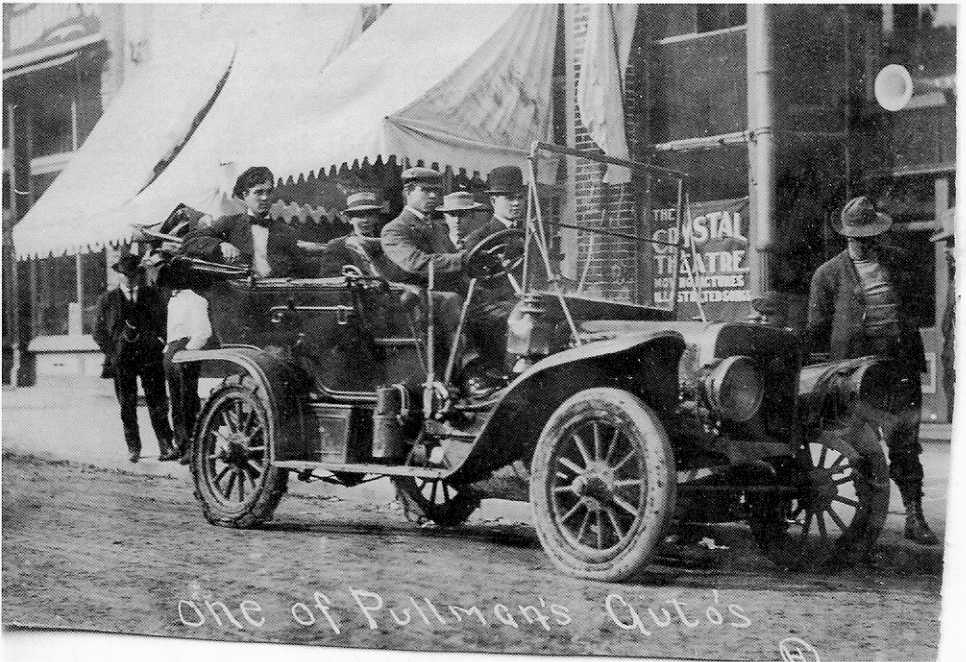


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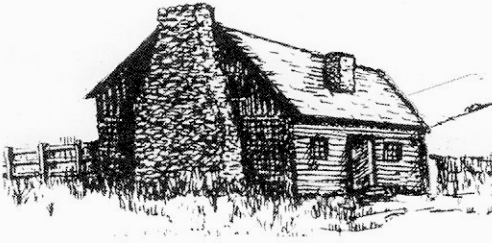
GOING TO THE MOVIES:

The Story of Pullman's Silent Picture Movie Theaters

THE YOUNGEST LINEMAN:

Memories of the Ewartsville Telephone Company

THE MALDEN POST OFFICE



Whitman County Historical Society Colfax, Washington

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COVER

Pullman's first silent movie house, the Crystal Theatre, is shown in the background of this photograph of one of Pullman's automobiles in about 1909. The sign on the building on the right reads: "Crystal Theatre: Moving Pictures Illustrated Songs." This is the north side of Main Street between Grand and Kamiaken, in the space that was formerly occupied by Stroup's Saloon.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Robert King, Bureau of Land Management-Alaska State Archaeologist and Homestead Historian, has always been fascinated by movies and their power to introduce new values and ideas to communities. As he read old issues of Pullman’s newspapers pursuing his many interests in Pullman’s history, he encountered ads for the movies shown in Pullman over the years. In 2008, he published in the *Bunchgrass Historian*, an article on “Drive-In Movie Theaters of the Palouse.”

Gerald Henson was born and raised on a farm southwest of Pullman. He is the fourth generation to farm in Whitman County. Gerald was the one who was volunteered, by his grandfather Ben Henson (president of the Ewartsville Telephone Association) and neighbor Gordon Klemgard, to climb the poles, ladders, and anything else necessary to repair the phone lines.

The editor’s interest in the **Malden Post Office** was sparked in the fall of 2011 by the imminent closure of this historic post office - a decision that has since been commuted to being open fewer hours per day. I visited the site and saw the important role the Post Office still plays in the life of the town - just as it did in its earliest days as a business established two years before the town was incorporated.

“QUO VADIS”

“Whither Goest Thou?”



The Pasquati Production of “Quo Vadis” in three parts-- the Acme of Motion Photography

Presenting a series of Religious and Historic Drama Pictures with startling effect, the tragic martyrdom of the early Christians, the profugary of Home under Nero.

These Woodman Beauty Pictures were taken right on the ground and down in the ruins where these great, good, God-loving people suffered.

You see the very places where these terrible sacrifices were made. You see the beauty of these early God-loving people. No one should miss seeing these most marvelous of all motion pictures.

The riot of imperial pomp and pageantry, the struggle and strife which the disciples of Christ passed through, the persecutions to which they were compelled to submit, their tragic deaths, suffering of crucifixion on the cross, the arena scenes, the beauty of their meetings in the catacombs.

This is the picture which has startled both the amusement and religious loving people of the world. It is the most gigantic and most wonderful motion picture ever produced. QUO VADIS has broken all records having played to more people than any other motion picture production. QUO VADIS, the stirring tale of the tragedy of the early Christian martyrs. A film which has created the most profound impression throughout the East.

lergy, Bible Students--all endorse this Photo-Drama

STAR THEATRE

FRIDAY Evening, December 19

Admission, Adults 15c; Children 10c

Pullman Herald, December 19, 1913

GOING TO THE MOVIES: The Story of Pullman's Silent Picture Movie Theaters

By Robert E. King

The Invention of "Movies"

In the late 1880s, Thomas Edison was one of several people (and ultimately the most successful) working to develop a practical way of showing photographs in rapid succession to produce the illusion of moving images – “movies.” In 1891, Edison marketed a usable device for one-person viewing of motion pictures, and by 1896 he produced the first commercially successful electric movie projectors in the United States. With them, multiple viewers could at last simultaneously see moving images projected on light-colored surfaces. This accomplishment accelerated a new use for another late 19th century invention: roll film, pioneered by George Eastman in the 1880s. The marriage and further development of these two key inventions, film and movie projectors, led to the rising popularity of motion pictures in the later 1890s.

Soon, the movies were being shown at special exhibitions to spell-bound crowds fascinated with the new technology. Among the first were short films, often of poor quality, of events like boxing matches or other types of entertainment. Also, important world stories, such as foreign wars, became popular subjects. Films of this earliest period typically ran only a few minutes and lacked plots. However, by the late 1890s, the new “flickers” (so-called for the frequent jumpiness of the images and lighting irregularities) began coming to small towns across the nation. Pullman was among them.

Pullman's First Movies

As early as October 31, 1899, when the town was only in its second decade of existence Pullmanites excitedly flocked to a special traveling program shown in the town's Opera House (also known as the Auditorium) built in 1893 on the northwest corner of Blaine Street and South Grand Avenue.¹ Front page coverage in the *Pullman Herald* on October 28, 1899, gave this account:

The Edison Warograph company, under management of the Fleming Bros., will exhibit at the auditorium in this city on next Monday night, and with the most wonderful moving picture machine of the age, will show the most realistic prize fight ever produced, being a ten-round encounter between McCoy and Sharkey, from commencement to knockout.

In addition, the program presented movies of fighting during the Spanish American War, including “a naval battle in Santiago harbor showing destruction of the Spanish fleet, return of the rough riders, landing horses in Cuba, and one hundred others of marvelous accuracy and beauty.” To accompany the silent pictures was another Edison invention: “the Edison Mechanical opera” with “the renditions as loud as a brass band and of the softness of a human voice.” The price for this sensational novelty? Adults paid 35 or 50 cents, and children 25 cents. At that time, one dollar per day was a common wage, so the price of seeing these earliest movies was expensive.

Subsequently, other movies were periodically shown in the Auditorium although its normal fare was local and traveling productions. These included plays, musical performances, lectures, poetry recitals, comedies, and even minstrel shows. But the new movies were special crowd-pleasers from the start.

The Auditorium’s offering on May 30, 1904, is an example of early movies. On that evening a touring company presented a live-action Passion Play, but the program also featured “genuine Edison films of the Jap-Russian war.” The latter were movies of “battleships and torpedo boats attacking Port Arthur, and sinking of battleships and cruisers.” Additionally, shorter films were shown of two notorious fires and a bad flood elsewhere in the country, plus “miscellaneous other pictures, using over 1000 feet of film.” Several months later, more moving pictures of the Japan-Russian war were shown in the Auditorium. This time they were supplements to a “stereopticon” show of the same event. This was probably the projection of color images from hand-tinted glass slides, another interesting novelty that attracted crowds in the early 1900s. Adding to this special program was a vocal performance by Miss Josie Marrington, who was described as a “sweet-voiced” soprano.²

On December 23, 1905, the front page of the *Pullman Herald* extolled the excellent quality of an upcoming film to be shown in the Auditorium five days later. It was a boxing match filmed by the Britt-Nelson Company, one of the many rivals to the Edison Company that had come into existence by this time. The new film was said to be “simply superb—clear, bright, every movement and detail faultlessly portrayed” marking “an epoch in the history of motion photography.” To support this claim, the article recited problems with earlier boxing films, including “blurred” images and “rifts of light and shadow marring the effect and frequently coming in at the most exciting moment.”

While the Auditorium was drawing crowds for its occasional movies, by 1904, silent films were starting to be shown elsewhere in Pullman. For example, in late September of 1904 the traveling Edison Family Theater Company featured a variety program with live singing, mandolin and guitar playing, a “black comedian,” and “the Kinedrome with 1,000 feet of moving scenes.” The location was in “the White Brick building on the corner of Main and Grand” in downtown Pullman.³

Competition in the movie business resulted in attempts to provide ever more

novel attractions. One notable, indeed surprising, example was a special showing on October 31, 1906, of what probably was Pullman's first movie in color. This was part of a special evening program brought to Pullman's Auditorium by the Beatty Brothers on a return appearance. The newspaper encouragingly added that their previous engagement had brought the "best moving pictures ever seen here." This time their program included "a specialty and comedy show" that consisted of "character sketches, dramatic sketches, funny comedians, singers and dancers." Between acts the audience would also witness "50000 latest colored moving pictures that do not quiver or blur and many beautiful illustrated songs."⁴ If shown at a typical 32 frames per second, this hand-tinted motion picture would have run around 26 minutes. Interestingly, this early example of "colorizing" a black and white film is still being done today, though now using computerized techniques.

As the quality of movies improved in the early 1900s, their popularity increased. More films were available as more movies were being made by more and more movie companies. Longer films were shot, and engaging plots featured talented and popular actors and actresses -- the first "movie stars." As a result the first movie theaters began springing up across America around 1905-1910. Pullman was no exception.

Pullman's First Movie Theaters: the Crystal Theater & the Ivy Theater

On January 25, 1908, the *Pullman Herald* (p. 1) carried the following notice of the opening on the north side of Main Street of the town's first silent movie theater: The Crystal Theater, giving a program of moving pictures and illustrated songs every evening, is now open to the public in the building recently vacated by the Stroup saloon.

The owner was a Mr. Stover, but within months, he sold the enterprise to George Schroder and Carl Gerding and moved to neighboring Moscow, Idaho.⁵ There, that same year, another "Crystal Theater" opened in a wooden shack on Moscow's Main Street as its first silent picture house.⁶ Meanwhile, Pullman's Crystal Theater continued with a mixture of movies and apparent vaudeville acts typical for theaters of this era. For instance, the September 11, 1908, *Pullman Herald* (p. 4) reported: "Isaac Buckley has returned to Pullman from Coeur d'Alene and is singing for the Crystal Theater." Later, the July 23, 1909 *Pullman Herald* (p. 3) reported: "Miss Laura Putman is again playing the piano at the Crystal Theater. Miss Putman is an accomplished musician and her music is appreciated by the patrons of the house."

By this time, however, Pullman's Crystal Theater was facing competition from a newer theater called the Ivy. It was also located on Main Street and was established sometime prior to mid-1909. On June 18, 1909, the *Pullman Herald* (p. 1) reported that the Ivy Theater had been sold the prior Saturday to Enos & Spawr, "formerly proprietors of the cigar store now owned by Thorpe & Newman."⁷ The

new owners wasted no time. The day of their purchase they opened the establishment to a large crowd that heard singing by local talent Miss Effie Ringer, age 16, daughter of Eugene Ringer (1871-1908) and granddaughter of Whitman County pioneer Lewis M. Ringer (1834-1909). Reportedly, Clara (Ford) Ringer played the piano for her daughter Effie's performance

A few weeks later, on August 6, 1909, the *Pullman Herald* (p. 1) reported that Enos & Spawr, owners of the Ivy Theater, bought the Crystal Theater and planned to run both. The Crystal Theater would be closed "...until September 1, when it will be reopened with entire new equipment. The building is to be overhauled, remodeled and new machines put in." The article further noted:

It is the intention of the management to have two of the best theaters on the circuit and to run a vaudeville program along with the motion picture show. Arrangements are being made for a fine program of vaudeville attractions and the best lot of motion pictures ever seen in the west. The programs at each place will be changed frequently and everything possible will be done to make the shows the leading attractions of the kind in the Inland Empire. There is only one way to secure good attractions for Pullman and that is to give the management liberal patronage. Since the citizens of Pullman have been doing this the quality of the entertainment has been steadily improving.

This latter pitch to get more paid attendees was partly to help recoup not only the upcoming expenses for remodeling and updating the Crystal Theater, but also to repay the cost of recent work at the Ivy Theater. The July 9, 1909, *Pullman Herald* (p. 4) explained:

IVY MAKES IMPROVEMENTS – The Ivy Theater, the popular resort, has made many improvements in its service recently. A triple dissolving stereopticon machine, the only one of its kind in the Palouse country, has been added and other new equipment, making it the best equipped play house of its kind in the Inland Empire, outside of the larger cities. A five-piece orchestra is to be added and the walls are to be covered with handsome hand paintings. The increasing attendance every evening testifies to the growing popularity of the Ivy.

Two weeks later, on July 23, 1909, the same paper (p. 1) reported:

More improvements are being made to the Ivy Theater. Manager Enos is putting in a raised floor, which raises the last row of seats 18 inches above the front rows, and is also having three panels painted on the ceiling. Every week new improvements are being added to this popular play house and the people show their appreciation by constantly increasing patronage.

At first, the improvements at the Ivy Theater apparently helped increase business, with “three performances” needed on July 28, 1909 to “accommodate the big crowds.”⁸ However, with both the Ivy and Crystal theaters on Main Street competing against each other and Pullman’s older Opera House, the town had too many places showing silent films. The situation soon got even worse when Pullman’s third combination silent picture theater and vaudeville house, the Star Theatre, opened in mid-September of 1909. Its opening was the same day as the reopening of the remodeled Crystal Theater. The latter event was reported on September 17, 1909, by the *Pullman Herald* (p. 1) as follows:

The Crystal Theater on the north side of Main street, which has been closed for several weeks, while it was entirely remodeled and re-seated, with a regulation opera floor with a gentle slope toward the stage, will re-open next Monday [September 20, 1909]. The new proprietors, Enos & Spawr, will conduct this theater as they have the Ivy, as a first-class amusement resort, with motion pictures every night.

By the late fall of 1909, the inevitable happened. The town could not support so many entertainment houses, and the Ivy was the first to go. The *Pullman Herald* announced the situation on December 3, 1909, (p. 1):

The Ivy Theatre is a memory. The building is being dismantled, the equipment removed and the raised flooring taken out. This gives a vacant business building on Main street, for the first time in many months. This building seems ‘hoo-dooed’ for it has been vacant more than any other building in town.

Just over six months later, Pullman’s first silent picture house, the Crystal Theater, would also close after being sold. On May 27, 1910, the *Pullman Herald* (p. 3) reported:

Crystal Theatre Sold – Enos Bros. have sold the Crystal theatre to V. C. Armour, of Michigan, who came here to visit his friend, Mr. Hochradel, of the pool and billiard hall. The new proprietor took possession Monday night. The old proprietors have not fully decided what they will do, but may go to Montana. Mr. Armour intends to maintain the splendid quality of entertainments that have been offered at this popular amusement resort under management of Enos Bros.

Despite the statement that the Crystal Theater would continue in business, nothing further was said about it in the local paper. Apparently, V. C. Armour was unable to keep it going. Part of the reason may have been connected to local events of less than three months earlier. In early March of 1910, the Great Whitman County flood swept Pullman and badly damaged many businesses on Main Street. Whether the Crystal Theater had ever recovered from this setback by the time of its sale is unclear, so perhaps the Crystal Theater had “gone dark” even before its sale.

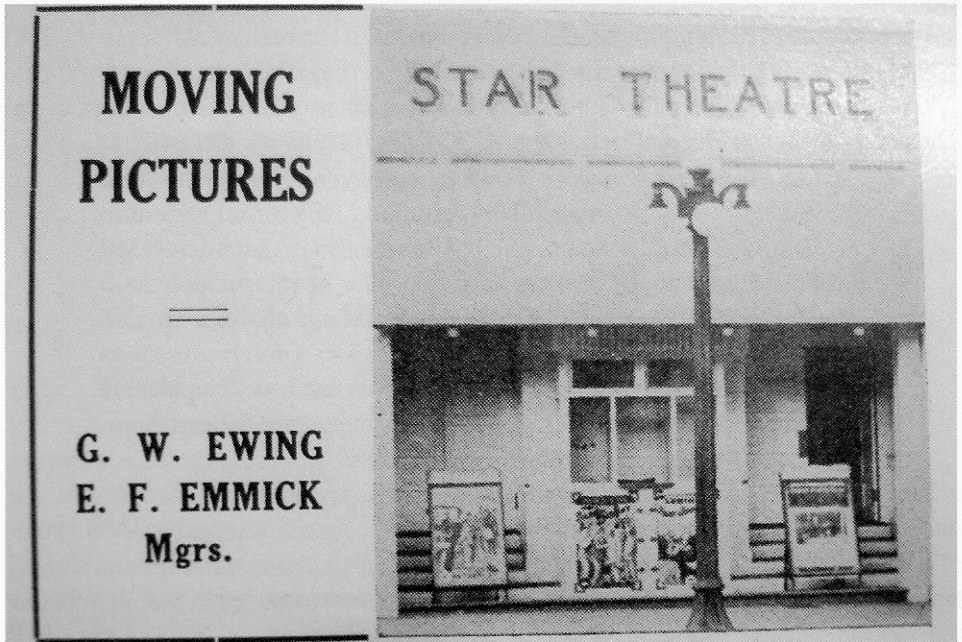
Pullman's Third Silent Movie Theater: the Star Theatre

Pullman's third silent movie house, the Star Theatre, opened on September 20, 1909, in the M. D. Henry Building on Main Street, the same day that the older Crystal Theater reopened after remodeling. The September 24, 1909, *Pullman Herald* (p. 4) reported:

A large crowd witnessed the opening program at the Star Theatre Monday night, and all expressed entire satisfaction with the entertainment given. The management has made arrangements for a fine program with frequent changes and will make a specialty of trying to please the public.

When the Star Theatre commenced operation, it drew patrons not only from the Ivy and Crystal Theaters but also from the city's Auditorium (opera house) that already was experiencing lowered attendance. The opening of the Star Theatre only aggravated the problem with its 10-cent movies. When the Auditorium accidentally burned in mid-June of 1910 it had already been "dark" for about a week and was having financial problems.⁹ With its destruction, and the prior closing of the two other silent movie theaters, the Star Theatre became Pullman's only movie theater.

One of its more notable attractions in the fall of 1910 was a special showing of "Custer's Last Stand," an event described in the November 18, 1910 *Pullman Herald* (p. 3):



Advertisement in the 1915 Chinook

Custer's Last Stand, the most thrilling and realistic motion picture ever conceived or constructed, will be presented at the Star Theater next Tuesday evening, Nov. 22. The pictures were taken on the old Custer battlefield. By permission of the U.S. government several hundred mounted warriors of the Sioux, Cheyenne and Crow tribes took part in this never to be forgotten scene.

Lecture Accompanies Films – Three full reels or 3000 feet of films will be presented, and will be accompanied by a lecture descriptive of the famous battle. Don't forget the date, Tuesday, Nov. 22. Prices of admission, 15 and 20 cents.

A December 2, 1910, front-page account in the *Pullman Herald* proclaimed the "Star Theatre Popular: Local Show House Puts on High-Class Motion Pictures and Attracts Large Crowds." The article continued: "The Star Theatre, Pullman's up-to-date motion picture show house is attracting record-breaking houses each night and those who pay their 10 cents for admission always go away well pleased." The flattering review added that "while Pullman keenly feels the need of an opera house to replace the one destroyed by fire the Star is filling that need to a great extent, and from time to time is putting on a high-class vaudeville entertainment or a light drama that goes a long way toward satisfying the desires of Pullman theatregoers."

Typically, the earliest shows in the Star Theatre were described as three complete reels of films, one dramatic, one comic, and one scenic, giving the audience a large range of subjects. For example, on December 2 and 3, 1910, the three reels included: *A Mexican Lothario*, dramatic; *All the World's a Stage*, comic; and a scene along the coast, "which is said to be one of the best scenic films ever showed in Pullman."¹⁰ Also at this time, Saturday matinees were being featured at the Star Theatre. The presentation of these "silent" movies was by this time far from silent, although no voices were projected with these films. Typically a pianist played music appropriate to changing scenes to enhance the mood of the picture. Sometimes more instruments or even a small band were hired for special engagements.

In addition to the three-reel pattern of shows, other offerings of the Star Theatre included what were termed "special" movies. An example in 1911 was *The Dalton Gang*, which ran on September 4 and 5. The film was described as depicting "the most fearless bandits this country ever knew, showing two banks being robbed at the same time."¹¹ The advertisement in the Pullman paper noted that this reel would run in connection with the regular program and would be accompanied by a lecture by Mrs. Davis, presumably an expert on the famed outlaws. The admission cost was 10 and 20 cents.

A month later, Thomas Miller, the manager of the Star Theatre, made it available two afternoons for a special public service education series of films on the dangers of tuberculosis. Rather than just being documentaries, the subjects were in part presented through a series of dramatized stories. One ended with a

“young country girl” and “wealthy young man” brought together by love and the “great opportunity to do good.”¹² Another reel traced the story of a young boy who tragically fell ill drinking unprocessed milk from his grandfather’s farm, which as a result adopted modern methods to make the milk safe.

In early 1913, the Star Theatre featured special movies of the 1912 summer Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden, and also 90 minutes of the 1912 Pendleton Roundup.¹³ These programs illustrate the increasing diversity of what could be seen in Pullman via silent films. In effect, they brought to Pullman greater knowledge about the wider world.

In March of 1913, the local paper reported that Thomas Miller had sold his half interest in the Star Theatre to his partner, George Ewing, in anticipation of returning to his former home in Vancouver. His son, Clyde Miller, employed as a drummer at the theater, also returned to Vancouver. That spring a new “motiongraph projecting machine” was ordered for the Star Theatre, reportedly “to obviate the flicker of the picture and the resulting eye strain.” In the summer, a new front was built on the theatre to make it more attractive.¹⁴ Later in 1913 at a time when another movie theatre was about to open in Pullman, two new partners, E. F. Emmick and Peter William Struppler, bought the Star Theatre. Struppler sold his half interest to Emmick in December 1914.¹⁵ But within a short time, Emmick also disposed of his interest in the theater, though he would soon resurface in a new Pullman movie theater venture.

On April 9, 1915, the *Pullman Herald* revealed on page 1 that two Pullman businessmen had just acquired the Star Theatre’s lease but then temporarily closed it. They were H. M. Beck, owner of the Model Bakery and Cafe, and George Stephenson, owner of the City Club. Both were already involved in another Pullman movie theater by that time. Their initial plan in closing the Star Theatre was to turn it into another type of amusement house by installing what was described as an “automatic baseball pitching apparatus.” But this space soon became a temporary sales room for Beck’s Model Bakery after a fire in that business.

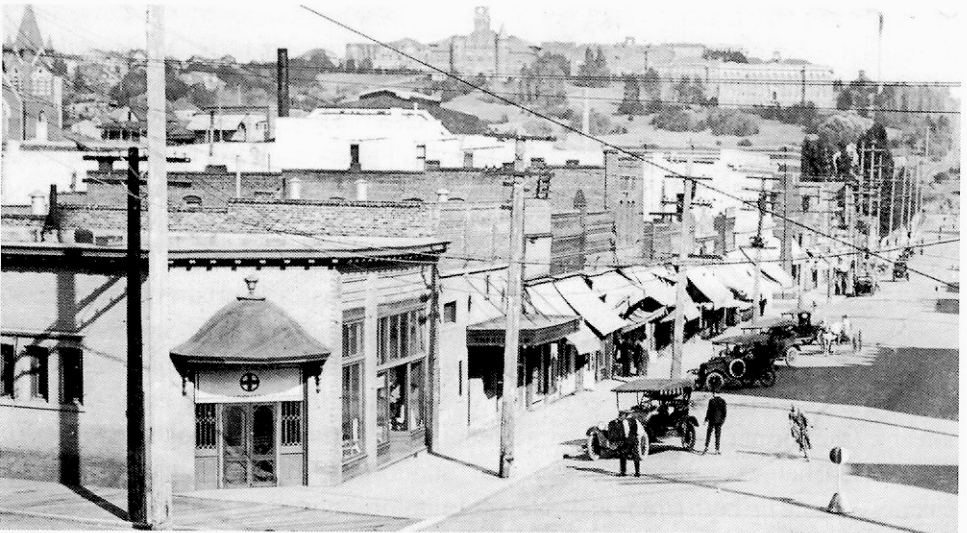
As plans changed again, the local paper proclaimed in early August of 1915 that the Star Theatre would reopen that fall under Stephenson and Beck’s management “as a strictly five and ten cent [movie] house, never varying from these prices.”¹⁶ Various attempts were made to secure the future of the Star Theatre. It joined with six other Pullman businesses in a “movie stamp” program: one stamp given out for every 10 cents spent and 50 stamps equaling a movie ticket. The theater was also used as a location for a series of religious meetings during March of 1916. Nonetheless by mid-July 1916, the Star Theatre permanently closed. On July 14, 1916, the *Pullman Herald* (p. 1) noted that the former Star Theatre’s location in the M. D. Henry building on Main Street had been taken over by a grocery store called the Economy Store. Apparently the Star Theatre could not compete with the two other silent picture theaters operating in Pullman.

The Pullman Theatre (later the Beck Theatre, the Theatorium, and the Liberty Theatre)

On December 12, 1913, Pullman's fourth silent picture movie theater opened. It was called simply the Pullman Theatre.¹⁷ It was located in a new brick building built on a vacant lot on the north side of Main Street near its intersection with Grand Avenue – a part of today's Rico's. With the opening of this theater, which operated into 1927 under four different names, a new era of moving-going began in Pullman.

The new brick theater, located beside the Palace Meat Market, had been quickly built for W. H. Albright by the local firm of Klossner Brothers & Hinchcliff during the preceding two months, with arrangements made through the Downen Realty Company of Pullman.¹⁸ Albright, an experienced movie theater operator from Pasco and Toppenish, Washington, took a five-year lease on the building that included a large stage and seating for 350 people. Thus, while the structure was built to show movies, it still served other purposes, including hosting vaudeville acts. Indeed, the opening day's entertainment was a series of plays performed live by a traveling company, with the first offering entitled *The Marriage Sin*. Reportedly, it depicted "the trials and tribulations endured and finally overcome by a working girl who married a millionaire, and the play ends with everybody happy."¹⁹ The local newspaper report also stated that "stock shows will be secured at frequent intervals and motion pictures will be on the boards nightly."

On February 12 and 13 of 1914, the Pullman Theatre showed a special six-reel silent film *The Life and Works of Richard Wagner*," as advertised with a



The Theatorium was located on East Main Street at the site of present-day Rico's. It is the building with the flat marquee in the center. In some photographs, the word "theatorium" can be seen on the two sides over the sidewalk.

A SEVEN REEL FEATURE

"THE ESCAPE"

A Big Drama of Life Which Grips and Fascinates



THEATORIUM
Tuesday, Aug. 31st

Matinee at 3 p. m., Evening
Performance at 7

Admission - - - - 25c and 15c

Pullman Herald, August 27, 1915

photograph in the February 6 *Pullman Herald* (p. 3). By this time, it was becoming customary practice to have scenes from movies shown in the local paper to entice the public. For the Wagner film, which included 150 scenes in four acts, the adult admission was 25 cents and 15 cents for children.

In later 1914, the Pullman Theatre presented an 8-hour extravaganza created by the International Bible Students Association and presented in segments on each of five days in late August, with both matinee and evening showings. A lengthy story about it appeared in the August 21, 1914 issue of the *Pullman Tribune*. The subject was a history of the earth, from "Creation" through the time of Christ, with dinosaurs also included. Curiously, drawings of the latter illustrated the lengthy newspaper article about the film. Undoubtedly, members of the local religious community, perhaps including a college organization, had sponsored the film, as it was offered without cost.

In mid-September of 1914, the Pullman Theatre was sold to H. M. Beck, who assumed Albright's five-year lease for the Pullman Theatre with four years still remaining. As

noted, Beck was also the proprietor of the Model Bakery and Café in Pullman. After making "extensive improvements" and promising to have "the best there is in the motion picture and vaudeville business," Beck reopened the establishment initially as the Beck Theatre.²⁰ The venture proved successful, and by early 1915 Beck decided to become even more involved in Pullman's growing entertainment business.

Beck and his new partner, George Stephenson, became co-owners of Pullman's other movie theater, the Star Theatre by April 9, 1915, as reported on that date in the *Pullman Herald*. They closed the Star Theatre and incorporated the Beck Theatre (the former Pullman Theatre) under a third new name, the "Theatorium." The unusual name combined "theater" and "auditorium," thus implying that the new business would be both a movie theater and auditorium in the tradition of Pullman's Auditorium (Opera House), which had burned in 1910. The partners proclaimed that they would run their theater "as a higher class establishment, featuring vaudeville performances and high class pictures."²¹ Also, they announced that the theatre would

be remodeled with a new balcony added to increase seating capacity.

For nearly a year, the local paper sometimes used the older Beck's Theatre name to refer to the Theatorium. On August 31, 1915, the facility, by then being called the Theatorium debuted a seven-reel feature, *The Escape*, billed as "a big drama of life which grips and fascinates." The admission charge was 25 cents for adults and 15 cents for children, with a 3 p.m. matinee and 7 p.m. evening performance.²² Mostly, however, regular movies were advertised at the Theatorium in late 1915 and for the following few years. It eventually became the Liberty Theatre. But by late 1915, a new silent picture theater opened in Pullman that again increased competition.

By the spring of 1916, advertisements in the local paper indicated that only George Stephenson was owner of the Theatorium, which subsequently shut down the next year.²³ One of the last events held in the Theatorium was a four-act comedy, *Esmeralda* presented by the Senior Class of Pullman High School on April 26, 1917.²⁴ By fall 1917, Stephenson had closed the Theatorium, although he retained ownership of the building. In 1919 Stephenson sold the Theatorium to Peter Struppeler, who soon sold it to the Allender Company, a firm that operated movie theaters in nearby Moscow, Colfax, and Spokane. On November 6, 1919, after a remodeling that included renovating the balcony viewing area into family boxes, the Theatorium reopened as the Liberty Theatre.²⁵

Pullman's Fifth Silent Picture Theater: the Grand Theatre

E. F. Emmick, one of the former owners of the Star Theatre, opened Pullman's fifth silent motion picture house, the Grand Theatre in late 1915. Probably even before selling the Star to Beck and Stephenson in the spring of 1915, Emmick had already decided to continue in the movie theater business—but in a newer building with the latest improvements for showing silent pictures.

Just weeks (or even days) after selling the Star Theatre, Emmick secured a lease to operate a new and larger theater in a different location on Main Street



The Grand Theatre on Main Street; Emerson Mercantile is the next building, and the Corner Drug is in the background

THE BIRTH OF A NATION
GRAND THURSDAY - FRIDAY NIGHTS AND FRIDAY MATINEE
APRIL 12-13
 The Elliott & Sherman Film Corporation (H. A. Sherman, President) Presents D. W. Griffith's Masterpiece
THE WORLD'S GREATEST AMERICAN SPECTACLE
 "THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST"
THE BIRTH OF A NATION
 Cost, \$50,000 -- People, 18,000 -- Horses, 3,000
 Accompanied by their own Musical Director with Same Special Score
3 Hours of Thrills - Laughter - Tears
 Matinee at 3:00 - Prices 25c and 50c -- Night at 8:00 - Prices 50c and 75c

Pullman Herald April 6, 1917

orchestra pit large enough to accommodate a full orchestra."²⁶

Soon, the new Grand Theatre and older Theatorium were Pullman's only movie theaters, with both featuring live performances as well as silent films. George Stephenson, who now owned the Theatorium, bought the Grand Theatre on April 7, 1917. He retained ownership of both into early 1919.²⁷

On April 12-13, 1917, the Grand Theatre showed one of the most famous silent movies ever made: D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*. It was billed as "3 Hours of Thrills - Laughter - Tears" for a price of 50 or 75 cents for the 8 p.m. showing, or 25 or 50 cents for the 3 p.m. matinee. Later that fall, the Grand Theatre showed another D. W. Griffith extravaganza, *Intolerance*, billed as a "colossal \$2,000,000 spectacle."²⁸

The April 4, 1919, *Pullman Herald* announced that George Stephenson had sold both the Theatorium and Grand theaters to Peter William Struppler for \$5,000. With this sale, the silent movie business in Pullman would change dramatically. Struppler, born in 1889 at Uniontown, had been involved in Pullman's silent movie business when he was in his mid-20s. During 1913-14, he had a short-lived partnership in the Star Theatre. It was during this time, on October 2, 1913, that he married Eugenia Staley, the pianist at the Star Theatre. For a few years, Struppler pursued other business interests before his ambitious 1919 purchase of both of Pullman's silent picture houses, the Theatorium and Grand theaters.

A month later, in May 1919, Struppler petitioned the Pullman City Council and won a reversal of a controversial decision made in 1917 that had shut down Sunday movies.²⁹ With that, the Grand Theatre drew increased crowds while Struppler meanwhile disposed of the older Theatorium to Allender Company. In the early 1920s, Struppler's Grand Theatre and the Allender Company's competing

in Pullman. It would occupy the westernmost of three business sites being designed to occupy the new Jackson Building, which was being built in 1915 on the south side of Main Street. Construction was rapid, and on December 7, 1915, Emmick's Grand Theatre opened in approximately the same location as the western portion of today's Audian Movie Theater. The new Grand Theatre boasted "two new motion picture machines," "indirect lighting and an improved ventilation system," seating for 480 people, a 15 foot by 32 foot stage, and "an

Liberty Theatre both prospered and often placed large advertisements in the *Pullman Herald* for their movies and other events. Like Pullman's earlier silent picture houses, both theaters in the 1920s hosted other events from time to time. For instance, on September 13, 1922, the Liberty Theatre featured a special event for children. The then-famous Buster Brown and his dog "Tige" were brought to Pullman, with attendees receiving free souvenirs.³⁰


While such special attractions drew crowds to the Liberty Theatre, less than a year later it was sold back to Struppler. Initially, he continued operating it full time along with his popular Grand Theatre, which he further improved in 1924. Of note, one of the Grand's 1924 upgrades was the installation of "a modern steam heating plant" so that "no longer will the attention of the spectators be distracted just at the thrilling climax of a picture by the clatter of stove doors and the shoveling of coal. No longer will part of the audience be shivering while another part are roasting." For this, plus new flooring, reupholstered seats, and the addition of a balcony with 30 seats, Struppler paid \$2600.³¹

While the Grand and Liberty theaters were the only regularly operating movie houses in Pullman from late 1919 through mid-1927, silent pictures were also shown elsewhere in town in the 1920s. As for example, the "College Movies" featured on the Washington State College campus. One such offering was *The Thief of Bagdad*, starring Douglas Fairbanks. It played in the WSC college auditorium on January 30-31, 1925, for an admission price of 50 cents for adults and 15 cents for children.³² Church and civic groups also showed silent movies periodically. For example, the *Pullman Herald* on February 3, 1928 (p. 1) reported:

A reel-reel picture of the Passion play as rendered at Oberammergau, Germany, will be shown at the Christian church next Friday evening [February 10, 1928]. An educational film of two reels showing how rubber is made will also be shown. There will be no admission charge but an offering will be taken.

Despite such occasional competition, the majority of silent films were still

GREENAWALT-FOLGER CO.



Buster Brown

and his dog "Tige" will be at the

LIBERTY

Wednesday, Sept. 13

at 4:15

A Word to Parents—

We want every child in Pullman to be present at this entertainment. Don't let anything keep them away. Above all be sure your child is at the Liberty theatre on Wednesday, Sept. 13, at 4:15, to meet a real live Buster Brown and his dog "Tige."

Buster Brown will give Free
Souvenirs.

Courtesy of

GREENAWALT-FOLGER CO.

Pullman Herald September 8, 1922

shown regularly in either the Liberty or Grand theaters. But as the years went by, both began showing their age from continued use. As modern as the Grand Theatre was when it opened in late 1915, in the mid-1920s, P. W. Struppler soon was formulating plans for an even more elaborate theater in Pullman. Within three years, he revealed his intention to construct what would become for decades the finest movie theater not only in Pullman, but in the entire Palouse area.

Pullman's Sixth and Last Silent Picture Theater: the Cordova

A front-page story in the *Pullman Herald* on February 4, 1927 was head-lined: "Struppler Will Build Elegant New Theatre." It was to be located on lots on the west side of Grand Avenue, in the block north of its intersection with Main Street. It would replace "the firemen's open air pavilion," located south of Martin's Implement Store. For this prime location, Struppler reportedly paid \$8,000 in cash. The newspaper story also stated that Struppler would continue operating both the Grand and Liberty theaters until his new movie house was completed, but would then sub-lease the Liberty Theatre for use as some other type of business. Judging by the disappearance of advertisements in the local paper for movies at the Liberty Theatre, it ceased operation sometime in June 1927.

Years later, the January 30, 1948 *Pullman Herald* (p. 1) reported that after operating the Liberty Theater for "six months," Struppler lost the lease on the property, and in 1927 it was rented by Ellsworth W. Thorpe for the Smoke House, what is now today's Rico's. Less than a year later, the Grand Theatre also shut down. This occurred on February 28, 1928, the day preceding the opening of Struppler's dazzling new theater dubbed the Cordova.³³ Its elegance would surpass anything ever seen before in the town, and even today its architectural details, both inside and outside, remain impressive.

After buying land for the Cordova, Struppler conducted a market survey in the spring of 1927 before finalizing plans for his new theater. A savvy businessman, he wanted more information on its prospective audience, plus projections for Pullman's future growth, to help determine "the size and construction of the building."³⁴ By August, Struppler had made up his mind. The result would be a most remarkable movie theater, initially projected to cost over \$31,000, with an extra \$20,000 or



Peter Struppler



The Cordova Theatre before the installation of its marquee

more to be spent on elegant seats, carpets, draperies, a pipe organ, and other unique furnishings. These included wrought iron accents such as a six-sided light fixture with a velum shade to further create a luxurious Spanish Colonial atmosphere.³⁵ The Spanish theme was also carried to the finely made ticket booth and arched entrance, with brown stucco used throughout as the wall finish.

The much-acclaimed 1928 grand opening was attended by approximately 900 people. On the eve of the movie palace's grand opening on February 29, 1928, the local paper had proclaimed Struppler's new Cordova

Theatre simply "elegant," with the master decorator quoted as saying that the structure was "nicer than any [movie] house on the coast." Others at the time touted the Cordova as "one of the finest theatres of its size in the entire Northwest."³⁶ And so it was and still is today, with the structure added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2004 based on its outstanding architecture and significance as an example of the great "Palace-Era Theaters" of the early 1900s.

This most elegant silent movie picture palace, which Struppler built, became the theater that would usher in the era of "talkies" and end Pullman's 30-year silent movie tradition. In August of 1929, Struppler temporarily suspended operation of the newly-popular Cordova Theater for a few days – time enough to install equipment for Pullman's first talking pictures! It was a great new development in local entertainment for all Pullmanites.

- ¹ “The Pullman Auditorium: More Than a Place of Amusement,” written by Miriam Stratton with Dorothy Sevier Matson, Researcher. *Bunchgrass Historian*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2000, pp. 6-15.
- ² *Pullman Herald*, Sat., May 21, 1904, p. 4 and Sat., Feb. 4, 1905, p. 1.
- ³ *Pullman Herald*, Sat., Sept. 24, 1904, p. 1.
- ⁴ *Pullman Herald*, Sat., Oct. 27, 1906, p. 1.
- ⁵ *Pullman Herald*, Sat., May 9, 1908, p. 6.
- ⁶ *Moscow-Pullman Daily News*, Mon., Oct. 19, 1998, p. 3B, and Mon., Oct. 20, 2008, pp. 1A, 10A. Its location is now part of the Kenworthy Theater.
- ⁷ In 1927, Ellsworth M. Thorpe would relocate The Smoke House on the site of the Liberty Theater.
- ⁸ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., July 30, 1909, p. 8.
- ⁹ “The Pullman Auditorium,” *Bunchgrass Historian*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2000, p. 14.
- ¹⁰ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Dec. 2, 1910, p. 1.
- ¹¹ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Sept. 1, 1911, p. 3.
- ¹² *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Oct. 6, 1911, p. 1.
- ¹³ *Pullman Tribune*, Jan. 24, 1913, p. 6; Feb. 14, 1913, p. 4.
- ¹⁴ *Pullman Tribune*, March 28, 1913, p. 1; May 2, 1913, p. 1, May 23, 1913, p. 6, and Aug. 29, 1913, p. 1.
- ¹⁵ *Pullman Herald*, Thurs., Oct. 4, 1962, p. 1 of 2nd Sec.; Fri., Dec. 11, 1914, p. 1.
- ¹⁶ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Aug. 6, 1915, p. 1.
- ¹⁷ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Dec. 12, 1913, p. 1.
- ¹⁸ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Oct. 3, 1913, p. 1.
- ¹⁹ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Dec. 12, 1913, p. 1.
- ²⁰ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Sept. 18, 1914, p. 1;
- ²¹ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Aug. 6, 1915, p. 1.
- ²² *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Aug. 27, 1915, p. 4.
- ²³ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., March 24, 1916, p. 1; Fri., April 4, 1919, p. 1.
- ²⁴ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., April 23, 1917, p. 2.
- ²⁵ *Pullman Herald*, Nov. 7, 1919, p. 1.
- ²⁶ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., July 30, p. 1 and Fri., Dec. 10, 1915, p. 1; *Pullman Tribune*, Fri., Aug. 6, 1915, p. 1.
- ²⁷ *Pullman Tribune*, Fri., April 13, 1917; *The Pullman Herald*, Fri., April 4, 1919, p. 1
- ²⁸ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., April 6, 1917, p. 5, and Fri., Oct. 12, 1917, p. 6.
- ²⁹ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., May 9, 1919, p. 1.
- ³⁰ *Pullman Herald*, Sept. 8, 1922, p. 1.
- ³¹ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Sept. 21, 1923, p. 1; Fri., Aug. 15, 1924, p. 1.
- ³² *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Jan. 23, 1925, p. 11.
- ³³ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Mar. 2, 1928, p. 1
- ³⁴ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Feb. 4, 1927, p. 1
- ³⁵ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Aug. 12, 1927, p. 1; Fri., Aug. 19, 1927, p. 1. The architectural style has also been called Spanish Eclectic, signifying that it is not truly Spanish in all details.
- ³⁶ *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Feb. 3, 1928, p. 1; Fri., Feb. 24, 1928, p. 1.



THE YOUNGEST LINEMAN: MEMORIES OF THE EWARTSVILLE TELEPHONE COMPANY

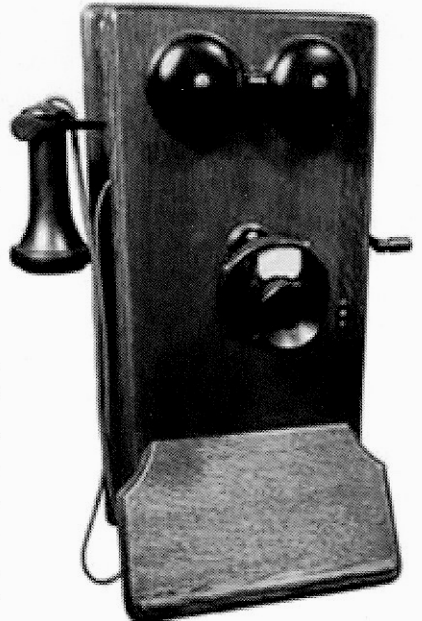
by Gerald Henson

At age 10 or 14 years, I was an unofficial lineman for the Ewartsville Telephone Company and the only person my grandfather, Ben Henson, the official lineman, could sucker into or find to climb the telephone poles and ladders to repair the phone lines. Here are a few of my memories of those days.

In my grandparents' house we had and used the crank telephone. Those were the days of party lines, so called because there were several homes (parties) on the same line. When a home on the line received a call, the operator, or Central, would ring on that line, using a different ring or ring code for each home – like one long ring and a short ring, or two short rings and so on. But when the operator rang a home to let the party know they had a phone call, all the phones on the line would ring the code. You were to only answer your own home ring, but everyone would listen into the other parties' calls, and there were some very interesting conversations. We used the crank phone until about 1956, when we got a dial telephone.

One of the first things I learned when my grandfather "volunteered" me to climb the poles and repair the phone lines was putting on the pole climbers and belt. The climbers covered most all of my leg and after I got them on I walked stiff-legged. The belt that was used to help you get up the pole went around me twice. The first time I climbed a pole for practice, I got off the ground about three or four feet and the climber came off. I slid down the pole to the ground, collecting slivers from the pole in my belly and chest. This is how I found out when using the climbers I needed to wear work boots and not tennis shoes.

I remember riding the school bus to my grandfather's one spring day. He was waiting for me. The phones were not working, and he had found the trouble and needed my help. We drove down the road. The phone lines had gotten tangled up and were wrapped around each other. We got a long pole and ran it between the wires. Now, we were on the ground and the phone lines were up about twenty feet in the air. We wiggled and pushed the pole between the lines until they





Young Gerald Henson as a lineman

came untangled. The phones were working again. This repair with the pole used from the ground did not always work and that's when we (I) got to climb the pole.

Which brings us to another time the phone lines were tangled. It was in the early morning and I was in school. My grandfather called our neighbor, Gordon Klemgard. Gordon was a lineman for the Klemgard road area, as my grandfather was lineman for the Wawawai road area. They worked most of the day trying to untangle the lines. When I arrived at my grandfather's after school, they were waiting for me. I had a job to do. We drove down the road to the trouble spot. Grandfather Ben and Gordon had a plan (they always had a plan). The tangle was in the middle of the line between two poles. The lines were twisted together several times (usually caused by the wind). Their plan was to hold up a ladder in the air under the tangle,

with Ben on one side of the ladder and Gordon on the other. I was to climb the ladder and untangle the lines. I made it to the top of the ladder and separated the two lines with a stick two feet long. All the while Ben and Gordon were holding up the ladder, which was swaying back and forth. When the lines separated, they SEPARATED! It was like unwinding a big spring: there were phone lines going every which way. I was hanging onto the ladder for dear life, but the ladder got off balance and Ben and Gordon couldn't hold it up with me swaying around on the top of it. Down I came. I'm sure that I looked liked a crazed monkey hanging on for dear life. I ended up in the thorn brush with the ladder on top of me. I spent the rest of the afternoon removing stickers from my body. Ben and Gordon were laughing at the sight. Seems they always found something funny about me in the brush.

Once in a while the ladder would fall from the pole because Ben and Gordon were talking and they forgot what they were doing. I would be left hugging

and hanging at the top of the pole, waiting for them to get the ladder back up. They always said they slipped. Once in a while I would accidentally drop a tool on my grandfather or Gordon. "It slipped," I would shout. Not that I was aiming.

One time the line was out in Gordon's area. He came over to our place for help and was glad to see both my grandfather and me. He said the line was broken at the pole, but he could use a ladder to climb the pole. Ben said we had a ladder. Gordon said he didn't need to take a ladder as there was one already there. I thought that Gordon had been there to look things over and left a ladder there before he came to our place. We had to climb up the bank off the road to get to the pole. When we arrived at the pole there was no ladder visible, but Gordon said it was lying in the grass. That made sense to me. Well, there was a ladder all right, but I'm sure it was left there by whoever put the pole up in the first place years before. After some hard looking we found it lying in the tall grass and sticker brush – good old sticker brush, thorns and all. Phone pole and sticker brush never fails. The ladder was old, very old, with moss growing on it, and wet from lying on the ground. Ben and Gordon put the ladder up on the pole. I got the tools I would need to make the repairs and started up the ladder. I remember asking if the ladder would hold me. I was reassured by Gordon that it would and that he and my grandfather would hold the ladder secure. I had reached the top of the



Ben Henson

pole and started to work, when the top rung of the ladder broke in two from my weight. The rungs had rotted from lying on the ground over the years. As the top rung broke and I went down to the next rung, it broke in its turn, as did the next one, and so on. Ben and Gordon were a lot of help. While I was climbing down the ladder as fast as I could, one of them was yelling, "Faster, Faster!" The other was yelling, "Jump! Jump!" Well I did neither, and the ladder broke so fast that I couldn't do anything. I had my hands full of tools and there really wasn't time for me to do much. I ended up falling about two thirds of the way down the ladder (eight feet or so). I landed on top of both Ben and Gordon tools and all. We all ended up in the sticker brush. They thought it was funny. I guess I did too, as we were all laughing and pulling the sticker brush thorns from ourselves.

Now Gordon's sister, Flossie Morton, lived just across the road where we were working, and she had watched the whole thing. I remember she was not happy and gave my grandfather Ben and Gordon heck for sending me up that ladder. They got heck, but I got cookies. She was always good for cookies. Her house was where I got off the school bus and walked a half mile home. She always had Cookies!

There were many more phone repairs – all great and fond memories, especially of my Grandfather, Ben Henson, and our neighbor Gordon Klemgard. It was fun climbing the poles, untangling, splicing and repairing the lines. It was fun taking the hand held phone after the line was repaired and calling Central (main phone office in town) from top of the phone pole to tell them the phone line was in working order. As I look back on those times, I wonder why I never broke a bone.

That reminds me of the story about jumping out the hay loading door at the top of the barn with an umbrella about fifty feet up. I did it, *not* once, but three times. But that's for another story...

APPENDIX:

History of the Ewartsville Telephone Company

The Ewartsville Telephone Association was one of the earliest telephone companies in the Palouse area, first incorporated in 1903. Before the Ewartsville phone system there was a limited system that passed between farm houses. This was called a pasture line or roadside line. There was also a barbed wire line that used the barbed wire fence between farms for the phone line. It was a very limited system and did not work all that well. It was said that in the old days there were three ways to communicate—telegraph, telephone, and tell a woman, and all worked equally well.

The original group of farmers who met on December 13, 1902, to establish a rural telephone company were as follows: U.S. Grant Story (my great great grandfather), J.S. Klemgard, J.M. Klemgard (who had a working barbed wire line), C.D. Martin, N.C. Meyers, J.T. Smith, James Haines, and A.J. Whitten. After electing A.J. Whitten temporary president and J.T. Smith acting secretary, the group moved to file for incorporation to build and maintain a telephone line between the rural areas of Pullman, Wawawai, and Almota.

By 1903, the Ewartsville telephone system was on its way. The system soon grew, not only by putting up new poles and line, but by buying out other, smaller phone companies. From 1903 to 1911 the company expanded its lines and service, and more expansion was planned.

On January 19, 1911, the company held a meeting at the Ewartsville Grange Hall. The purpose of this meeting was to re-organize the company under the laws of 1907, which permitted a corporation to be formed without capital stock. At this meeting the by-laws were read and adopted, after which officers were elected to serve the first period as provided by law (for not less than two months and not more

than six months). The officers were instructed by motion to incorporate under the name of the Ewartsville Telephone Association and to have certificates of membership issued.

The annual record book for the Ewartsville Telephone Association describes the company's progress, including decisions made, officers and members, financial reports, and hand-written and typed copies of the association's by-laws. All this drew to an end after 62 years of service about September 20, 1965. This is the last date listed; there is, however, no mention of disbandment. Past stockholders have said this was about the time the company was sold to the Bell Telephone Company. There was a big dinner for stockholders held at the restaurant above the Cordova Theater in Pullman. There was not enough money in the treasury to pay the total dinner bill, so stockholders made up the difference.

SOURCES:

Pullman Herald, November 4, 1938

Ewartsville Telephone Association, *Record Book*, 1911-1965

Personal memories of Gerald Henson

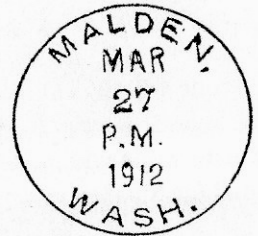


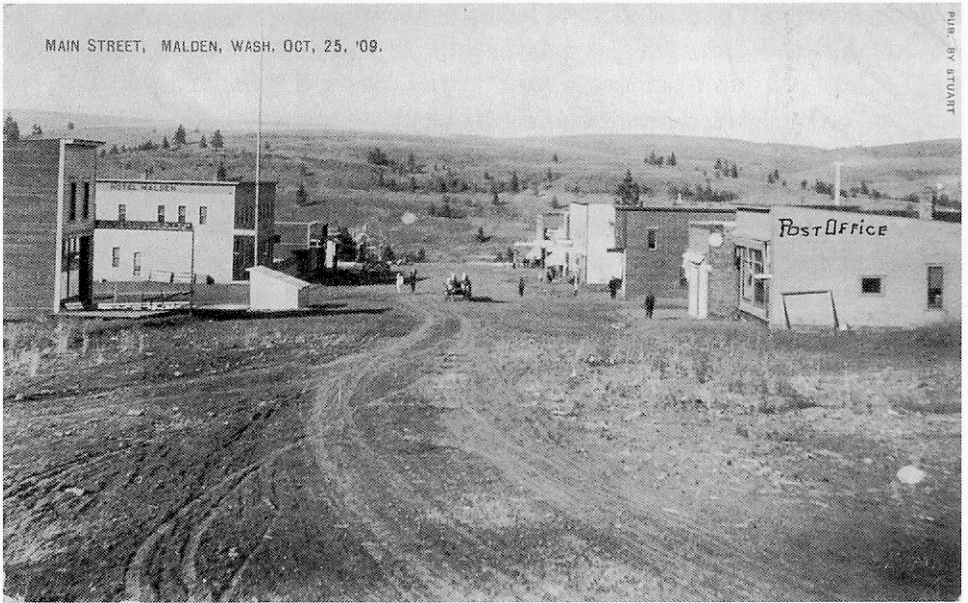
THE MALDEN POST OFFICE

By Edwin Garretson

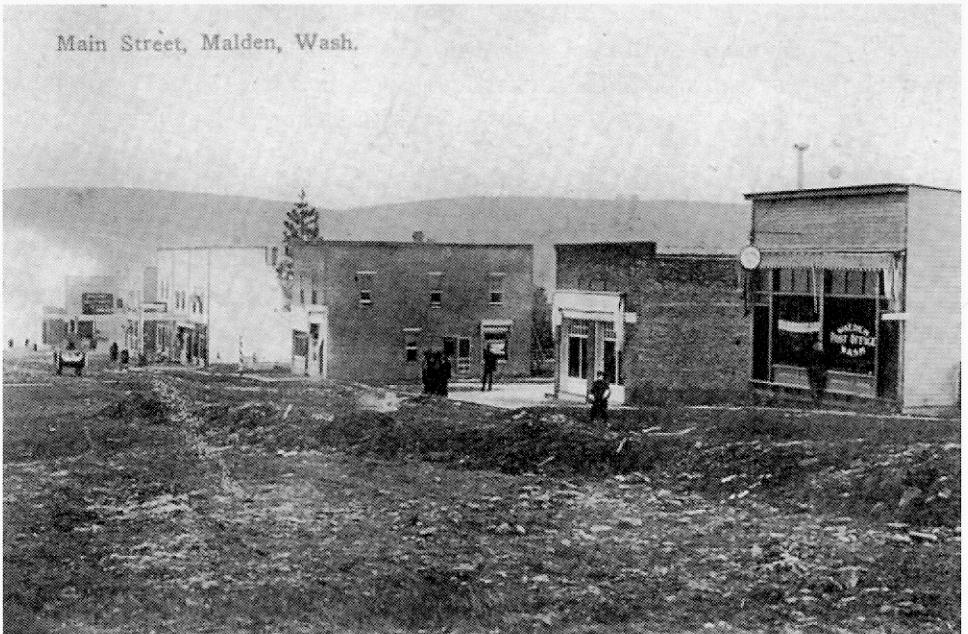
The tracks for the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad were graded in 1908 and the town site given its name by a railroad vice president. The Post Office in Malden was established on August 22, 1908, with mail service on the daily stagecoach from Rosalia. By the end of the year service was increased to twice daily due to the population explosion caused by the selection of Malden as a division point for the Milwaukee Railroad. Construction crews flooded the newly emerging town.

The original wooden Post Office building was on Main Street as shown in the 1909 postcard on the next page. In October of 1913 the Post Office moved into the building formerly occupied by the Farmers & Merchants State Bank, which had constructed a new bank building across the street. This move placed the Post Office in the brick building to the north of the original Post Office. The Malden Post Office has remained in this building for 99 years - and is still going strong.





*Main Street, Malden, October 1909
Two-story Hotel Malden on left, Post Office as marked on
right side of this postcard*



*Original Post Office building on far right; next building to the left was the Farmers
& Merchants State Bank - to become the Malden Post Office in October 1913*



Interior service windows, still guarded with cast-iron decorative bars and surrounded with varnished wood paneling



Malden Post Office, 2012



This drawing is Architect William Swain's front elevation for the brick Jackson Block at the corner of Main and Pine streets. The accompanying article in the August 6, 1915, Pullman Tribune, p. 1A, indicated that the right part of the building was to be occupied by E. F. Emmick with a moving picture theater. This became home to Pullman's fifth silent picture theater - the Grand Theatre. In later years, it was the lobby area of the Audian Theater.

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