

Bunchgrass Historian

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James A. Perkins and the Founding of Colfax



also: The 1970
STUDENT STRIKE

Beginning the Second Decade

With 1983 the Whitman County Historical Society begins its second decade of service to people who are interested in our region's history. The *Bunchgrass Historian*, also begins its eleventh year of publication in 1983. Perhaps it is fitting that, as we start this second decade we, once again, feature James Perkins on the cover of our publication.

In addition to our regular features you will find three fine articles in this issue. The first, written by Tom Fryxell, chronicles the life of James Perkins and focuses upon the founding and early life of the community of Colfax. Tom's article complements much of the fine work that has already been done in this area—in particular, Dr. Roy Chatter's biography of James Perkins *Bunchgrass Historian*, (Volume One Number One), and Edith Erickson's fine recent book, *Colfax: 100 Plus*. Fryxell's piece is the first of a two-part series. The second installment, to appear in June, will feature an in-depth look at the Perkins House and family after James's death in 1920.

The second segment of *this* issue focuses upon some recent history of Whitman County—the Student Strike on the Washington State University campus in 1970. We are fortunate that two fine writers, Mark Feige and William F. Wilbert, were willing to share their work with us. While we are aware that “the Strike,” as it is still called, remains an emotional issue in the minds of many residents, we believe that it is important for us to examine this time of recent unrest.

We have a big year planned for “*Bunchgrass*” readers. In upcoming issues, you will be reading about the time that T. R. talked in Tekoa, about the time that Will Rogers *did not* talk in Pullman. You will learn more about the Germans from Russia, as well as changing agricultural practices in the county. On top of this, we hope to have some more oral histories, book reviews, and information on how to conduct family history. If you have comments, information, or photos about any of these things that you would be willing to share with fellow-members, drop us a line. □

Fred C. Bohm, Editor

James A. Perkins and Colfax: The Entrepreneur and His Town

by Tom Fryxell

For a full century the Perkins Family has been an important force in the history of Colfax, Washington. Almost every aspect of community life from business to education to religion was influenced to some degree by James Allen Perkins and his descendents. Yet despite their significant role in the settling and growth of Colfax, relatively little is known about the Perkins family. A decade has elapsed since Ethel Perkins, the last member of the group to reside in the town, died in July, 1970. With her death awareness of the pioneering family's achievements flickered briefly in the obituaries and then simply went out. Such a lapse is unfortunate, as it not only prevents recognition from being given to those who deserve it, but also deprives people of the knowledge of their local heritage.

James Allen Perkins was born September 7, 1841, to Joel and Margaret Perkins, the second of twelve children. He spent the first eleven years on the family farm fifteen miles from Lacon, Illinois. As the years passed, the growth of the family taxed his father's farm heavily. Along with the dwindling supply of available land in the state, it prompted the elder Perkins to consider the move West, where unclaimed land was both abundant and affordable. In 1852, Joel Perkins and his family crossed the Plains by ox team searching for a better life in the Pacific Northwest.

The Perkins settled first in Oregon City before moving to Benton County, Oregon, where they lived until 1861. That year they decided to move to Washington Territory. After driving one hundred head of cattle to Walla Walla, Joel Perkins took a land claim for his family near the town of Waitsburg. It was here that James began to establish himself. He took a pre-emption on land next to his father's claim, but was apparently dissatisfied with the soil. The younger Perkins later sold his allotment, moving to where the town of Huntsville later arose, and purchased a claim there.

Unfortunately for the young man, the area he had chosen was not conducive to farming. Frost came early in the fall, hurting the growth of his crops. After several frustrating seasons of trying to cope with the adverse weather, Perkins was more than receptive to the idea of relocation. The opportunity came in the form of a business venture organized by Anderson Cox of Waitsburg. Cox was searching for settlers interested in constructing a sawmill with his financial backing, at the junction of the forks of the Palouse River.¹

1. This point is disputed by Roberta McClean in a manuscript entitled "Perkins: The Perkins' Coat of Arms." She contends that James Perkins was sent out to find a good location for the sawmill and thereby chose the town's location.



—Whitman County Historical Society

A photograph taken of the Perkins family taken in the parlor about 1917. From left to right, Stella, James, Minnie, Myrtle, Jennie and Sumner.

Frustrated with the uncooperative climate and eager to try a more profitable avenue, Perkins gladly accepted Cox's offer. Along with Thomas Smith, from Waitsburg, he arrived in the wooded valley on July 10, 1870.

Being in such a remote location must surely have spawned doubts among Perkins, Smith, and their assistants. But the hope of prosperity through the sawmill and a possible settlement gave them the determination to go forward with their enterprise. The first task which confronted them was building a cabin for shelter. They collected logs and hauled lumber from Walla Walla. Work in the middle of the summer was undoubtedly quite grueling and the small size of the group did little to lighten the individual load. Nightfall often found them tired, sunburned and dirty.

The two men found time aside from their labor on the cabin to stake out their property. Perkins had purchased a pre-emption on the land which allowed him to buy 160 acres for approximately \$2.50 per acre. While no information was found concerning Smith, it is presumed from the amount of land he took, that he also had a pre-emption in his possession. The two men divided the valley land between themselves, with Smith taking the land in the south area and Perkins taking the north part. The marker separating the two homesteads ran from east to west across the glen and when made into a thoroughfare, it was appropriately named "Last Street." Each of these land allotments was enormous and later proved a prosperous investment for Perkins.

Unfortunately, Smith was not impressed with his new land holdings. For reasons unknown, he chose to withdraw from the venture at the end of the summer and move south to Union Flat, leaving his former partner with only a few assistants. The unexpected turn of events must have been disheartening to Perkins, who nevertheless chose to persevere.

Isolation on the frontier was psychologically trying for many a pioneer, and those involved with the founding of Colfax were no exception. On one occasion after returning from a month long trip to Walla Walla, James Perkins found a nail protruding from the wall inside the cabin with a string hanging from it. Curious, he inquired of his helper, who stayed after Smith's departure, as to the meaning and discovered that the man had become so lonely to see anything alive that he had caught a mouse and tied it to the string. Evidently, the rodent did not care for the fellow's company and managed to escape. The assistant soon left for a more populated region.

Perkins was undoubtedly pleased with the man he recruited for his new partner, Hezekiah Stout Hollingsworth. Born in 1839, Hollingsworth packed for the Volunteers under George Crook in the Oregon-Indian Wars of the 1850's. Later he supplied mining camps in Idaho and Montana from his headquarters near Waitsburg, where he probably met his future associate. The subsequent partnership would play a vital role in the establishment of one of the earliest settlements in the Palouse.

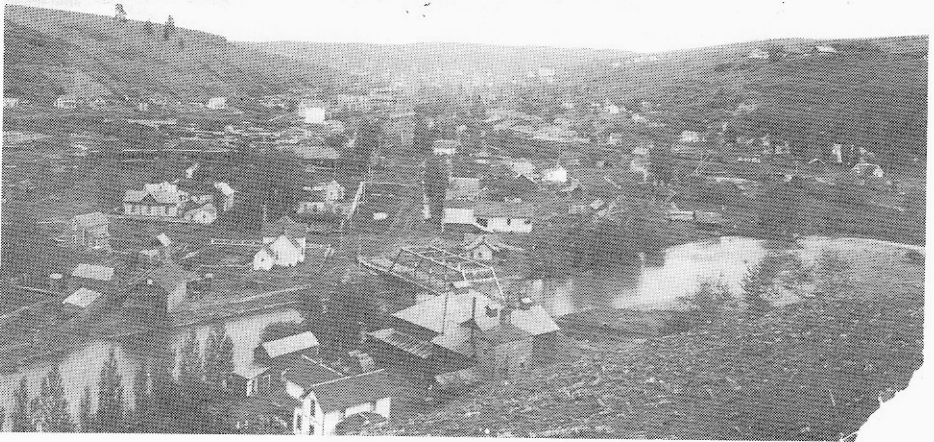
In the spring of 1871, Hollingsworth arrived in the area and settled on the land vacated by Smith the previous year. One of the first projects he and his new partner undertook was to hire A. L. Knolton, a surveyor, to plat a townsite, an important step towards varifying the land as being worthy of settlement in the eyes of prospective settlers. It indicated the valley possessed a future, the brightest aspect of which was the possibility of serving as a supply center, thereby eliminating the long and arduous trip to Walla Walla. Knolton began his surveying in February, 1872.

During the year-long interval, Perkins and Hollingsworth turned their attention to the sawmill. With the financial backing of Anderson Cox and using hired labor, construction of the new enterprise began in the late spring or early summer of 1871. After several months of hard work, the area's first business commenced production on September 12, 1871 at the junction of the north and south forks of the Palouse. As with any new enterprise there were some problems with the mill that needed correcting. Although the two forks of the river provided plenty of access to the site, log congestion occurred. Consequently, a millrace was dug to the building which enabled the wood to flow in an efficient manner.

The second problem concerned getting the lumber to the consumer. The mill's saw was perpendicular, and the speed with which it moved was not a noted attribute. Impatient customers wryly commented that the saw, "went up one day and came down the next." Yet despite its slow pace, the business was the only one of its kind in the region and it attracted customers accordingly. As people came to the sawmill, interest in the valley grew, laying another "plank" in the movement toward becoming an established town.

Ironically, the mill which served as such a powerful incentive in drawing other businesses to the area, was owned by Perkins, Cox, and Hollingsworth for but a short time—a scant six months. In March of 1872, Anderson Cox died unexpectedly and Perkins sold out to Hollingsworth, who in turn sold to John C. Davenport. The sawmill, though it continued to be an important part of the community, did so under a number of different owners.

Davenport, who built the town's first flour mill in 1873, apparently chose to concentrate his efforts in that business and sold the sawmill in 1877 to M. J. Sexton and William Codd. Davenport worked to secure water power for his new mill then under construction. The site, located on the south fork of the river near the present location of the Excell Food Store, lacked an adequate water supply. Also, private property stood between Davenport's land and the north fork of the Palouse. Fortunately for Daven-



—Whitman County Historical Society

Photo of Colfax taken about the turn-of-the-century. In the foreground can be seen the brewery, Clearly, on the hill to the right sits Colfax College and, in the lower right, the Perkins House. Notice that the main street of town had not yet been paved.

port, Perkins, a close friend owned part of the land which separated the mill from the power source.

When Davenport broached the subject of running a millrace and flumes across the property, he found the owner receptive and a legal agreement was drawn up. On June 23, 1877, the document was signed, giving Davenport permission to begin construction. In the agreement, Perkins was quite generous, granting him free use of his land in acknowledgement of the high cost the latter would incur with the excavation and construction. In addition, he could use as much land as he needed. The only stipulation was that the miller keep the dikes and ditches in repair. Such an agreement was not only benevolent, but in terms of community development, it was a far-sighted act as well.

It appears that Perkins knew Davenport would share the use of the millrace with others, for two weeks later the partnership of Sexton and Codd in turn entered into an agreement with Davenport. In a legal document signed on July 6, 1877, the miller agreed to allow these logging entrepreneurs the same use of the millrace and flume, provided that they allowed a "sufficient" amount of water to the flour mill and refrained from floating logs in a manner or at certain times that would hurt Davenport's property.

The decision by Perkins to allow his land to be used for water transportation and power was a wise one. It not only enabled another large flour mill to begin business, but it also permitted the sawmill to increase production. It now could use an additional avenue of transporting the logs to the mill instead of relying only on the river. As the number of establishments increased, interest in the settlement rose accordingly. Larger numbers turned their wagons toward the little community for the vital necessities of lumber and flour instead of making the journey to Walla Walla. With the upward flux

of business more pioneers began to settle in the valley and the surrounding area. By 1871 the population was 83.

While James Perkins was encouraging the development of trade in Colfax, he also worked to establish it as an important town in the region. When an act of the territorial legislature formed Whitman County on November 29, 1871, he was appointed as one of three commissioners to find a temporary location for the county seat until the voters could make the final decision at the next elections. How the commission made their selection is unknown, but one story often told related that Perkins, William Lucas, and James Logsdon met at what is now Plainsville to make the decision. Each man had his own choice for the county capitol, and as a result—the debate was long and hotly contested. On the second day, Lucas, who preferred a western location for the county seat, became upset with the others and left to feed his livestock. The discussion continued with the same intensity, and the following day Logsdon, whose choice was Plainsville, gave in, telling Perkins to “take the county seat and go to blazes.”

While Lucas and Logsdon did not appreciate Perkins' choice of Colfax or his tenacity, the rest of the county apparently did, as they confirmed his choice at the following elections.

The acquisition of the county seat was extremely important to the town's growth. It added another business—county government—to Colfax, bringing in more jobs and diversifying the economy. The number of people now attracted to the settlement was substantial, as many types of legal affairs were now transacted, which in turn created more consumer demands. Other establishments such as dairies, livery stables, saloons, and hotels began appearing in the following years to meet these emerging needs.

In working to attract settlers to the Palouse, Perkins occasionally rode to Walla Walla on the Oregon Trail, stopping people and telling them about the virtues of the Palouse Country. It was probably on one of these trips that he met his future wife, Sarah Jane Ewart in 1871. A pretty young woman with dark hair, Sarah Jane or “Jennie” as she was called, had just arrived in Waitsburg with her family on their way to the Puget Sound area. Her looks and sense of humor attracted Perkins who immediately insisted that the Ewarts visit the Palouse before continuing on their trip. This they did, and much to the young bachelor's pleasure, they decided to settle there.

Jennie's parents, Captain James Ewart and his wife Jannette, settled their family south of Colfax in a settlement near Union Flats. Captain Ewart, originally a native of Scotland as was his wife, emigrated to the United States in 1851 where he distinguished himself through service in the Second Illinois Cavalry during the Civil War and later in fighting against the Apache Indians. These achievements, along with his work as postmaster, gained him a respected niche in the small community which later bore his name—Ewartsville.

In 1873 Jennie Ewart and James Perkins were wed in the first such ceremony held in Colfax. Many people attended the event some of whom had spent part of the night traveling from as far as twenty miles away. The ceremony was conducted at noon on April 6, in the town's original schoolhouse located near the corner of Spring and Mill Streets. Doctor B. D. Bunnell was best man, while Nattie Taber, the daughter of a wealthy farmer, stood as bridesmaid for Sarah.

It was possibly the result of this union that altered the name of the town. The community was originally named Belleville, honoring, as one source claims, Perkins' birthplace, Belle Plaine, Illinois. However, Sarah Perkins claimed her husband named it for a former sweetheart. With his increasing attraction to Sarah Ewart, Perkins apparently decided it was time to let the past be forgotten and renamed the town in honor of

Ulysses S. Grant's first vice president, Schuyler Colfax. Just when the change of names occurred remains uncertain, but presumably it was before the wedding.

After the ceremony, the Perkins remained at Colfax making their home in the log cabin. It was here on April 18, 1874 that their first child Minnie was born.²

The Perkins saw to it that Minnie and later her sisters and brother had a strong religious background, for they were devout Christians. In 1877, James and Sarah were among the ten charter members of the Plymouth Congregational Church, which was originally located where Eells Park now stands. Thus began a ninety-three year relationship between the family and the church, involving three generations.

After Perkins had sold his interest in the sawmill, he farmed at least part of his landholdings, that which is now known as Brown's addition. As for the northeast side, its use is unknown. It is possible he may have farmed it in the first few years after he arrived in the valley, but with the influx of settlers the land was used for commercial and residential lots. Perkins' close friend Hezekiah Hollingsworth, along with Julia Ann Cox and James Nosler, formed the Colfax Town Company on September 5, 1873 for the purpose of selling lots and subdivisions. Perkins possibly sold his land through his company.

By 1880, the town's population was 445 and its appearance had changed from that of a frontier outpost to an established community. It boasted the astounding number of fifty businesses ranging from four agricultural stores to a pair of restaurants to an upholstering shop. With such a diversity of city enterprises, many citizens discussed the possibility of incorporation for their town. The issue was finally settled at the elections the following year. On January 14, 1879, the voters of Colfax chose to incorporate by a vote of 77 to 27 with James Ewart (who had moved to town from Ewartsville) winning the mayor's role. Elected with him were two sons-in-law, James Perkins as a councilman and Leon Kuhn (who married Sarah Perkins' sister, Frances) filling the treasurer's position. With this important event, the community was officially confirmed as a secure settlement, capable of caring for its citizens through a variety of government services.

The new councilman was a Republican and had long been active in politics. In 1872, he hosted his party's first convention in his log cabin. With election to the city council, he began a long and illustrious political service to his town, which later extended to the state and national levels. Perkins' ability in city government was so exceptional that in a nine-year span he was elected mayor four times,³ once without a single vote being cast in opposition.

At the regional level, Perkins was equally as active. Not only was he a territorial committee member, but he also served as a delegate to the conventions and as chairman to the Republican Central Committee of the county. His hard work was in time noticed by Republicans at the state level. In addition to serving as a delegate at several national conventions, Perkins was asked to allow his name to be nominated as a candidate for governor, and later, for the office of state senator, but both times he declined.

2. Whether she was the first white child born in Colfax is controversial. It is rumored that in the 1940's a diary was discovered in Spokane belonging to the Nosler family who lived in Colfax during the 1870's. The journal noted the birth of a girl in November, 1873, seven months before Minnie's birth. However, the Nosler child died in early childhood and no firm proof is available on the issue.

3. Roy Chatters' article on Mr. Perkins in the *Bunchgrass Historian*, Spring, 1973, contends Perkins was elected mayor five times: 1882-1885 and again in 1891.

Having prospered sufficiently from farming, the sale of his interest in the sawmill and the northeast section of land, Perkins purchased the Bank of Colfax from C. G. Linnington in 1881. As president of the bank the new owner was meticulous. Before any loan was made, he visited the prospective client's home to see the condition of the residence and the premises. If, for example, the individual was a farmer, Perkins studied how the agricultural equipment was kept. Should he see tools and machinery lying about and left unprotected, the loan was not granted. He reasoned that if the person was not responsible enough to protect his possessions, he certainly was not reliable for a credit risk. As a result of his business acumen, the bank, which also offered interest on time deposits, trade on Exchange, and fire insurance, became soundly established in the Colfax community.

The Bank of Colfax had a friendly rivalry with the Second State Bank of Colfax, whose officers were Alfred Coolidge, president, and Aaron Kuhn, vice-president. Coolidge was the brother-in-law of Charles Scriber, who in turn, was the son-in-law of James Perkins, having married his daughter Myrtle. As for Kuhn, he was related to both Coolidge and Perkins through his brother Leon's wedding to Francis Ewart, Sarah's sister. Later, Scriber also worked at his brother-in-law's bank, making Colfax banking an inter-family business. Competition between the two organizations for clientele, although keen, must have been friendly, providing lively conversation at family get-togethers.

Another family enterprise between Perkins and his in-laws was the organization and development of railways in Washington and Idaho.

The Bank of Colfax president probably began his association with the railroads in 1879. That year he represented the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company (which later became part of the Union Pacific) as a real estate agent. He also served in the same capacity for the Northern Pacific line, starting from the time the company began selling acreage after receiving their land grant in the early 1880's.

These endeavors apparently brought further prosperity, for several years later he was one of the incorporators of the Washington and Idaho Railroad, which played an important role in developing the mineral and agricultural resources of the two states.

Of these railroads, only the Union Pacific went through Colfax. Later it was augmented by the addition of service from the Spokane and Inland Electric Railway.

While Perkins' finances were growing so was his family. After Minnie's birth, three more children arrived. Myrtle was born in 1875, followed by Stella four years later. In 1884, the family's last child and only son, Sumner, was born. Six people now occupied the cabin and living space was at a premium. Perkins decided that a more spacious home was necessary and sometime between 1884 and 1886, a huge, two-story house with gingerbread scrollwork and four balconies was constructed near the cabin.

Civic work was important to the Perkins'. In 1871, with the organization of the county, a school board was set up and James Perkins was installed as clerk. How long he served in the position is unknown, but his service must have been commendable, for ten years later the Baptist-run Colfax Academy asked him to serve as chairman of the board of directors even though he was not a member of that denomination.

In 1885, the Colfax Academy changed the articles of incorporation making the institution a college. It was intended as the first step toward making Colfax the center of education in the Palouse. However, not only administrative and financial problems plagued the young college, but in 1891, sixteen miles away in Pullman, a land grant school was being created with which Colfax College simply could not compete.

Perkins, who had devoted twenty years to the school, and the board made the sad decision to disincorporate and pay off their debts during 1882.

After the demise of the school, Perkins continued to work at the Bank of Colfax in the position as president until he was about seventy-one. Between 1912-1913, after thirty-one years in the business, he decided to retire and sold his stock in the organization.



—Whitman County Historical Society

This 1922 photograph shows Jim and Louie Perkins playing in a front yard sandbox. Notice in the background the original stone fence and iron-work on the gate.

Once retired from the bank, he spent his time working at an independent firm he owned, J. A. Perkins & Co. The business was an insurance, loan, and real estate organization. It handled farm loans, fire and casualty policies. The company also offered the service of assisting people interested in purchasing farms or selling land. When he was not working on company business, he used the office for work as a Notary Public, a position he had held since 1877. The workload was undoubtedly exhausting, but he kept the pace for the following eight years. By doing so, he continued his long involvement in developing the town which was now approaching a half-century since the time of its founding.

The Perkins family was keenly anticipating the upcoming summer of 1920. It marked the fiftieth anniversary of James Perkins' arrival in the valley and the activities planned for the anniversary were expected to be a time of celebration and happiness. However, when the day arrived, it proved bittersweet for the family, overcast with sadness and grief.

In early April, Stella died unexpectedly of post-operative complications in Spokane. Before the Perkins had a chance to recover from Stella's loss, seven weeks later death claimed another member.

James Perkins was actively involved in the Pioneers Association, an organization concerned with life on the frontier and the roles settlers played in the development of the area. He was looking forward to the festivities they were planning in honor of the fiftieth year since his arrival. He had planned to address the crowd with his grandson, James Allen Jr., who would tell the crowd that his Grandfather would speak at the centennial anniversary. Sadly, the gathering was not to hear him, for late in the evening of June 1, James Allen Perkins died in the dignified manner with which he had lived. In his obituary, the *Colfax Commoner* eloquently eulogized him, saying:

Up until the very hour of his death, he conducted his own business and spent a full day at the office . . . He belonged to that class of pioneers who believed labor was honorable, and believed that every one should be engaged in some line of employment.

The commentary was an accurate summation of this humble man whose efforts were, more than those of anybody else, responsible for the existence of the town to whom the title "Father of Colfax" was henceforth bestowed. Such was an appropriate title for a talented individual.

The second fifty years of the Perkins's involvement with Colfax was not as extensive, but was still significant. Through their civic efforts, Sumner and Ethel Perkins made a large contribution to the community's improvement and well-being. Sumner's work on the school board was a strong force for the amelioration of education and the addition of facilities for such purposes. In athletics, the time and effort he donated, especially with the swim team, enabled Colfax students to compete in a sport they otherwise may have missed. Ethel's contributions in blood donation drives and fund raising work for the city swimming pool were important in improving the town's hospital and recreation facilities.

After Sumner's death in 1959, the Perkins's involvement with their town began to quietly recede. Only Ethel remained of the family and advancing age increasingly restricted her activities. With the passage of time, relationship of the significance of the Perkins' to Colfax slowly faded in the memory of many citizens. For these people the family's importance remained unnoticed until the *Colfax Gazette* pointed out their niche in the city's history by announcing Ethel's passing on July 11, 1970—One-hundred years and a day from the time her father-in-law first set foot in the valley.



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America needs
your help.

—Courtesy of Siegfried Vogt

Among the underground publications spawned by the student strike was **Scorn**, edited by Wally Powers. Like other papers of its kind, **Scorn** advocated civil rights and was strongly opposed to the war in Vietnam.

Rebellion in the Palouse: The Student Strike at Washington State University, May 1970

by
Mark T. Fiege

During the 1960s America's colleges and universities were plunged into turmoil as students expressed their concerns over civil rights, freedom of speech, military conscription, and the Vietnam war. Some demanded a greater roll in university governance and policy making. Others, such as the Students for a Democratic Society, were revolutionary in their rejection of the economic order upon which the nation rested. Throughout the decade, discontent seethed on the campuses, often boiling over into open rebellion. Disorders shook some of the most prestigious universities in the country.

The tumultuous sixties were climaxed by the events of May 1970, following President Richard Nixon's announcement that American forces had invaded Cambodia, and by the killing and wounding of students at Kent State University in Ohio and at Jackson State College in Mississippi. That month an unprecedented wave of protest swept the nation's campuses. Students at over one-half (approximately 1,350) of all colleges and universities reacted in some way to Cambodia, Kent, and Jackson, with strikes occurring at approximately 350 institutions. Washington State University, an over-whelmingly white school, experienced a nine-day strike during this time that concerned the issue of racism.¹

Located in the windswept wheatfields of the Palouse region, Washington State University had remained relatively calm during the 1960s. The local chapter of

¹This was not the first strike to occur at WSU. In 1936, three thousand students, led by the "Students Liberty Association," a coalition of fraternities, sororities, and campus organizations, went on strike, protesting what they felt were stifling social rules. In one inflammatory incident, Dean of Women Anne Fertig supposedly called the house mother of the Pi Beta Phi Sorority demanding that a davenport on a side porch be taken inside because it was "suggestive and raised the biological impulse." In addition to changes in the college social rules, students demanded more student and faculty control, Wednesday night mixers and desserts, new closing hours, an end to compulsory attendance, and "abolition of ultra-conservative dictatorial administrative policies." The protest proved itself to be all-American and underlain by the ideology of mom and apple pie when ROTC band members led a demonstration through campus, ending with a stirring rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" with "paraders and onlookers standing rigidly at attention, with right hand over their hearts." In response to President E. O. Holland's request that parents be consulted before striking, students carried signs reading "mom says yes," and "my mom's for it," in a show of parental approval. After negotiations, President Holland and the administration submitted to the demands. Triumphant students rang the victory bell atop College Hall in approval **Washington State Evergreen**, May 4, 6, 8, 1936; *Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections: Student Strike Material*, May 4-8, 1936, cage no. WSU 172. Student rebellions are nothing new in American history, and have happened for a variety of reasons. For concise discussions of this phenomena, see: David F. Allmendinger, Jr., "The Dangers of Ante-Bellum Student Life," **Journal of Social History** 7 (Fall 1973): 75-85; Phillip G. Altbach and Patti Peterson, "Before Berkeley: Historical Perspectives on American Student Activism," **Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science** 395 (May 1971): 1-14; and Morris Bishop, "The Lower Depths of Higher Education," **American Heritage** 21 (December 1969): 27-63.

Students for a Democratic Society and various peace organizations had staged small protests against the Vietnam war and the Reserve Officers' Training Corp (ROTC). In January of 1969 a fight in which gunshots were fired took place between members of the Black Student Union and the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity. The Vietnam war moratorium days in the fall had attracted a fair amount of attention, but interest waned as the semester wore on. A Student Senate poll revealed the moderate opinions of a significant segment of the campus population. Although a majority favored some sort of American withdrawal from the war, an even larger number supported the existence of ROTC at the school and were opposed to the university ever taking an official stand on controversial issues. All things considered, the campus was quiet. President Glenn Terrell predicted optimistically in the fall of 1969 that WSU would be safe from unrest in the coming year.

Terrell's prognosis, however, was not borne out by subsequent events. In October, fifty of seventy-five demonstrators, led by a left-wing political group, the Radical Union, occupied the Placement office in French Administration Building to protest ROTC recruitment at WSU. A shoving incident between two Radical Union members and an administrator ensued, ending in the arrest of the two students.² In March, a crowd of three hundred to four hundred gathered on the campus to protest the draft and the sale of non-union grapes. The assembled people then marched into downtown Pullman, held a rally, and listened to speeches. Some of the demonstrators invaded the local Safeway store, smashing and stomping the non-union grapes. On April 4, an arson fire destroyed the south stands of Rogers Field (now Martin Stadium).³ While speaking at the campus-wide Earth Day conference on April 22, Senator Henry Jackson was pelted with marshmallows by a group protesting his pro-war views. One student activist has described the atmosphere on the campus that spring as "tense."

On April 30 President Nixon announced the Cambodia incursion. The shootings at Kent State occurred on May 4. That night about four hundred students met at Rogers Field. They resolved to strike if the university administration did not cancel classes for one day in protest of the Cambodia invasion and send a telegram to Nixon deploring the use of the National Guard to quell disturbances. After a noon rally on the Compton Union Building (CUB) mall the next day, five hundred to eight hundred demonstrators occupied French Administration Building for nine hours in an attempt to get the administration to answer the demands. President Terrell assented after conferring with protest leaders, administration officials, and representatives of the Associated Students. He did not, however, commit the university to any authoritative position in regard to either Cambodia or the National Guard. A telegram sent to Nixon mentioned the "outrage and dismay on the part of a substantial segment of the campus at Washington State University." Terrell canceled classes for May 8, and plans were organized for a teach-in, at which members of the university community could discuss the war.

²Letters from Jerry Calvert to the author, 6 April 1982. The Radical Union was formerly the WSU chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society, but had dropped its national affiliation and changed its name in late September after the splintering of the SDS at its national convention. For a straight forward explanation of RU views, see Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections: Spark: A Radical Union compendium of Commie lies, sex and cheap thrills (VF no.2318-256); and *Evergreen*, 30 September 1969.

³*Evergreen*, 15 April 1970. Ralph Atkins, a Black activist, was arrested in connection with both the Safeway riot and the stadium fire. He eventually was convicted of incitement to riot during the Safeway incident, even though the prosecution could not sufficiently identify anyone else involved. Many Blacks pointed to this as further proof of the racist corruption of the judicial system. *Evergreen*, 21 October 1970.



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Frequent meetings, rallies, and teach-ins, such as this gathering in Reaney Park, just below the WSU Campus in Pullman, punctuated the activities accompanying the strike.

What student support existed for Terrell's decision, beyond the eight hundred or so demonstrators, is hard to discern. Opposition formed the next day. A petition drive collected 1,600 signatures opposed to the sending of the telegram and cancellation of classes. No doubt some students felt that a few had decided for the many. Eight hundred protestors may not have represented a "substantial segment" of the university population, but it does not take a majority for a violent confrontation. Only a minority of Kent State's twenty thousand students were present at the demonstration in which four were killed. President Terrell said that he made his decision "free of any threat of violence by the assembled students." However, the possibility that violence might erupt at WSU was probably on his mind when he stated that a teach-in would be "a far better way of letting off steam than through the destructive actions which have occurred on so many campuses." On May 8 classes were cancelled. Approximately 2,300 people attended the teach-in. A few professors held classes in defiance of Terrell's orders, but otherwise things went smoothly.⁴

In the shadow of Kent State occurred the deaths and wounding of black students at Jackson State College on May 14. In contrast to Kent, events at Jackson aroused little attention, either nationally or at WSU. Disturbed by the apathy of the university community, S. K. Tripathi, a student from India, organized a meeting at the off-campus Koinonia House, of members of the Black Students Union (BSU), MECHA (Chicano students), Radical Union, and other concerned faculty and students, including Dr. Johnetta Cole, the head of the Black Studies program.

⁴*Ibid.*, 8 May 70. Gary Eliassen, spring semester editor of the *Evergreen*, was shouted down by the audience while speaking at the teach-in. A former member of the rightist Young Americans for Freedom, Eliassen was an outspoken opponent to what went on at WSU that spring. He often took the brunt of much abuse for his views. Once, after publishing an editorial unpopular with certain segments of the university population, a mob burned him in effigy at a rally on the CUB mall. A bonfire was also made of undistributed copies of the newspaper containing the editorial. Interview with Gary Eliassen, 23 April 1982.

Minority students at Washington State numbered less than two hundred out of a total university population of over fifteen thousand. The school had never included a percentage of minorities comparable to their proportions in the rest of society. In order to bring minorities and “economically disadvantaged” whites to the campus and thereby eliminate the disparity, WSU instituted the Experimental Education Program in the fall of 1968. The first group of new students totaled approximately twenty-five, of which about twenty were black. Exact figures are unknown as the university did not keep accurate statistics on minority enrollment until the fall of 1973.

Once at WSU, minority students became frustrated with what they viewed as the racist nature of the university and its refusal or inability to deal with their needs. Efforts by black students and faculty to have a minority studies program established finally resulted in the creation of black Studies in the fall of 1969. However, continued attempts to get the school to expand minority enrollment, hire more black faculty, and provide adequate funding for the black Studies program had been rebuffed by the administration, according to Ernie “Stone” Thomas. Insensitivity on the part of advisers and faculty also discouraged many students. In some cases advisers attempted to dissuade blacks from preparing for professions not usually filled by blacks, such as law, or from pursuing higher education at all. At other times, some social science professors in their teaching minimized the importance of black culture institutions.

Many individual acts of racism directed against minorities on the university campus and within its environs further aggravated their predicament. At WSU these incidents had been perpetrated by students, as well as faculty and staff. The results of a survey, released by the university Human Relations Committee in January, found “ten to twenty prejudiced and discriminatory” white students for every black student, and depending upon the criteria used to determine a prejudicial act, the number “could be as high as fifty [students] or more.” The arrest and conviction of several black students, resulting from the shooting episode at the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity in 1969 and from the vandalism done at the Pullman Safeway store during the March 1970 protest, angered many blacks. In the spring of 1969, a group of students publicly demonstrated their grievances with the judicial system at Colfax, the Whitman county seat. Confronted by a hostile, threatening mob, the protesters narrowly escaped attack by finding refuge in a church. Conditions in and around the university, together with national events such as the Jackson State incident, provided the catalyst for minority groups and their allies to take action against what they felt was an intolerable situation for minority students.

After discussing the state of affairs at WSU, the coalition of participants in the Koinonia House meeting compiled a list of eleven demands they thought the university must agree to “as a minimum commitment against racism.” Briefly, the demands called for a reduction in law enforcement power on the campus, the extension of the university’s legal resources in aiding “Third World” students, the establishment of programs for dealing with racism, increased enrollment of minorities, additional support for minority studies programs, and the immediate removal of all non-union grapes from the campus.⁵

⁵The demands are described here in a little more detail: The disarming of campus police and ROTC, and the disavowing of violence on campus to disrupt demonstrators; the elimination of all plainclothes and undercover agents, and the ending of the compilation of faculty and student dossiers for political purposes (Some activists believe the FBI had placed agents on the WSU campus in order to infiltrate student political organizations. These individuals were supposedly quite vocal in advocating violence to achieve aims, and were identifiable by their fresh beards and unfamiliarity with student jargon; Interview with Ernie Thomas, 26 April 1982. A former member of MECHA maintains that an informer from ROTC kept dossiers, with the intention of passing them on to the FBI and CIA. The informer was discovered and confronted, and the dossiers destroyed. Interview with Margarita

Representatives of the Third World groups (BSU, MECHA) announced the demands at a noon rally held on the CUB mall the following Monday, May 18. They then presented them to President Terrell, the Board of Regents, the Faculty Executive Committee, and the Educational Policies Committee. The Third World organizations and their supporters were adamant that the demands be accepted. Copies distributed on campus included the statement that "an affirmative response by university authorities must be forthcoming by NOON, MAY 22." The statement made no mention about what would happen if the administration did not comply.

Opponents to the demands immediately came to the fore. An organization called the "Rational Alternative" circulated a petition exhorting the university administration not to "capitulate to any non-negotiable demands placed upon it by factions." Another group, the "University Committee for Rationality," maintained that no "rational" decision concerning the demands could be reached, either by May 22, or by the end of the semester. On Wednesday, May 20, Board of Regents President Harold A. Romberg declared: "I feel that both the university community and the board members I have talked with consider that these demands do not fall within the purview of the university to consider." Limited support came from the Student Senate, which took it upon itself to rewrite part of the demands while endorsing some and rejecting others.

On Friday, May 22, after consulting several administrative bodies, Terrell replied to the demands in a detailed, three-page public letter. In it he stated the university's previous commitment to developing and maintaining "programs designed to attend to the needs of the minority groups on campus" citing specifically the Experimental Education Program and the American Minorities Studies program. He further went on to answer point-by-point each of the eleven demands, explaining that the university would not consider some of them; that others were already being taken care of by existing policies and committees; and that the university could not accede to the rest, either because it did not have the power to do so, or because the charges implicit in some of the demands were untrue. Terrell's response was decidedly different from that given to the demonstrators who had occupied the administration building earlier in the month. In that instance he had faced a potentially volatile situation. In the case of the Third World organizations, Terrell had four days to analyze their demands and measure whatever student support existed for them. There was little pressure for an immediate solution, and no ultimatum delivered. Terrell and other administrators believed that they had been presented with a set of non-negotiable demands, which, in their view, the university could not agree to. Furthermore, it was possible that Terrell was under pressure from legislators, regents, or other interests, not to "capitulate," as some thought he had done before.

Terrell's response upset Third World organizations. The Black Students Union charged that by rejecting the "eleven minimal requirements . . . policy makers at the

Mendoza de Sugiyama, 22 March 1982. University administration officials may not have known of any of this, but some students thought they did.; the establishment of a review board of Third World people (non-white) to investigate law enforcement actions involving Third World people, both on and off campus (several people had been recently charged with crimes); the use of the university's legal and financial resources to present a constitutional challenge before the courts to determine the rights of Third World defendants to be tried in such a manner and place as will ensure a fair trial; the abolishment of the Disciplinary Board; the establishment of a Third World Board to work with the Publications Board in fighting racism through student publications; a mandatory ten-day racism workshop for all faculty, staff, and administration; the immediate hiring of three Third World admissions officers whose sole responsibility would be to accelerate recruiting of Third World students; the achievement of a racial balance of Third World people at the university proportional to their numbers in the U.S. population; the prevention of the loss of faculty members in the Black Studies Program, and more support for minority studies programs; and the immediate removal of all non-union grapes from the campus. Vogt, untitled circular.

university had given priority to the wishes of the most racist elements of the community.” Consequently, the BSU committed itself to work for “the gradual withdrawal of all black students, faculty and staff” from WSU, with the objective of placing them in other universities. In addition, the group promised to “discourage further recruitment” of black students to the university.

Behind the black students’ course of action was a strategy advocated by Ernie “Stone” Thomas, a BSU leader. Thomas reasoned that if the school was left without a minority population, it might become ineligible for certain types of federal government funds. The administration would then meet the demands rather than face such a situation. Although a good idea, university officials never responded to the scheme as the BSU hoped.

Threats against the lives of black students by some county residents also influenced the decision to leave Pullman. Rumor had it that a bounty had been placed on the lives of “Stone” Thomas and other BSU leaders. As a result, Thomas and his friends began carrying guns in self-defense. No communities of blacks existed in the Palouse. The fear and alienation felt by many blacks at that time was reflected in the statement of one student, who said:

I really feel paranoid, like man, if someone started shooting, where in the hell do you find a place to hide? In a wheat field? We’re completely surrounded by right-wing crackers here. Things around here are really getting heavy. If something happens, I’ve got a feeling people will really start shooting if something gets started. Like man, they won’t care who you are, they’ll only care what color you are.⁶

The BSU decision to leave the university did not bring the issue of the eleven demands to a close. Instead, it induced a flurry of activity in support of the BSU, especially on the part of white students and faculty. A group of “shocked” white students converged on French Administration Building to discuss the BSU withdrawal with Terrell. Twenty-five filled out withdrawal forms as a gesture of solidarity with the blacks. Professors Robert Cole and Paul Brians met with Terrell for an hour, trying to persuade him to reconsider the administration’s position. At 4:30 p.m., approximately four hundred demonstrators staged a sit-in on Stadium Way in front of the administration building blocking traffic for an hour and a half. Students then talked with halted motorists about the BSU decision. One individual threatened to drive his car into the massed people; a demonstrator, fearing for the safety of the crowd, smashed the car’s windshield.⁷

After hearing the BSU plans for leaving WSU, two economics professors, John Donnelly and Lane Rawlins, arranged an afternoon meeting in Todd Hall of interested faculty and students. Several proposals were made for actions whites might make in support of the Third World groups and their demands. A decision was eventually made to strike, and a number of faculty and students proceeded to the Koinonia House to organize details.

That evening at 7:30 p.m. approximately eight hundred people filled the CUB auditorium and ratified the strike proposal by voice-vote. The assembled students and faculty selected a steering committee, called the “Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism,” to coordinate activities. The group chose Nola Cross, a former editor of the *Evergreen*, as chair primarily because of her softspoken manner and non-affiliation

⁶Letter from Nola Hitchcock Cross to the author, 5 May 1982; *Evergreen*, 21 May 1970.

⁷According to Paul Brians, the demonstrator was Don Smith, who earlier had been convicted of assault in the French Administration Building shooting incident. Tape-recorded interview with Paul Brians, 6 April 1982, conducted by William F. Wilbert and loaned to the author for research purposes.



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“At 4:30 on May 22, approximately four hundred demonstrators staged a sit-in on Stadium Way in front of the Administration Building, blocking traffic for an hour and a half.”

with any political faction.⁸ They also approved plans to picket and distribute leaflets outside of classroom buildings, President Terrell’s house, the CUB, and the bookstore. An economic boycott of all Pullman and Colfax businesses not displaying a sign declaring opposition to racism was authorized because the strikers felt that merchants “should also admit to the guilt of the racism which existed in the Palouse country.” In order to circumvent local stores, carpools were organized for shopping in Moscow. The steering committee itself put forth no independent demands, but instead intended the strike to be purely a supportive action, to “force the administration . . . into meaningful negotiations with the Third World groups.” They planned to continue to strike until the Third World students felt “satisfied with the actions taken” on the part of the administration.

The strike vote and the measures adopted at the May 22 meeting were important because they represented a growing sympathy on the part of a considerable portion of the university population for the aims of the Third World organizations. The impetus behind the strike proposal came not only from radical and established activist groups, but also from an amorphous body of concerned faculty and students not usually associated with any particular organization.

On Sunday, May 24, President Terrell met with representatives of BSU, MECHA, and the Native American Student Association in a heated encounter. Neither side yielded their position, and after two hours of unproductive discussion the students walked out of the meeting. That evening Terrell spoke on local radio and television stations calling the strike an unconstructive action. He reaffirmed his opposition to the demands, but took a more conciliatory stand by offering instead to appoint for himself a special minority relations adviser.

Support for the strike continued to grow. Protesters picketed buildings and distributed leaflets in a “massive” campaign. On Monday three thousand people

⁸Letter from Gary Cross to the author, spring 1982. Nola Cross was fall semester (1969-1970) editor of the *Evergreen* and was well-known for her opposition to racism, sexism, and the Vietnam war. Gary Cross was her husband, and also active in the student movement.

crowded into Bohler gymnasium and voted to continue strike activities. They also approved plans for small groups to enter offices and classrooms with the instructor's permission to talk about the strike, and for students to talk with Pullman residents. Nola Cross urged the rallied students to talk with "the other twelve thousand who are not striking." Three thousand persons represented about twenty percent of the university population. Most of "the other twelve thousand" never joined, or at least never attended strike meetings. It is impossible to identify how many students were actually opposed to the strike, or how many just did not care to be involved.

Rumors circulated on campus that the National Guard had been called, and that vigilante bands made up of Whitman county residents (one of them called the "La Crosse Nightriders") planned to break the strike by assassinating its leaders. A history graduate student, Dave Pflug, drew upon his previous experience with student unrest at Cornell University, and set up a "rumor clinic" in the CUB to answer telephone inquiries. The rumor about the National Guard was not true, but a tactical unit from the Washington State Patrol had flown to Colfax the previous Friday, and the Whitman County Sheriff's department was on alert in case of possible trouble. It was never confirmed whether there were vigilantes, but men in pickup and panel trucks, carrying guns and chains, did drive onto the campus.

Also on Monday, the Faculty Executive Committee released the results of a poll of forty-eight academic departments conducted to ascertain support for the continuation of the academic schedule. Of these, thirty-seven voted to complete courses and adhere to the examination schedule and grading system. The poll did not account for individual professors, many of whom actively supported the strike. Eleven departments voted to continue the academic program, "endorsing varying degrees of dissent." Social science disciplines were generally more supportive of the strike. For example, the Psychology department teaching assistants and professors voted to donate three days of their salaries to the Experimental Education Program and to hold racism workshops in lieu of regular scheduled classes.

Terrell, faced with mounting opposition, softened his position somewhat. In an open letter published in the *Evergreen* on Wednesday, May 26, he admitted that racism existed at WSU, that he personally opposed it, and that the administration was "dedicated to the struggle to eliminate it." Terrell further announced the elimination of the Human Relations Committee and the appointment of an Assistant to the President for Minority Affairs, who would work with a Minority Advisory Council in fighting racism at the school.

Terrell's plans, however, did not win favor with the Third World students, who still insisted that their demands be met. They accused Terrell and the administration of claiming undue responsibility for minorities studies programs. They felt that his plans placed the burden of eliminating racism on minority people, when it should rest with the administration. The group, however, complimented the President on his "attempt, if sincere, to improve the campus environment for minority people."

From 3,500 to 4,000 students and faculty attended the third strike meeting, held at Bohler gym the night of May 27. Steering Committee leaders announced plans for a march through classroom building corridors. Marguerita Sugiyama, leader of MECHA, asked approval for a measure to rally outside a Resident Instructional Staff meeting the next day, at which the proposed Chicano Studies Program was to be considered for ratification. The assembly responded to her request with a standing ovation. After the meeting, a throng of from 2,000 to 2,500 swarmed out of the gym and



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“Support for the strike continued to grow. Protesters picketed buildings and distributed leaflets in a ‘massive campaign.’ ”

rallied in front of the President’s home. Terrell came outside and spoke to the crowd reiterating his commitment to improve conditions for minorities at WSU. He announced that he would confer the next day with leaders of the Third World organizations, and said that his power to deal with any problem was limited by the faculty, academic departments, taxpayers, legislators, Regents, and students.

On Thursday, May 28, approximately one thousand students marched through campus to the administration building, but dispersed at 2:00 p.m. when it was announced that BSU and MECHA would not meet with Terrell as planned. Protesters then moved to the CUB auditorium, where with little debate, the Resident Instructional Staff overwhelmingly approved the Chicano Studies Program.

Aware that the end of the semester was near, the steering committee determined that it would be impossible to continue the strike past finals week and into the summer. In a last effort to see the eleven demands resolved, several new, more extreme measures were adopted at the last strike meeting. These included a mass book check-out at Holland Library and a plan for strikers to follow President Terrell twenty-four hours a day. But the new measures were not enacted as the Third World students compromised with Terrell and other administrators the next day, May 29.

After more negotiations, the consensus among the Third World groups was that Terrell had made satisfactory concessions to the demands. Knowing that strike support for their cause would not continue into the summer, they decided to accept what Terrell offered. The agreement resembled the proposals Terrell presented the previous Wednesday, May 27: appointment by the President, in consultation with minority organizations, of a special assistant for minority affairs, to work with a minority council in initiating anti-racist programs at WSU; racism workshops involving students, faculty, staff, and townspeople to be held the following fall; and hiring of minority students by the Admissions office to assist in recruitment. Also, the school was pledged to do all that it legally could to cooperate with the State Board Against Discrimination in fighting racism.

On Monday, June 1, the Resident Instructional Staff voted to allow students either to take final exams or receive course grades through May 25. Students had the option of withdrawing or having professors assign an "S" grade. At the end of the meeting, President Terrell was given a vote of confidence by the assembled faculty.

With the compromise agreements, the strike ended. The Third World groups were satisfied, and the BSU remained at Washington State. Students took their grades and fled the Palouse for the summer.

May activities at WSU aroused public concern in Whitman County and eastern Washington. People felt that the university had collapsed at the hands of a small group of vocal, violence-prone demonstrators. In July, over five hundred people met at the fairgrounds in Colfax to hear legislators and others voice their disapproval of the administration, students, and faculty. Largely in response to the unrest at WSU, State Senator Sam Guess of Spokane introduced a bill in the legislature in February of 1971 establishing rules for colleges and universities which would supposedly prevent further disruption of state institutions by a "militant, vocal minority."⁹

Senator Guess's bill reflected a misunderstanding on the part of many people of conditions at the school. To be sure, the Third World organizations were militant, vocal, and a minority. Members of these groups, however, believed that the university had fostered the level of militancy by inattention to their needs. Although a few individuals advocated violence, and were prepared for it, none of the Third World students or the steering committee sanctioned such behavior. As one leader stated, to advocate violent methods would have been to "lose everything" that the students were working for. Ernie Thomas and others reportedly had carried handguns only in response to threats of violence made against them. As support for the Third World organizations grew, it became impossible for Terrell and the administration to ignore what was happening. To have taken a stronger stand against the strike could have been to invite a serious confrontation. Instead, Terrell tried to "defuse" a potentially explosive situation by negotiating with demonstrators.

The strike was not original. To a large extent, WSU's experience mirrored that of many other institutions. Minority students presenting "demands" to the administration, followed by a strike or protest, fit a typical pattern. What made the strike at Washington State somewhat unique at the time, perhaps, were the causes behind the strike itself. During May 1970 Kent State captured the attention of the nation and was the focus of most student unrest. Likewise, Kent received more notoriety at WSU than the deaths at Jackson. However, as a result of a combination of factors, the subsequent strike was not directly related to Kent, but to minority students' grievances over racism at the university and in the local community.

Perceptions of discrimination and outright bigotry at the school and in Whitman county made life uncomfortable, if not intolerable, for many minority people. National events such as Jackson State provided the stimulus and opportunity for a politically active nucleus of Blacks and Chicanos to openly seek recourse to the injustices done them. Conjoined with this were the attitudes of a significant portion of the university population. In any campus unrest of the later 1960s and early 1970s all of the issues—student power, racism, the draft, the war—became inextricably linked,

⁹*Washington State Legislature, Senate Bills, No. 518. An Act relating to higher education; and declaring an emergency; Senate Journal, 42nd sess., p. 2135. The bill established broad rules prohibiting, among other things, "conduct which . . . obstructs or disrupts teaching or freedom of movement" on the campus. Faculty would be subject to disciplinary action for "unauthorized dismissal" of classes, and for making public statements "denouncing the college or university or any of its administrators." The bill never left committee.*

whether consciously or not, in the minds of the people involved. For many students and faculty, both nationwide and locally, May 1970 "was a month of moral indignation," caused by the war, and then Kent State. The BSU decision to withdraw added to this indignation, and was thus decisive in bringing about a strike. As one former activist has stated: "Minorities leaving the university under a cloud of racism was unacceptable to the moral and political sensibilities of thousands of WSU faculty and students in 1970."

As a result of the strike, the university made important steps toward establishing a hospitable environment for minority students. Besides the strike agreements, several other changes were made in university policy and procedure. In the fall of 1970 the Board of regents approved alterations to the conduct code prohibiting discrimination by faculty, staff, and students. President Terrell announced the establishment of a University Council—to include equal numbers of students, faculty, and administrators—and a University Ombudsman, in order to provide mediation between disputing students and administrative groups.

The first racism workshop in October 1970 featured Charles Hurst, a leading proponent of Black Studies and President of Malcom X College in Chicago. The affair was almost halted when Whitman County Superior Court Judge Robert A. Denoo issue a temporary restraining order at the request of two student petitioners from WSU who felt that Terrell was without right in cancelling classes in favor of the workshop. But the State Supreme Court overruled the order in time for the workshop to begin. Five thousand people filled Bohler gym to hear Hurst speak.

Largely due to reforms won during the 1960s and after the May 1970 demonstrations, students activism collapsed on the nation's campuses, and WSU was no exception. A new generation of students arrived, bringing with them the political apathy that characterized the 1970's.

Chronology of Events at WSU, May 1970

- April 30 Nixon announces invasion of Cambodia
- May 4 Kent State
- May 5 Demonstration at French Administration Building; Terrell cancels classes for a teach-in May 8.
- May 8 Teach-in
- May 14 Jackson State
- May 16 Students meet at Koinonia House to discuss Jackson State and racism.
- May 18 Eleven demands presented to Terrell and administration by BSU (Black students) and MECHA (Chicano students).
- May 22 Terrell rejects the eleven demands; BSU plan to withdraw from the university announced.
4:30 p.m.—400 demonstrators stage sit-in on Stadium Way
7:30 p.m.—800 students and faculty vote for strike and boycott; strike steering committee selected.
- May 24 Terrell meets with representatives of "Third World" organizations.
- May 25 3000 meet in Bohler gym, vote to continue the strike.
- May 27 Terrell comes out with open letter outlining his position and proposals, counter to the eleven demands.
- May 27 3500 to 4000 attend meeting in Bohler gym.
- May 28 Chicano Studies approved; last strike meeting.
- May 29 Students meet with Terrell again; compromise and final solution agreed upon; strike ends.

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—Courtesy of Siegfried Vogt

Among the numerous underground publications, including *Spark*, *The Three Forks Free Press*, and *Scorn*, *Burgerville Blues* proved to be one of the more radical and openly Marxist.

Political Activities During The 1970 Student Strike:

Three Recollections

by William F. Wilbert

The strike against racism at WSU in May of 1970 was a traumatic experience for everyone involved: students, teachers, administrators, and local residents. I was a senior then, just about to get a degree in English. I remember in late May coming back from a camping trip in Hell's Canyon with several architecture students. We were gone only about three days. Before we left there had been scattered demonstrations against the bombing in Cambodia and a lot of anguish over Kent State. By the time we got back to campus it seemed like everything had changed. Suddenly racism was the big issue and the entire campus was stirring like never before.

I supported the strike, but I was only a face in the crowd. I knew a couple of people who professed radical politics, but most of my fellow strikers were just like me: dedicated to rather old-fashioned American values. We believed in democracy, the power of the people, and a sense of fair play. We knew, beyond question, that racism had no place in institutions of higher learning. Nobody, not even the most thick-witted reactionary, defended racism. The strike was almost a religious crusade to eradicate an institutional evil. We believed that if we had the courage to point out what was wrong, the administration would respond by inaugurating a lasting and equitable change. It seemed as simple as that.

I recall that some of us made a point of confronting our professors at the end of the Spring semester. At the last minute the Steering Committee pressured the administration into allowing striking students to request a "satisfactory" grade. I was taking a class in German literature. At mid-term I had an "A" or a "B", but I wanted to make it clear that I was a striker by asking for an "S".

My professor was a tall, forceful native German and was acting chairman of the department. In my eyes he was the epitome of the Establishment—cold, distant, conservative. He spoke with a slight accent in rumbling, authoritative tones and greeted me with gracious Old World manners as I very nervously entered his office. He knew why I was there and listened quietly as I stammered out the importance of my mission. When I finished he stated gently that he respected my position and would gladly grant whatever grade I desired. He wanted to know what I thought of his course and we engaged in a short chat about the merits of this or that famous writer. I confessed that I had not gotten around to reading Thomas Mann. He hoped that one day I would. Then he stood up, shook my hand, and gave me a look that seemed to express infinite wisdom. "I think," he said, "I know something of what you are going through. We had to deal with Hitler, you know. Everything that smacks of totalitarianism and the secret police is absolutely abhorrent to me. It must be resisted."

I walked out of his office feeling small and frail. The business of fighting evil had been going on a long time. Things did not seem quite so simple anymore, and it was very hard to find the villains . . . I often wonder how other people remember those days. Not long ago I recorded conversations with Paul Briens, an assistant professor of English during the strike, and Randi Szabo who came to WSU in the Fall of 1969 as a freshman. Paul has a long history as a political activist. He was born and raised in Petaluma, California. Both he and his elder sister participated in the Civil Rights movement in the early sixties with considerable encouragement from their church which, Paul recalls, "was very politically oriented." In graduate school at Indiana University, Bloomington, he was editor of a "semi-underground" radical newspaper opposed to the Vietnam War. When he first came to Pullman he joined the Pullman's Citizens Against the War and served as a draft Counselor. In 1968 he became a member of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), but disaffiliated from that organization because of his staunch opposition to "armed

Free the



WSU
4

MOBILIZE AGAINST RACIAL OPPRESSION IN PULLMAN!!!!

FRIDAY, MAY 29
WHITMAN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, COLFAX, WN.

—Courtesy of Siegfried Vogt

Pamphlets, handouts, and fliers during the strike, included this one demanding that Ernie Thomas, Alonzo Brown, Irving and Jim Newsome be freed from the Whitman County Jail. "The four have been maliciously and falsely charged with rape." the flier declared.

force" after the advent of the violently militant Weathermen at the SDS Chicago convention of 1969. He was one of the founders of WSU's Radical Union which opposed the Vietnam War and endorsed the strike against racism.

Paul describes the strike as "a very spontaneous, amazingly widespread phenomenon" initiated by middle-of-the-road altruistic students. The old-line radicals were more or less "burned out" when the strike began and had to "scramble to catch up" with the new movement.

When asked to give a portrait of a typical old-line radical student Paul remembered Don Smith:

I was the one who was responsible for getting Don Smith involved in radical politics, although if he hadn't met me he might have got involved otherwise. I was doing draft counselling in Pullman. I got trained as a draft counselor in the Fall of 1968 when I first arrived here and eventually became head of the ASWSU sponsored draft counselling center. Don came to me as a conscientious objector. He had moved here from Arizona, where he had tried to get C.O. status.

Arizona was one of those states, and there were several, which prided itself on never having granted a single conscientious objector status to anybody in their whole history. This was blatantly illegal, of course. Just outrageous, but that was the way things went in those days. Don had presented his case and it had been turned down and so I went through long and torturous sessions of counselling with him. I believe he got his board transferred up here: he went through a state appeal and got turned down again.

At that time one of the things counselors were telling students was, if they wanted to prove that they were really sincerely pacifists, they should get involved in the anti-war movement. So long as you weren't advocating any kind of violence, it could make a certain support for your case. So I recommended that Don get involved in SDS and he showed up for one or two meetings.

He was a very quiet, soft-spoken guy. He was not massive, but muscular and very gentle in his talk. He was one of the most quiet, sweetest, low-voiced people I've known and very shy basically. He wouldn't speak out very much at meetings.

Don was kind of bookish. He was very bright and studied a lot and once wrote a whole analysis of the economic sources of the Vietnam War for the Radical Union. It was something like twenty pages long and we couldn't afford to reproduce it, but it was masterful. Beautiful stuff.

Anyway, Don's various appeals to the draft board were unsuccessful and as time went on Don became more and more radical and militant and stopped being a conscientious objector because he was now committed to violent revolution. This happened with a lot of people during that period.

Don and I were delegates to the Chicago convention of the SDS in 1968. By then he had passed his first physical for the military, even though he had flat feet. Don wanted to make con-



—Paul Kies Collection. Manuscripts, Archives and Special Collection
Washington State University Libraries

“On April 4 an arson fire destroyed the south stands of Rogers Field (now Martin Stadium). While speaking at a campus-wide Earth Day conference on April 22, Senator Henry Jackson was pelted with marshmallows by a group protesting his pro-war views. One student activist has described the atmosphere on campus as tense.”

tact at the convention with the American Serviceman’s Union, which was the most militant anti-war union among soldiers. He joined the union, got a whole lot of materials from them, and intended to go into the military that Fall, since it was either that or jail. He wanted to be an anti-war worker within the army, which was the official position of the cool way to do it with the SDS. The idea was that if white-middle-class college students got themselves exempted or managed to get deferments or whatever, poor people and blacks and Chicanos would wind up taking their places. Therefore to endorse draft resistance was a racist attitude. I had a lot of real arguments with people over this and I had to acknowledge that there was some truth to it, but I also felt draft counselling was important. So there was a tie between the war and racism there. It was brought home to us constantly.

Anyway, Don got all fired up for this idea. He became transformed. When we got back to Pullman he was practically a fire-breather. He still didn’t say much, but he was really committed to doing something strong.

Don was at this demonstration, the sit-in at the Army recruiter’s. Everybody from the SDS made appointments with the recruiter, trying to fill up his appointment book so he couldn’t interview anybody else. Then we gathered and sang the Marine hymn at the top of our lungs so the recruiter couldn’t get any business done. At this period the Yippies had just come on and everybody was doing weird and wonderful things. The deal was to do things with a sense of humor.

That was the first demonstration, the sit-in. The next day some people went back. They had moved the recruiter and so on. So there was a confrontation with the placement center director; there was a pushing match in which the director tried to push them out, they claimed. The director claimed they assaulted him. He had his glasses in his pocket and when they shoved that caused a bruise on his chest and it came out he had a heart condition. This was aggravated assault, so both Joe Shock and Don Smith were arrested for assault. That Fall I think I had seven different friends in jail, most of them some way or another related to political activity.

Then in the Spring Don got involved in another demonstration, the sit-in on Stadium Way during the strike. As he told it to me, they were sitting in the crosswalk and this guy came up in a car and yelled at them. He told them he was going to run over everybody. He backed his car



—Paul Kies Collection. Manuscripts, Archives and Special Collections
Washington State University Libraries

This photo shows the extensive damage done to the old wooden bleachers at Rogers Field. Along with the burning of National Guard vehicles in Lewiston and the smashing of the Pullman Safeway store window this was one of the more violent acts associated with the student strike.

around and started heading for them. Don jumped up, grabbed a two-by-four which was part of a barricade that was lying there, and just threw it through the guy's window to try to stop him. Don's argument was that he was just defending the lives of the people that were in the crosswalk.

I was in the next crosswalk up and I didn't see it happen; didn't even know about it until I read it in the papers. In fact, most of the people I knew in the Radical Union were not around Don, so very few people who knew him saw him do it. At any rate, the guy in the car had the nerve to go and have Don arrested for assault. Our argument was that he had been assaulting people with a far more deadly weapon—his car—and there was no bodily injury caused. This was a ridiculous charge, but it was taken very, very seriously at the time. We tried to get the other guy charged and got nowhere. Don was charged instead and by this time he was a repeat offender. He was seen as this violent personality, which always struck me as very peculiar because he was so quiet and calm.

After he was tried and sentenced Don's lawyer urged that he should just be allowed to go in the Army instead of jail, and by now Don was eager to go, you see. He didn't tell his lawyer what he planned to do in there and the judge said, all right, he would suspend his sentence conditional to his going into the Army. So Don went up to the recruiting station when he was called. He had his duffle bag filled with all this propaganda that he was ready to hand out. He really was all set and excited about the idea. He had this last-minute physical examination, which is routine for people, where they screen out another ten percent that they've overlooked. The doctor took one look at him and said, You've got flat feet, and sent him home. Don was crushed. That was when he was informed that he'd have to go to jail. Instead he disappeared. He went on the lam and travelled back and forth across the country completely out of touch with everybody.

He told me later that he was in Arizona or Texas when he suddenly got a revelation that Jesus had told him that he should go back and turn himself in. Now this was early in 1971, the period in which the Jesus Freaks and the whole Jesus movement was really getting up a big head of steam. And the germ of what was going to become the Moral Majority was really getting started. The peculiar thing about it was that before this Don had never been religious at all. I think that period of prolonged isolation and fear for his life during that whole time had really done something to him. He had become radical through a socialization process, by being surrounded by nobody but radicals. They suddenly he was thrust back into Middle America and flopped back to his original values.

Anyway, so he called up Sheriff Humphries in Colfax and said, Do you still want me? The sheriff said, Sure, come on up. So he turned himself in. He spent a year in the Whitman County Jail. He wasn't sentenced to State prison. He became a model prisoner and I met him the day before he was released. I went up there for a trial of some friends. Don was a trustee at that time, cleaning out the place. I have been told by other people, and I don't know how reliable this is, that he became an informer and gave out a lot of names to the FBI. I know that he was thoroughly detested by everybody at that point. As soon as he left jail he disappeared and went out of this area. But he's so typical of that period. He starts out as a pacifist, goes on to become a militant revolutionary, then a reactionary Jesus Freak. It was really funny. Actually, sad but funny.

Randi Szabo (nee Brown) came to WSU from Great Falls, Montana. She was a resident of Palouse, Washington for many years and now lives in Newhall, California with her husband, Ron, and their two sons. In May of 1970 [she told me] I had just turned nineteen. I was a freshman majoring in Speech and Education. Except for a visit to the Seattle World's Fair, and a session two years before at WSU's High School Summer Camp, I'd never been out of Montana before coming to college. And I knew very little about the Pullman community. I do remember an awareness of a hostile split between the college and the local community. Merchants and landlords treated me rudely and, I thought, unfairly when they labeled me as a student, then later as a "hippie."

My first semester at college was heavily colored, if you'll excuse the usage, by my first encounters with bigotry, both black and white. I'd been selected to be the roommate of the only black girl in Regents Hill dormitory. The **only** black girl. This is integration? Her name was Arlana and she and her friends were women aggrieved at the way of the world. They lashed out at people like me, their competitors for whatever power women can hold. They taught me what racial hatred is, a new lesson I absorbed, like many others, with a liberal sense of guilt. I knew that the black/white problem was a sore one on campus, that administrators were trying to solve this problem. Twice I was called on to discuss my roommate's reasons for her chronic altercations with white girls. Her reasons were real. Of that I was convinced.

I guess WSU was probably no more racist than any other institution. But the black community in Pullman was isolated and outnumbered and largely unprovided for—socially, politically and in higher education. Tension built over small things, such as the intangible color-line in the CUB. And bigger things, like the establishment of a Black Studies department, tenure for a black woman professor, the authority of the black student association. And over nasty things, like white co-eds propositioned by a black drama professor or black men accused of rape.

I remember that racism was a national topic for all us budding young liberals. It was part of the whole picture of discontent with the Establishment. That is probably why the strike was about racism, as much as anything. The anti-war sentiment was there too. Nixon's escalation of the war in Cambodia, and especially the Kent State tragedy, galvanized the dissent on the WSU campus. Nixon was brilliant at inciting opposition.

During the strike I boycotted finals in all classes and flunked only one. My instructors, to the man, professed sympathy and gave me the grade I had earned by mid-term, even though I would willingly have accepted a more punitive attitude. I walked in demonstrations and painted signs upstairs in the Koinonia House. I participated in two sit-ins that I remember: one on Stadium Way near Vet Science, and in the take-over of the French Administration Building—"Fort French," we called it.

I don't remember much about the Steering Committee. I do remember the bullhorn wielders, Tyler Fleeson and Kerrigan Gray. They were radical activists, I suppose, but mainly just loud. I knew Ernest "Stone" Thomas, the BSA president. He was moderate, I'd say, but of firm conviction mainly on racism issues. He told me that a reward had been put out by the rednecks for the shooting of the black leaders of the strike. He was apparently convinced enough to hide out for several days, I think at the home of a black professor, Johnetta Cole. And I knew Joe Shock, too, and remember experiencing mild surprise that Lewiston, Idaho could breed a communist. There were some hard-core radicals and I believe at the time that agitators of national stature were involved, even in Pullman, and that FBI attention was directed at many of the radical participants.

What did the strike accomplish? Not much, I suppose. I can't remember now at all, but there were demands that the University did agree to, and token solutions having to do with black relations. The student involvement resulted in a sort of maturing phase for the University, but Whitman County didn't change. It just got over it.

Family History In Whitman County: The WCHS Oral History Collection

by
Linda Scott Lilles

Family history researchers in Whitman County are fortunate in that the Whitman County Historical Society has collected over 200 hours of taped interviews with 110 individuals. This collection of first-hand reminiscences provides autobiographical information by men and women who lived in the county during the time period from the turn of the century until 1930.

CETA employees Margot Knight and Kay Kenedy Turner interviewed these Whitman County elders during 1977 and 1978. Not only did they learn about family life, work, and social life of early settler families, but the narrators also expressed their philosophies, motivations, and values.

In 1980 the Society published *The Guide to the Whitman County, Washington Oral History Collection*, which may be purchased from Edith Erickson, 317 E. Thorn, Colfax, WA 99111. The *Guide* gives a one-page description of each interview and provides narrator, location, occupation, and maiden name indexes, which are very helpful. For more recent interviews, check the updated *Guide(s)* at the two locations where copies of the collection are deposited—the Whitman County Library and Instruction Media Services at Holland Library, Washington State University.

At both these locations you may listen to the interviews and examine the tape summaries and available transcripts. Tape summaries are subject indexes correlated to the tape recorder's digital counter numbers. They enable the researcher to quickly locate information on the tape. Approximately one-sixth of the interviews have been transcribed.

Family members of a narrator may purchase copies of an interview for \$10 per first tape in a series and \$7.00 per additional tape. Write to Richard Hamm, Oral History Committee Chair, Box 2401 College Station, Pullman, WA 99163. The Committee is currently conducting interviews and transcribing tapes on a volunteer basis. Researchers who wish to publish material based on the tapes must obtain permission from the Whitman County Historical Society's Board of Directors.

Family historians may decide to begin an oral history project. The Washington State University Oral History Office publishes a workshop packet for \$1.00 and will offer a morning workshop at the state conference in Spokane on May 13th. For further information contact Linda Lilles, OHO, Wilson 301, WSU, Pullman, WA 99164-4030.

Oral histories add to the sparse documentary evidence which most families possess. They offer glimpses into the everyday life of parents, grandparents, and neighbors. We learn about their perceptions, hopes, and fears, and in learning about them, we often learn about ourselves and our heritage. □

*The editors are sorry for the unfortunate typographical error that appeared in Linda Lilles's column in the December issue of the **Bunchgrass Historian**. The headline on her column should have read "Whitman County Genealogy," instead of Whitman County Geneology. The spelling of Genealogy with an "o" has long been considered obsolete. Our readers should know that she was in no way responsible for this egregious error; we apologize to her for any embarrassment that it caused.*

BURGERVILLE BLUES, vol. 1, no. 5

*No rights reserved. Any article may be reproduced by anybody without permission from anyone—AND DON'T FORGET TO SMASH THE STATE!

THE UNIVERSITY

The American University system works hand in hand with the Army, Navy, and Air Force to serve the power trips of the US ruling class. Besides training ROTC lieutenants, the Natural Science departments explore new weapons possibilities while the Social Sciences examine every aspect of foreign cultures to facilitate fascist CIA counter-insurgency against heroic revolutionary struggles by the people's of the world against US capitalist exploitation.

*As shown by this rhetoric, many of the strikers openly advocated revolution. These passages from the pages of the **Burgerville Blues** include an advertisement for the Industrial Workers of the World, a statement of editorial policy, and a distinctively Marxist interpretation of the role played by American universities.*

Preamble of the IWW

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system. . . .

. . . It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized not only for the every day struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

RIGHT ON!

Members of the I.U. 450



● Publications of Note ●

Sentinel of Silence: A Brief History of Fort Spokane

by David H. Chance

Pacific Northwest National Parks Association, 1981, 59 pp., \$4.75

On a grey snowy day early in 1983 I visited the site of old Fort Spokane. As I walked through the short grass with my wife and son I could easily imagine how this patch of ground must have appeared one hundred years ago. My imagination was greatly aided by the short history of Fort Spokane written by David H. Chance. In 59 pages Chance has encapsulated the life and times of the last frontier Army post to be established in the Pacific Northwest.

In response to the Bannock and Nez Perce Wars of the late 1870's the United States Army moved large numbers of troops into the Pacific Northwest. The Colville and Spokane Indians, because of their resistance to reservation settlement, were also viewed as a potential source of unrest. As a result Lt. Co. Henry C. Merriam recommended that a fort be established at the confluence of the Spokane and Columbia Rivers. This location was of strategic importance providing quick access to the various Indian groups in the area. Arriving in 1880 troops began building on the southern shore of the Spokane River, 60 miles west of the present day site of Spokane, Washington. Over the next eighteen years Fort Spokane grew from a few tents and log barracks to an installation of over 50 brick and frame buildings. During this period of time the

troops of Fort Spokane served as the local peace keeper, Indian agents, a source of income for the local inhabitants, and prepared for battle through endless daily drill and routine. Significantly, troops from Fort Spokane never fired a shot in anger. By 1898 Fort Spokane had served its purpose and the majority of its garrison was transferred to serve in the Spanish American War. After becoming an Indian school in 1899 and later serving as a tuberculosis sanatorium the fort was abandoned in 1929. Today little is left; fire and scavengers have reduced the fort to only a few buildings and open cellars.

Focusing on the people and their daily life, *Sentinel of Silence* fills in the open pits and fleshes out the framework of Fort Spokane. Well illustrated with photographs and anecdotes, this book is a must for those visiting Fort Spokane. Additionally, it is an important supplement to the study of the westward movement of the United States Army and the modernization of the Indians of the Pacific Northwest. □

—David L. Whelchel

Nordic Heritage Northwest

Kristine Veirs, editor. Photography by Scotty Sapiro and text by Nancy Hausauer, Seattle: The Writing Works, 1982. 157 pp. \$12.95. (Paperback)

Nordic Heritage Northwest has been published in association with the Nordic Heritage Museum of Seattle to commemorate the region's Scandinavian culture. The book is a tribute to the vitality of the heritage planted by immigrants from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden in the Pacific Northwest from the 1840's until World War I, which marked the virtual end of the exodus to America. It is an attractive introduction for anyone interested in the ethnic history of a group which has played a large role in the development of the coastal portions of this region.

One of the most useful features is a convenient sketch of the history of Scandinavian settlement, describing movements, communities, and causes of migration, as well as some of the struggles for livelihood. In the process the author depicts a characteristically hard-working, patient people who soon won full acceptance as Americans.

The extensive portfolio of black and white photographs satisfies most expectations. Through illustrations of Puget Sound shores, mountains, and farms the reader gains a graphic idea of the strong attraction which the immigrants felt to Western Washington because of its resemblance to the "old country." Portraits of "typical" Scandinavians in several instances present interesting characters but are ambiguous for lack of additional information on person or fame. Most interesting are scenes of characteristic occupations of the immigrants, such as fishing, farming, and lumbering. Most attractive are the still life pictures showing Scandinavian cuisine, Hardanger embroidery, and artifacts of immigration such as a Norwegian "America Chest," a "Finnish Bible," and a Swedish Dala painting.

Many of the illustrations are accompanied—as, indeed, is the historical sketch—by poetry of Tacoma's Arnfinn Bruflot, offered in both Norwegian and (apparently) English translation, as well as quotations from writers like Wilhelm Moberg and evocative diary jottings and musings of immigrants, all of which add insights into the difficulties and excitement of pioneer existence. The use of the term "Nordic," so predominant in this work, may be excellent for revealing a homogenizing of the various natural cultures by the descendants of the immigrants but tends to conceal the precise national origins of cultural institutions and artifacts. Such homogenization obscures the very real cultural differences which existed among the five peoples and distorts their histories.

The great bulk of contents is devoted to Seattle and the Puget Sound region. The map on page 21, however, shows a host of Scandinavian communities elsewhere ranging from Portland south to Roseburg and in the east to Pendleton, Palouse, and Spokane, but these places received virtually no attention in the work. The promise of the book is that the exhibits of the Nordic Heritage Museum in Seattle are rich in Scandinavian lore. The reader is urged to explore the museum at the earliest opportunity to enjoy its rich holdings and expand his knowledge at that time. □

—George A. Frykman

Counting Sheep: From Open Range to Agribusiness on the Columbia Plateau

by Alex Campbell McGregor

University of Washington Press, 1982, 482 pp., \$25.00

From a unique vantage point (he is the grandson of one of the principals), Alex McGregor tells the story of more than one hundred years of agricultural history in the Palouse region and on the Columbia Plateau. On one level is the story of four brothers, Archie, Peter, John, and Alex McGregor, and the business they built at Hooper in Whitman County. It is a chronicle of their successes, their failures, as well as the founding of the McGregor Land and Cattle Company that is told in *Counting Sheep*. Yet, as McGregor writes,

The experiences of the McGregors and their employees, as well as many other wheat growers, livestock raisers, and merchants of the region illustrate the process by which remote isolated lands of the semi-arid West became a vast farmland. These areas came to be part of a complex capital-intensive agriculture dependent on international markets, on chemicals manufactured from natural gas and petroleum, and on very expensive machinery that has displaced most of the labor force on American farms.

But it was almost literally on the backs of sheep that the McGregors rose to construct the corporate structure that today bears their name. First working for others, then acquiring sheep of their own, Archie and Peter engaged in the most ancient of systems for grazing sheep; this was the "... seasonal migration of men and sheep between mountain and lowland pastures. Similar patterns had been practiced for thousands of years by Celtic shepherds in Scotland and by Basque and Bernais herders in the Pyrenees." These brothers did well, increasing the size of their herd from less than a thousand to more than 22,000 in the years from 1885 to 1890.

Vascissitudes of market, the Panic of 1893, bad winters and the like, the reader must discover for himself or herself. But it appears as if the railroads, more than anything else, proved decisive in bringing success to the sheep men. By refusing to allow the sheep-herders to trespass on company land, the railroads forced them to lease and buy the best pasture available—those that could. The McGregors were among those that could. This, in turn, led to the fencing of pastures, ultimately to the raising of wheat as fodder for animals. Ultimately wheat became a cash crop.

But *Counting Sheep* is more than a "business history." It is a story of people that rings true. McGregor writes, for example, of the Basque shepherds, employed by the McGregor company.

None ever had to be dismissed by Morod (a long-time employee from France) as no good or drunk in camp. . . Quiet pride and dignity and a willingness to work hard were common attitudes. I remember asking a Basque herder a few years ago about the health of one ewe in a band of 2,000 head. The herder looked at the ewe and said "I remember her. Two years ago she was a lamb. I find her abandoned and get a ewe to claim her. Last year twice I pulled her out of mud holes to save."

The book is filled with detail, all of it adding to a strong sense of time and place. The numerous quotes of sources, much of it contained in the more than 125 shelf feet of archival material in the McGregor papers at Manuscripts, Archives and Special Collections at Washington State University, give a rounded picture of the span of time about which McGregor writes. This, by no means, should suggest that the author slights his coverage of Eastern Washington agribusiness history. This is, after all, the heart of *Counting Sheep*.

The only criticism of the book might be its lack of end paper maps. There are maps contained in the text, so the reader is not at a complete loss. But these presuppose a certain amount of "prior knowledge," even a certain "prior love," for the Palouse and the Columbia Plateau. On the other hand, the book's bibliography is most complete and its indexer is to be commended. It contains numerous photographs and the printing measures up to the usual high standards of the University of Washington Press. There is much here for both scholar and armchair historian. While *Counting Sheep* is a book about "our part of the world," it deserves a wider audience than just those of us in Southwest Washington. I hope that it finds its way. □

—Mark Fleisher