



Bunchgrass Historian

Whitman County Historical Society
Colfax, Washington

Volume 21
Number 4
1994



THE HEART OF THE INLAND EMPIRE
PEA GROWING CAPITOL OF THE WORLD
MINING AND TIMBER INDUSTRIES
WASHINGTON STATE COLLEGE
THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

- Pullman - Moscow Airport
- Early Oakesdale

Whitman County Historical Society

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Current and Back Issues:

(Send \$2.50 per issue)
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Colfax, WA. 99111





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AUTHORS

Gary Grau was a student at Washington State University when he researched the history of the airport and presented his findings as a master's thesis.

J. E. McCoy was one of a family of that played an important role in the early history of Oakesdale. His account was written in 1913.

COVER

From an application for construction funding for the Pullman-Moscow airport, ca. 1945.

FROM YOUR EDITOR

This issue of Bunchgrass Historian looks at the process of creating an airport and the 15 years and special circumstances that it took before it became a going concern. The account is extracted from a student thesis written at Washington State University about twenty years ago.

An early (1910) review of the first years of the town of Oakesdale is republished as the second feature.

Bunchgrass Historian has been delayed this past summer as once again its editor was somewhat debilitated by several months of medical treatments. Fortunately, the treatments were of some help and time for editing small periodicals is again available. Thank you to all for good wishes along the way.

The Early Years of The Pullman-Moscow Airport by Gary Grau, 1973

As late as 1932, aviational landing facilities in the Pullman-Moscow area were limited to rough landing fields. No airports existed. A landing field has generally been known as any flat area large enough for airplanes to land, while an airport has definite facilities for aircraft such as graded runways and hangars. Up to 1932, Williams field, "a plain... about a half mile north of Washington State University... was a frequent landing spot." It was a typical landing field, not an airport. Kester Grimes, long-time local flyer, refers to it as a "former alfalfa pasture" which was the only acreage even "resembling an airport." No hangars or other buildings existed near the runway. Without doubt, necessity made Williams field the center of local air activity.

In 1932, three reasons stimulated the idea of building a local airport. First, members of the Reserve Officers Training corps (ROTC) at the State College of Washington (WSC), the Reserve Officers' Association (ROA) of Pullman, the Pullman American Legion, the Pullman Chamber of Commerce became concerned about the promotion of national defense. Second, there was widespread sentiment in the community that it was time for an official, permanent airport for the region. To some at least it was obvious that air travel "was the coming thing." Third, Williams field was inadequate to handle the air transportation needs of the record-size crowd attending the 1932 WSC-California football game in Pullman. Thus, national defense, community sentiment, and a football game spurred the search for an airport site.

ROTC, ROA, the Pullman Chamber of Commerce, and the Pullman American Legion each established an airport committee. These committees worked separately to find and develop a site until an airport



*Military Trainer Planes
at Pullman-Moscow
Airport, ca 1941*

board was formed in 1939. The ROA coordinated the various efforts through its own airport committee. During the summer of 1932, the ROA Airport Committee (ROAAC) appointed Lieutenant Harry Cole to head a survey party to explore possible sites. The team waded through ankle-deep mud to inspect the local terrain. Five sites were located. The future Pullman airport, referred to as site number two, was the second of the five.

After the sites were designated, the committees sought federal approval in locating an airport. They surmised that if federal money was to be spent for the airport eventually, the federal airport specialist, who must approve all such federal outlays, should assist in choosing the location in the beginning. At that time, the Department of Commerce was the federal governing body for airports, so, in September, 1932, Captain Walker of the ROAAC requested an opinion from Lieutenant Marshall C. Hoppin, airport specialist of the Department of Commerce, Aeronautics Branch, Washington, D.C. Hoppin arrived in Pullman on October 24, 1932. After looking at the five sites, Hoppin generally agreed with Walker on the advantages of number two. The good approaches to the area, even though it was sur-

rounded by rolling hills, particularly impressed Hoppin. But he also pointed out the disadvantages of the site:

It would be necessary to reroute the present county road running through the center of the valley to either the north or south side. Also there appear to be drainage problems involved.

The advantages that impressed both Hoppin and Walker proved substantial enough to make site number two the final location of what is today the Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport. However, the disadvantages have constantly hindered the airport's development. Rerouting the county road caused considerable expense and delay in the growth of the airport facilities. Even now, in 1972, airport officials are discussing another rerouting of the road, which cuts off the southwest end of the runway, in order to provide the additional runway space vital to commercial airliners. The drainage problem that Hoppin referred to has also been a major obstacle to airport development. Glen Ottmar, airport manager and operator of the airport flying service, considered the drainage problem at the airport as one of the major dilemmas which has hampered the development of local aviation, especially the construction and maintenance of the runway. He has observed several examples of how erosion widened cracks in the runway and caused many difficulties in construction of runway extensions.

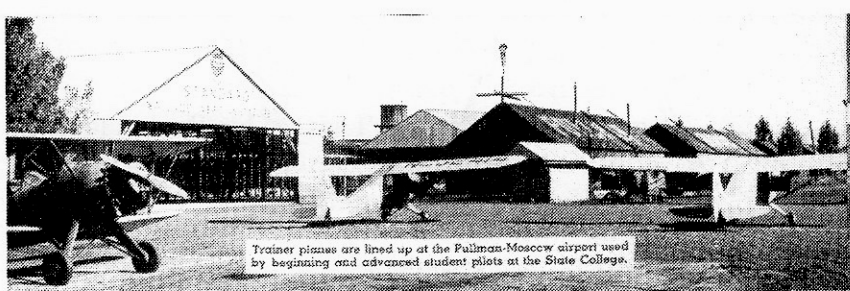
Another of Hoppin's observations made in 1932 was prophetic:

It appears to the writer that it would be advisable for the commissioners of Whitman County to aid in the establishment of a county airport which would serve several cities within their district.

Many years later, on January 19, 1971, Whitman County accepted partial responsibility for the operation of the airport, joining Pullman and Moscow in its annual financial support and its governing responsibilities. Thus, the airfield became in part the county airport Hoppin had recommended thirty-nine years earlier.

Shortly after Hoppin's visit, President Ernest O. Holland of the State college of Washington also began suggesting to federal officials the possibility of an airport in the Pullman area. In December, 1932, Holland wrote a letter to Major Roy M. O'Day, Washington, D.C., stating that the Pullman community had "the possibility of finding a good site for a future municipal airport." Although nothing resulted from Holland's letter, it did reveal WSC's interest in the airport which has consistently been a factor in its development.

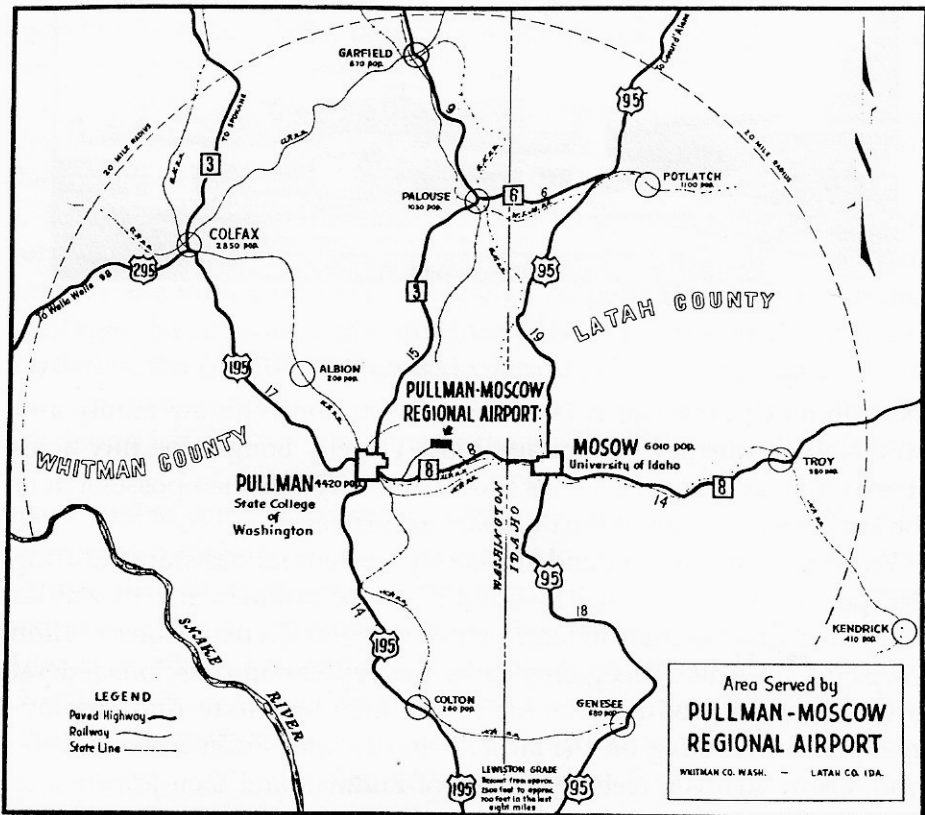
Pullman's city council surmised that site number two was the best



location and purchased it from the owners, the Whitlow family and Mrs. Nellie Courtney, in January, 1934. The city bought the fifty acres at sixty-five dollars an acre. As soon as the city obtained possession of the land, construction of the Pullman airport began.

Work on airfields depended heavily on federal assistance during that period of depression. The building of the pullman airport was no exception, and the first federal helper was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). This agency, created by the depression-conscious federal government to produce jobs for young men unable to find employment, began working on the airfield shortly after Pullman bought the land. Oscar Gladish, recently mayor of Pullman and then principal of Pullman High School, and W.T.Mitchell, Gladish's predecessor as mayor, remember vividly the CCC's military-style barracks, youthful industriousness, and efficient operation. However, Dan Downen, city council member at the time of the CCC camp, believes that more could have been done on the airport if the money allotted to the CCC camp had been spent for more machinery and less manpower. Although the effectiveness of the CCC is controversial, "the CCC 'boys,'... drilled a well and installed water distribution and waste disposal systems. In addition they constructed buildings, entrance roads and sidewalks." The buildings remained at least twenty years. Glen Ottmar dug up spoons, clothing, and other CCC camp items when he constructed a foundation for his trailer on the airport grounds in 1969. The CCC period of work lasted until the Civil Works Administration (CWA) took over construction on March 9, 1934.

During the depression, the CWA was organized to provide the unemployed with work rather than a mere dole. Millions of persons were hired by the CWA's contribution to the building of the Pullman airport was brief. The CWA work crew spent only about twenty days at the airport. Pullman officials were optimistic when the CWA crew



From Funding Application, ca. 1940

started work on the airport, but the optimism diminished as the crew was reduced in number several times and disbanded completely on March 29. With the closure of the CWA program and the subsequent withdrawal of federal assistance, construction of the Pullman airport halted.

During the next frustrating five years, numerous possibilities were suggested by the various committees which had initiated the program to finish the partially completed airfield, But each attempt to restart work on the project failed. For instance, in 1937, the ROAAC was advised that the Puget Sound-Alaska Air Conference, a major aviation-planning conference for the Pacific Northwest, had urged Congress to complete certain airports in the state of Washington. The recommendation did not mention the Pullman airport and the ROAAC was unable to get it included.

In 1938, Captain Henry Walker, chairman of the ROAAC, wrote Fred D. Fagg, Jr., director of air commerce, Department of Commerce, about the lack of federal aid for the Pullman airport, stating:

We have been much surprised at other areas (airfields) being bought and developed that were submitted a year and a half or two years after the Pullman airport. I earnestly request your serious consideration in order that the obligation of the Government for completion of this worthwhile airport project may be consummated.

In response to Walker's letter, Fagg sent Paul Morris, airport manager in the Portland office of the Bureau of Air Commerce, to inquire about the abandoned construction near Pullman. While in Pullman, Morris met with the airport committees of the American Legion and the determined Reserve Officers' Association. The only result was Morris' promise to consider restoring federal support.

The Pullman committees continued their struggle. In November, 1938, WSC Professor G.E. Thornton, chairman of the airport committee of the Pullman Chamber of Commerce, supplied the National Airport Survey of the new civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA) with a summary of the airport project. The document gave reasons for the development of the proposed airport. Although the letter was acknowledged and more information requested, nothing developed.

In 1939, not only committee members but also WSC took an active role in the attempt to finish the partially completed airport. On January 25, 1939, Vice-President H. Kimbrough met with Professors G.E. Thornton and Howard H. Langdon and Captain Walker. The purpose of the meeting was to review the work that had been done on the air facilities at Pullman and to consider possible actions that WSC might take to further the construction. Thornton, who represented the Chamber of Commerce, and Walker, who represented the ROA, summarized the efforts of their respective organizations. Kimbrough suggested the willingness of WSC to participate in the CAA's Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP). This program had been created in 1939 because of gathering war clouds in Europe and the Far East. The federal government sought military preparedness, and training pilots was vital to that purpose. College men were considered good potential pilots; thus most programs were conducted on airfields near colleges.

In January, 1939, the Pullman ROAAC, after being encouraged by WSC, approached the University of Idaho regarding its cooperation in the airport development and the training of student pilots. This state university is located in Moscow, Idaho, only eight miles from WSC.

The committee found that the Idaho institution was not interested. The Pullman group also sent a resolution regarding the use of the Pullman airport as a student training center to Robert H. Hinckley, director of the CPTP, Civilian Aeronautics Authority, Washington, D.C. In addition, the ROAAC wrote members of Congress in the latter part of February when it discovered that unless the airport was completed, the prospective training program for the region would be taken over by Spokane or Lewiston. The reply from Hinckley acted as a major catalyst in getting the airport finished. It read in part:

You may be sure that any application from the University of Idaho at Moscow, Idaho, or State College of Washington, Pullman, Washington, will be given careful consideration at that time.

Of course, the Pullman Airport would have to be completed before either institution could be designated to participate in the expanded program.

The Pullman committees realized that since they had not been able to finish the airport in the preceding years, they needed to solicit help from elsewhere. Therefore, they invited Moscow to assist in completing the facility in time for approval by the CPTP, in exchange for making the airport a joint venture between the two cities. Accordingly, on April 6, 1939, the Pullman ROAAC and other Pullman airport committees held a meeting with representatives from Moscow at the Moscow Hotel. The committees reviewed the airport construction which had been completed and emphasized the possibility of WSC and the University of Idaho cooperation to receive funds from the CAA for the training of Civilian pilots. The funneling of federal funds into the project apparently impressed the participants with the idea that the completion of the airport might be a profitable venture.

At the meeting, Captain J.H.Reardan of the Moscow Air Reserve stated that the university of Idaho was making a big mistake if it did not endorse and make application for a training unit. The institution that did not have such a unit, he said, would lose enrollment since students would go where they could get free aeronautical training. Captain John Howard, president of the Moscow ROA, assured the representatives that undoubtedly the University of Idaho was contemplating a training program, as he had been asked if he would teach navigation . Favorable support for Moscow's joining with Pullman came from Harold Corneilson, secretary of the Moscow Chamber of Commerce, who admitted that he did not know what the reaction of the University of Idaho's administration might be, but that the Chamber of Commerce

would be very pleased to support the joint effort. A Moscow citizen, Earl David, thought Moscow was extremely fortunate in being able to step into the picture after most of the work on the airport had been done. At the close of the meeting, the Moscow delegation, having been briefed and encouraged by the Pullman group, decided that Mr. Corneilson as a representative of the Chamber of Commerce would write to senators and representatives of Idaho urging their endorsement of the joint air port. Captain Harry Brinn stated he would see that some action was carried out by the American Legion.

The Moscow delegation present at the meeting agreed to become a committee to work with the committee from Pullman in the development of the air port.

On April 14, 1939, the Pullman newspaper contributed its support to the enthusiasm of the cooperative meeting. A statement by Captain Walker of the advantages of the joint airport concept was included in the article. This statement helped convince both cities and possibly the national government of the soundness of further construction on the Pullman airport:

The field has wonderful possibilities from a commercial standpoint. It is located between two good sized towns, both having large federal-state institutions with many government departments in connection with them... This field would be available for commercial transportation of passengers, particularly to athletic events at both the University of Idaho and the State College of Washington. The field is located on an air lane from Boise to Spokane. Pullman alone sends between 2,400 and 2,500 letters a month by air mail. No doubt this is about the same for Moscow.

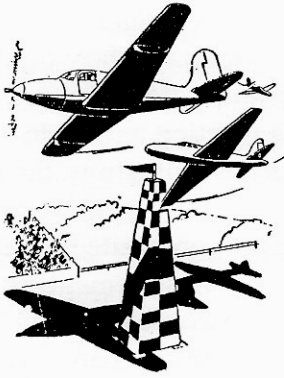
The probability of a completed joint airport was enormously enhanced when, on August 11, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the federal CPTP bill which allowed for the training of 12,000 pilots each year in colleges and universities. The Pullman Herald enthusiastically announced the approval of the national program and commented that it added "considerable impetus to the proposal for the completion of the Pullman airport for use by the State College of Washington and the University of Idaho in training pilots."

At the April meeting which had joined Pullman and Moscow in an effort to complete the airport, a general informal agreement was made that in return for Moscow's help, the airport would be run by both cities equally. Such a combined effort by Pullman and Moscow and their respective universities was very agreeable to the federal govern-

ALL - AMERICAN

AIR SHOW

SEPTEMBER 1, 1947



Pullman - Moscow Airport

ment. Paul Morris, Seattle regional airport engineer for the CAA, while visiting the Pullman-Moscow area, stated that "a community airport, with the State College of Washington and the University of Idaho cooperating, is certainly the logical plan for the two institutions."

On September 1, 1939, the uncompleted airport was approved for a flight training program sponsored by the CPTP if the facility was operational by November 1, 1939. As discussed earlier by Moscow and Pullman representatives, the only way the air facilities could be readied by the deadline was if both cities worked together on it. A joint airport would be the final result of such a unified effort.

Accordingly, a legal partnership for the establishment and control of a regional airport serving the two cities and the area was signed by E.B. Parker, mayor of Pullman, and Henry E. Hansen, mayor of Moscow, of September 5, 1939. This union created the Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport from the still uncompleted Pullman airport. Under the agreement's provisions, the mayors of both cities and a representative from each city selected by the respective city councils were to be appointed members of the Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport Board. Those four members were then to select a fifth member. The board was primarily an advisory group, while the respective city coun-

cils had final approval of all airport business. Land for the airport was leased from the city of Pullman, and all expenses and revenues were to be shared by the cities.

The physical transformation of the airport to meet the CAA's requirements for the CPTP was almost completed on November 3, 1939. The \$15,000 for the work to make the airport operational had been raised by the new board from the two cities, UI, and WSC. The runway, 100 by 2,500 feet, was completely graded and most of the 3,000 yards of crushed rock was laid. The first hangar was being constructed by Wallace Air Service of Spokane, which was awarded the contract for the training of the WSC and UI students enrolled in the CPTP. The airport was accepted as a training center on November 9, 1939. The Pullman ROAAC and the other Pullman airport committees, with their dream fulfilled, disbanded soon afterwards.

When good weather arrived after a harsh Palouse winter, a ceremony consummated eight years of effort to create an airport, not just a flat landing field, for the Pullman-Moscow region. A dozen planes circled the airport during the ceremonies held on May 24, 1940, which drew 5,000 spectators. The crowd enthusiastically cheered a spot landing contest and numerous training maneuvers. The spectators were especially awed by "two huge transport planes" which had been brought to the field by United Airlines and northwest Airlines. Dignitaries were introduced by the master of ceremonies, Fred Rounds, president of the Pullman Chamber of Commerce. They were Wiley R. Wright, senior private flying specialist at Boeing Field, Seattle; Paul morris, federal regional airport engineer at Boeing Field; W.H. Hill of boise, Idaho's state director of aeronautics; CPTP directors Professor H.H. Langdon of WSC and Dean J.E. Buchanan of the University of Idaho; and county commissioners from Whitman and Latah counties. Speeches followed the introductions. Bert Zimmerly, head of a commercial air service at Lewiston announced plans for passenger and mail service to Lewiston and Spokane from Pullman within sixty days. Mayor Eri B. Parker of Pullman exclaimed, "We are just in the beginning and looking forward to improvements on the airport."

In August, 1940, a few months after opening the airport, the regional airport board asked for \$54,000 from the CAA to expand the runway from 100 by 2,500 feet to 400 by 4,000 feet. On October 4, 1940, the CAA agreed to give \$28,628 for runway construction. Additional land was required for the expansion. The possibility of the CAA grant motivated Pullman, the owner of the airport land, to buy the needed

acreage as well as additional land for probable future expansion. The Pullman City Council offered the Whitlow and Courtney families \$110 per acre. This was considered a fair price because comparable wheat land was being sold at \$75 per acre. However, the two owners stubbornly refused the city's offer and demanded \$150 per acre plus \$1,500 damages. Pullman convinced them to sell by issuing its first ordinance regarding the Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport which authorized and instructed the city attorney to institute proceedings for condemnation of the land for public airport purposes. The final price was \$3,380 for 25.78 acres, or \$131 per acre, considerably less than the \$150 per acre plus damages first requested by the two landowners.

Another major financial contribution was made to the airport on July 18, 1941, when the original CAA grant of \$28,628 was bolstered by \$42,121 in additional funds. The money guaranteed the completion of the 400 by 4,000 foot runway with the necessary new type of surfacing needed for heavier planes. Specifically, the work involved in the airport preparation required 870 cu. yds of runway and 2,400 cu. yds. of drain pipe excavation and backfill and laying of 10,800 linial (sic) feet of from 8 to 12 inch drain pipe. Fifty-two catch basins were constructed and 5,000 cu. yds. of crushed rock was used for backfill.

Surfacing of the runway required 70,000 sq. yds. of crushed rock and oil mat surfacing. Approximately 3,000 cu. yds. of 3/4 inches minus crushed rock was used in the surfacing. The water tower was painted and 10 boundary markers installed to show the limit of the sides and ends of the runway.

Searching for money to improve the airport has been a continuous project of the board. The next step in the development was to obtain the needed funds to enlarge the airport to the size demanded by the CAA for secondary flight training of civilian pilots. Formulated in September, 1941, the plan was known as the "\$165,000 WPA project." It would enlarge the airstrip to 500 by 5,000 feet and include an extensive lighting system. A great deal of work was called for on the landing strip.

To aid the board in meeting these specifications, the Work Projects Administration (WPA) offered to pay for the expansion except for \$21,333, which would have to be raised locally. The incentives for a local fund drive were explained at a meeting on September 25, 1941. Represented at the gathering were Pullman's and Moscow's chambers of commerce, the University of Idaho, the State College of Washington, the cities of Pullman and Moscow, and Whitman and Latah counties.

The most favorable argument was that more than \$100,000 of government money had been spent locally to develop the preliminary Civilian Pilot Training Program, so secondary training would mean added income for local people. Proponents mentioned the fact that already more than a hundred persons had been trained as possible military pilots through the existing CPTP at UI and WSC. One of the representatives commented, "Not even the most optimistic could come within 10 per cent of what this airport will mean to us ten years from now." However, even with the impetus of federal money and the national defense crisis, Jack McQuade, Latah County attorney, emphasized local differences over the airport rather than the proposed \$165,000 plan. He decried "the lack of the proper use of the name 'Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport'" and asked that an access road be constructed on the Moscow side. But national defense and federal money was more important to the communities than local problems and the \$21,333 was raised. On December 26, 1941, shortly after the United States declared war, the \$165,000 WPA project was approved by the federal government and local officials. Preparation of the airport for the war was well under way.

The Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport Board further committed the airport to the war effort on May 22, 1943, when it officially approved the exclusive use of the airport by the United States Army Air Corps. In this unique package deal, WSC, although not legally involved in the airport, agreed to pay \$350 per month during the war emergency and \$250 per month thereafter toward its maintenance. The board agreed "to keep the airfield in the best possible condition with the funds available."

With other colleges and universities during wartime, WSC became part of the United States war effort. Prominent in its involvement was the Army Air Force (AAF) which selected the college as one of its pre-flight training centers. The main objective of the pre-flight program was to provide actual experience in airplanes for recruits who were being considered for pilot training. It was designed to eliminate those persons who could not eventually qualify either physically or mentally for flight training. A college without a nearby, first-rate airport could not have been selected.

The four-month program consisted of two parts: academic flight preparation and actual in-the-air training. The academic phase included courses in mathematics, physics, geography, and history.

The second part of the program allowed each student at least ten

hours of flying time. A mere ten hours of air flight does not conjure up images of any major advancement of the war effort. However, in the early 1940's, the majority of the United States population had never flown in an airplane. This opportunity to fly before going into actual military flight training saved an overexcited, would-be pilot from possible damage to himself or his plane. Experience around airplanes can save persons from making costly mistakes. For example, the cadets learned respect for the Palouse wind when a woman instructor lost all of her hair while being whipped across the ground after parachuting too soon from a faulty plane.

Ultimately over 5,000 flight students passed through the training program before the airport reverted to civilian use with the end of the war. A year later, mid-1946, the first scheduled passenger service was offered by Empire Air Lines, and the airport was at last a going concern.

Early History
Told By J. H. McCoy, Son of Town's Founder
J. F. McCoy

Written for the *Oakesdale Tribune*
February 28, 1913 By J. H. McCoy

Having heard of the wonderful opportunities awaiting us in the Territory of Washington, and seeking to better our condition financially, in the fall of 1876, my father, with all his family, numbering seven, and Elija Harris, who had lived with the family for a long time, began to get everything in readiness for the trip to Washington. We were living at the time about 90 miles south of Portland, Oregon, and after our wagons were in readiness, all of our belongings loaded in, we were off for Washington. The roads were very muddy, but in due time we arrived at Portland, and after camping there overnight in one of those "Oregon Mists", "we embarked the next morning on the "Wild West," a boat which ran from Portland to Celilo, where we made a portage by train, and after a short run were again transferred to the boat which ran as far as The Dalles, Oregon, at which place we arrived about midnight.

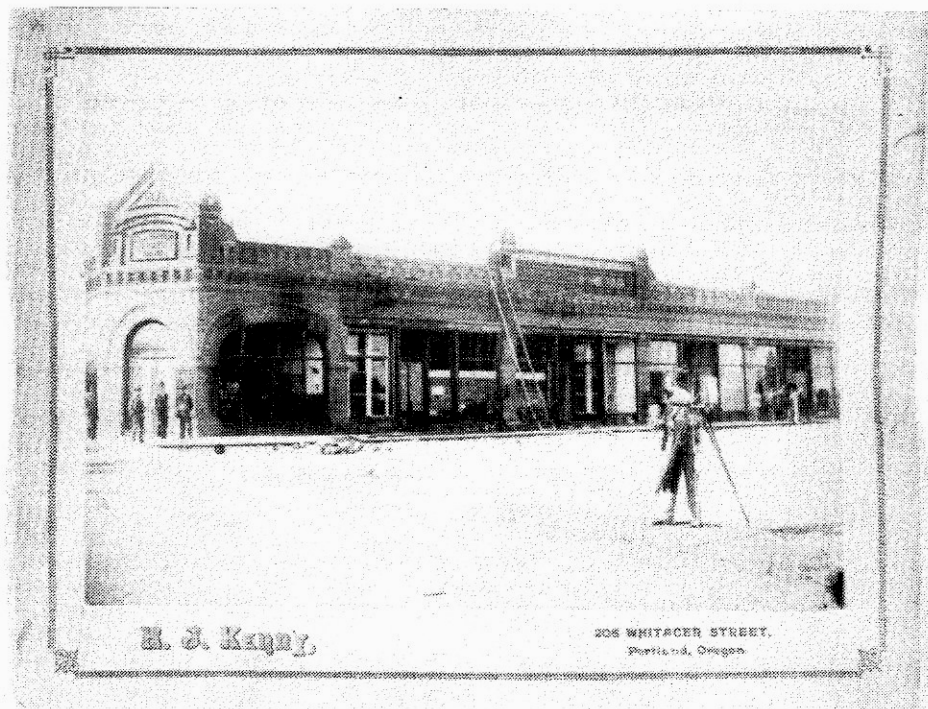
In the morning everything being put in readiness, we proceeded on our journey overland by team traveling through the John Day, Deschutes, Willow Creek and Butter creek country. Passing through the towns of Heppner, Pendleton, Walla Walla, Waitsburg and Colfax, going on to Pine Creek near Farmington, Where we had previously rented 80 acres of improved land. We arrived there in the late fall of 1876.

EXPERIENCES IN THE PALOUSE

The improvements on the 80 acres we had rented, consisted of a small log barn and a one room log house, 14 x 20, with a small lean-to shed on one side. The interior of the main house was all in one room

with a loft overhead partly covered with split cedar boards, with a fire-place in one end of the house and but one small window near the corner. In this corner, the cook stove was placed, where the meals were prepared for the family.

We had no furniture to speak of, having no beds and there was no store near. We proceeded to construct some homemade beds and by making some mortises in the walls, we soon had the frame work for three beds. They were so constructed that they only had two legs, but they answered the purpose very well. The sleeping quarters of S.J. McCoy and myself were in the loft where no one could molest or make afraid. In order to reach our bed, we would spring upward, seize a round pole made of cedar, which formed one of the upper joints, and by doing the "Trapeze" act we were able to turn on top the pole and then crawl back to our beds. I say crawl, for the loft was too low to permit our standing erect. The winter months soon passed away and the spring time had arrived and the 80 acres were to be plowed and seeded, a task that required some time, on account of the lack of sufficient teams. But in time, we succeeded in getting our seed into the ground. It came up quickly. One could almost see it grow. My father had previously located a homestead, where the town of Oakesdale now stands, on which improvements were to be made, so after our crops were in, we began to make preparation for building a house on the homestead. It was only a short distance to the timber on the headwaters of Pine Creek (from the 80 acres on which we were living) so thither we went, and with our axes we felled the trees and began to hew the logs for the new house. We had, in the meantime hauled some small logs to the homestead and erected a temporary log cabin, in which to live while the permanent house was being built. But owing to the fact that all of our material had to be hauled 15 miles, our harvest came on before other buildings could be done, so we began at once the harvesting of our crop which was a bountiful one, yielding some 2,400 bushels of wheat and something like 1,500 bushels of oats from the 80 acres. The marketing of our surplus grain was no small task as it had to be hauled as far as the Coeur d' Alene Post, now Coeur d' Alene City. It was late in the fall before we were able to move to the homestead, moving into the temporary cabin which was constructed of round logs and chinked with bunch grass which grew everywhere. When the nights were cold the horses would seek shelter behind the cabin and eat the bunch grass chinking and then we boys would have to pull more bunch grass and rechink the cracks. But by and by, we had the new house complete



City Block, Oakesdale, following fire

which was 1 1/2 stories in height, constructed of logs hewed on four sides being 6 inches thick, and 15 inches in width, the main building being about 16 by 24 feet as I remember. This house is still standing on the same spot, where erected over (now 93) years ago and is occupied by my oldest brother, W. C. McCoy (Note: The original McCoy cabin is now enclosed in the house occupied by Mr. and Mrs. John Hanford and family. The house entirely surrounds the old cabin, but is still there, just as it was during those early years.)

Under the different rights, we had located 3/4 sections of land comprising the land on which the town of Oakesdale is now located and being a strip of one mile long and three-fourths mile wide along the east side of Section 22, Township 19, Range 44 E.W.M. We passed the long tedious winter on the homestead with no neighbors, except our bachelor neighbors, nearer than the settlement on Pine Creek, and we were glad to see the springtime once more when we could be busy with our work on the homestead.

As soon as the ground was in condition we began to break the virgin soil for our first crop on the new farm which was only partly enclosed

by fence, and to protect this crop from the ravages of horses and cattle, we were compelled at times to take our blankets and sleep in the open at a point where stock were likely to bother. The time went, and in a few years, we had made the new home very comfortable. The farm was now fenced and the crops we raised were very bountiful indeed. While we fed part of the produce of the farm to stock, there was a surplus that had to be taken to market requiring from four to five days to make a trip and exposing us to all kinds of weather. This in itself was no small task and required many days to accomplish. But the prices we received as a rule were exceptionally good.

I call to mind one trip that I made to the Coeur d' Alene Post just before the Thanksgiving season with a four-horse load of oats, turkeys, ham, butter and eggs that gave me a net return of almost \$400.00. Everything that I had, bringing fancy prices.

Along in the eighties, the country began to settle very fast and in a short time, we had neighbors on every side, and for the most part being heads of families. Those I call to mind who settled near us were: I. N. Balthis, John Balthis, A. H. Crow, Jesse C. Bailor, D. B. Conrad, (Uncle Dan as we learned to call him,) W. M. Hughes, Perry Prettyman, Rev. Dunlap, W. P. Hunter, Dan Fish, John Kemp, N. M. Norris, Maggie Williams, and some of our bachelor neighbors were N. P. Parkman, John Kelly, A. E. Corlett, Frank Dennis, Peter Conway, F. M. Gunn, Tom Griffin and Ed Griffin. A number of these have since become heads of families and are still among us.

THE FIRST SCHOOL HOUSE

The number of children in the neighborhood was now ample to support a school and a school house was the next thing needed, and by the help of the neighbors, a comfortable little house was soon built on the bank of the creek near where the country road leaves Bartlett street going out toward Pine Creek (near the corner of Bartlett and Idaho Streets); this being the first school house in this part of the country.

There was preaching services held in this school building from time to time, conducted by the Rev. A. J. Loomis and the Rev. Dunlap.

My oldest brother, W. C. McCoy, who had remained behind in the Willamette Valley had now decided to move to Washington, and in the spring of 1884 he with his family boarded the train for Cheney, this being the nearest railroad station at this time.

THE NORTHERN PACIFIC

The Northern Pacific realizing the vast resources of this wonderful Palouse country, in the spring of 1885, had placed corps of surveyors in

the field, and had run preliminary surveys from Marshall Junction, south through the Palouse country and on toward Lewiston, and in the spring of 1886, they had located the line permanently as it now runs through Oakesdale, and by fall, the line was completed as far as the town of Belmont.

Belmont was the terminus until 1887, when the line was extended on toward Lewiston. The railroad company made a special effort to make a city of Belmont but how well they succeeded is easily determined by a visit to the quiet little town.

FOUNDING OAKESDALE

In the spring of 1887, after the coming of the railroad, the town of Oakesdale was plotted, but not until we had seeded the land to oats on which the town now stands. The first building erected on the townsite was built by Henkle, McCoy and Company, which was used as a general store and was built on the corner of First and Bartlett streets. This was a wooden structure and it was necessary to mow the grain before commencing to build. The same company, in 1889, erected a building known as the Union Block. The wooden building was moved just across the street where it was burned in the big fire of 1892. Other buildings were soon erected and in a short time Oakesdale had grown to be quite a town, having almost every line of business represented. Those representing the different lines of business were, J. B. Baker and John Fore, the first newspaper; Thomas Secrest, was the first Mayor of the town. G. W. Roberts ran the hotel, Henry Clark, the first butcher shop. W. D. Porter, the first and only flour mill. Mrs. M. Walsh, was the first postmistress and owned the first millinery store. J. L. Bailor, first furniture store; William Tretner, the first blacksmith shop; W. M. Barr operated the first livery stable.

The First National Bank was the second bank located in Oakesdale the place of business being the corner of First and Bartlett streets, in the Union Block, established in 1890, with Samuel Brown, president, and C. A. Brown, cashier. The next was the Commercial State Bank, established in 1891 on the corner of Steptoe Avenue and First Street with George Comegys, president. This is the only one of the two above mentioned banks doing business.

The first church was built by the U.B. church and during a severe electrical storm was struck by lightening and was burned to the ground before assistance arrived.

The first schoolhouse built after the incorporation of the town was a two-story frame building, which was built on the present high school

site. This building soon proved to be inadequate for the accommodation of the students, and was sold to the different orders of the town for a lodge room and was moved to the lot where the Baptist church now stands and fitted up for an opera house. The upstairs was made into a lodge hall. In moving this building it was necessary to cross the O.R. & N. track and when partly across the track a special passenger train with a theatrical troupe on board ran into it, causing some damage to the train and damaging the building to the extent of \$100. Luckily no one was hurt.

In place of this wooden structure a three story brick structure was built at a cost of something like \$20,000. (The top story of this building was removed a few years ago and the first two floors are now used to house the grade school and the Junior High.)

OAKESDALE - A GRAIN CENTER

In the early history of Oakesdale this town was noted as a grain center, the farmers delivering their grain here from points as far as 20 miles. It was not an unusual sight to see teams lined up for several blocks awaiting their turn to unload and at times they were compelled to remain there overnight before they were able to get their wagons unloaded.

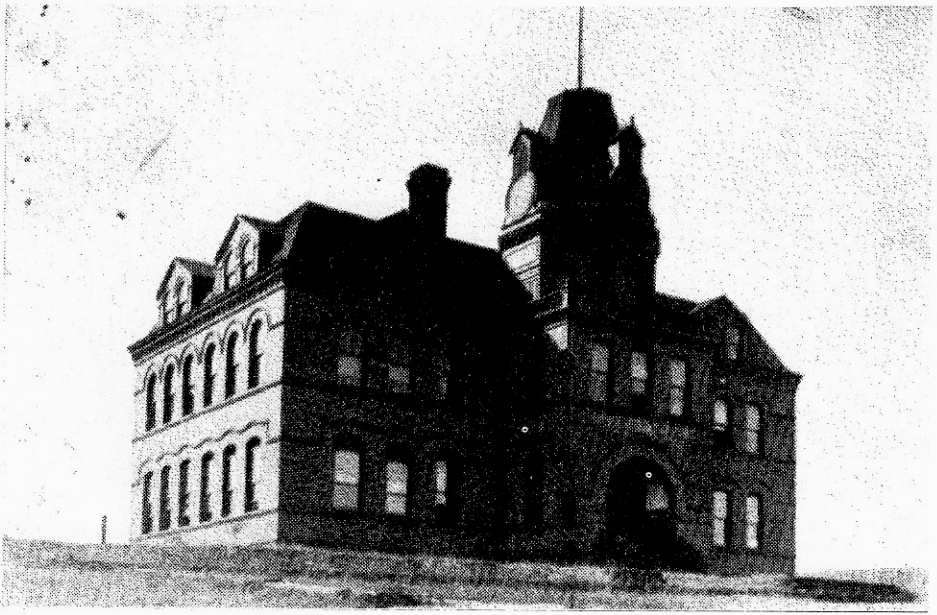
The warehouses were filled to overflowing and great piles had to be erected outside.

O.R. & N.

The building of the O.R. & N. through Oakesdale was completed in 1888, the track being laid from both Tekoa and Winona at the same time and connecting in Oakesdale at or near Third Street. Uncle Tom Secrest, then mayor of the town, drove the last connecting spike. The building of this road gave the farmers to the west of us better shipping accommodations and cut the amount of grain coming into Oakesdale but it was still a good grain point.

With the building of these railroads the scene has changed. The once beautiful bunch grass hills where the cattle and horses roamed at will, have been converted into one vast grain field, dotted here and there with the farm houses. Towns have sprung up on every hand, representing almost every line of business where the farmer can buy all his supplies and find a market for all his products.

Oakesdale in her early history was a saloon town, having at one time no less than seven saloons, which caused many heartaches and wrecked the lives and homes of a few citizens causing heavy expenses to the county and town and materially increasing the taxes of the tax-



Oakesdale High School

payer.

This has all changed now and instead of the open saloon to tempt us, we have a full line of legitimate business houses consisting of three general stores, two banks, four blacksmiths, one flour mill, five churches, three meat shops, two barber shops, bakery, hotel, lodging house, pocket billiard hall, three story high school building, two livery stables, two shoe shops, three real estate offices, three railway stations, harness shop, three drug stores, furniture store, scores of beautiful residences and a happy and contented population of from 900 to 1,200 people, with a railway service equal to any in the Inland Empire, having three roads the N.P., the O.W., and the electric line.

The members of our family still living are mother, who is now in her 81st year, and yer hale and hearty; W.C. McCoy, now state senator from this district, S.S. McCoy, one-half mile from town, farmer; J.R. McCoy, Oakesdale, assistant cashier of the National Bank. Hattie P. Wyard, Spokane, and myself, resident of Oakesdale which nestles in the little valley that once formed the homestead.

At the present time (1913) Oakesdale is a thriving town of nearly 1,200 inhabitants. It is situated in one of the best districts of the best county of one of the best states in the Union. Surrounded by an agricultural district of unsurpassing fertility, permanent welfare of the city

is assured. Each year without a single failure to date the harvest's golden stream flows from Oakesdale through the arteries of commerce to the world's markets. Farmers are beginning to look with more than usual interest to the more advanced and scientific methods of farming, the raising of thoroughbred stock of various kinds, and the establishment of dairies of the best approved and modern type. Intensive farming is fast becoming more common and popular and the problem of making the land produce two dollars where one was produced before is now being solved every year.

The make-up of the town itself is of the most permanent character. Practically all of the business section of the town is built of brick. The streets are well constructed, level and of a most attractive type. Steptoe Avenue as it extends from points near the Spokane & Inland depot reaching for more than half a mile through the town westward, is a truly magnificent thoroughfare and should be a pride to any city. First class street light and electric service of all kinds adds to the merit of modern methods and makes Oakesdale a very desirable place of residence.

J.H. McCoy