

# Bunchgrass Historian

Whitman County Historical Society  
Colfax, Washington

Volume 20  
Number 2  
1992



- **Working in Pullman, 1892**
- **Perkins Family Reminiscences**

# Whitman County Historical Society

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

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### The Authors

The letters of Mollie Clark are selections from typed transcriptions of original letters owned by Mollie's descendants in Oregon. A complete set of the transcriptions is available at the Washington State University Library.

Howard Lawrence originally interviewed Minnie Perkins Tower in 1955 as a project for a correspondence course in history in which he was enrolled. Mrs. Tower was the daughter of James Perkins, builder of the Perkins House in Colfax.

### COVER

Paradise Street and residential area of Pullman, 1892, Photo courtesy WSU Libraries.



## From your editor:

The lead item in this issue of *Bunchgrass Historian* is made up of an interesting and entertaining series of letters from Pullman in 1892, and the second article is a little-known interview with a member of the Perkins family, whose house in Colfax is, of course, now operated by the Whitman County Historical Society as a historical reconstruction.

The letters of Mollie Clark are based on copies supplied by her descendants on Oregon, who also found them interesting and graciously offered to share them with others. Printed here are about two thirds of the entire series. They run from early 1892 until later in the year. The author, Mollie Clark was a young lady from Corvallis, Oregon, who moved to Pullman for a year to work in a restaurant. The letters are chiefly to a young man in Corvallis, and a few love letter passages explain this situation.

Not a lot of information about Mollie is needed. We do not even have her picture, and we really don't need it, any more than we need to know about the rest of her life. That is because the letters are a great description of life in this little town and some of the surrounding places. Reading the letters is almost like looking at the old photographs of Pullman and seeing motion in them.

The second article is the write-up of an interview, done in 1955, of the daughter of James Perkins, a founder of Colfax. As the author notes, it does not add much new information to the Perkins family story. It basically confirms the story that appears in earlier issues of *Bunchgrass Historian*, although the authors of those articles did not use this account as one of their sources. Even so, it is offered here because of the Historical Society's close association with James Perkins.

## **Living and Working in Pullman, 1892**

### **Letters of Mollie Clark**

February 16, 1892

Leslie Lilly, Corvallis Oregon

Dear Friend:

At last I grasp the opportunity to write you a letter.

Do not think that I have been having such a nice time that I did not think of my friends in Oregon.

Such was not the case, although it is quite true I have had a delightful time. My mind would wander back.

I shall endeavor to give an account of my self since I left Corvallis.

The conductor on the train from Corvallis to Portland told us that the time was changed, that there was no night train leaving Portland, that we would have to remain there overnight.

It was false, but we had no more sense than to believe it; so we went to the Perkins hotel and stayed. The scenery between Portland and the Dalles and for miles this side was a continual ovation of grandeur. I wish I could give you a description of the magnificent scenes I beheld.

You know I am so enthusiastic over the beauties of nature. I could scarcely refrain from clapping my hands with delight at sight of some sparkling waterfall or towering rock.

I did not grow weary of looking out until we came to the sage brush prairies; then darkness soon came to our relief. We had to stay in Pendleton that night. It was four o'clock Wednesday evening when we arrived in Pullman.

At the depot we found Lou, Uncle Mose, cousins Will, Charles and Jim with two of their friends Johnie Young and Harry Stout to meet us.

They expected us on Tuesday evening and all that were there Wednesday eve with half a dozen more cousins were there. They were very much disappointed - Lou so much so that she cried.

After we came as long as I stayed in town there was someone here to see us all the time. We have more cousins than any one, and only two of them are married. We are the only girl relatives they have in this country, so of course they think a great deal of us, and do every thing they can to make us happy.

A week ago last Wednesday cousin Jim and his most intimate friend Mr. Hubbard came to take us out to the Hubbard farm five miles from town. We had a very pleasant time. They brought us back Thursday evening.

We were to go to a dance on Friday eve. at the Wawawai school house seventeen miles from here and had to cook a supper to take with us. It was ten o'clock Friday morning before we could get the things to cook.

When the boys came we were just in the midst of cake baking.

I have done a great many foolish things during my life but before I got there I thought that was the most foolish.

I nearly froze and in some places the ground would be covered with snow and ice, rendering it dangerous on steep grades, come times when we would get to the bottom of a hill we would almost be going backward, the hind wheels would slip so. The boys said they had often heard of getting the cart before the horse; but that was the first time they had ever seen it done.

We stopped at cousin George Clark's for supper. They went too. I do not think I was ever so badly frightened as when crossing the Wawawai hill. It is three miles long - a very narrow grade on an almost perpendicular mountain side, with Snake river two thousand feet below us. It was a grand sight, but I would much have preferred to walk. I begged them to let me out but they would not do it.

There were eleven Clarks there. Sometimes the whole set would be Clarks.

I never danced so much in my life or had so much fun among strangers as I did that night. I thought morning never would come I was so tired. Your twin brother was not there; but his brother was. I made his acquaintance.

Next morning we came back to George Clark's for breakfast. They would not let me come back to town. George has the sweetest wife I ever saw. I enjoyed my visit with them immensely. Cousins George and Jim together own \$30,000 worth of property there. It is twelve miles from town. I think it a very pretty place. George took me out to the stable to see his horses. There were between forty and fifty head. He said if I had brought my saddle he would make me a present of one.

Saturday morning George came in and asked me how I would like to teach their school, at fifty dollars per month. The school house was three and a half miles distant, but he would get a one horse buggy and I could stay there and take the children.



*Photo: WSU Libraries*

Of course that would suit me and they were all so anxious, I told them I would try to get a permit. Examination was just over.

He went to see the other directors and they were willing, so Sunday morning they brought me back to town, and Monday morning George and his wife went with me on the train to Colfax.

We went to see the Superintendent, but he said he could not grant a temporary certificate. If I was in the Co. at the time of examination, unless I was sick. George and his wife were more disappointed than I. They said they hated to go home, the children had been so delighted with the prospect of getting me for a teacher. We went to a hotel and while waiting there, a gentleman came to see me, said he had just been down to the Superintendents office and asked if I would like to take a private school - said there would be four children to teach. That there were several applicants for the position, and unless his brother hired someone before he got back that I could have it. George was acquainted with them, said they were fine people. They own fruit plantations on Snake River about six or eight miles above Wawawai where we went to the dance.

George said he was coming to take me home with him again Saturday. And if Mr. Bishop wants me to teach he will come there for me next Sunday.

George's wife's sister, Maggie Young, arrived here from Corvallis last Thursday, she went out with them yesterday.

The hotel where I expected to work when I came up here, has not opened up yet and the proprietor who engaged us has rented it to some one else. Do not know where Lou will work. We have had several good positions offered us in private families.

We are all very much pleased with the country.

I do not notice the cold weather here so much as I did in Oregon. There is no snow, and the sun shines bright. Think if I get the sleigh ride I came for I will have to stay until next winter. People all tell me if I stay until fall I will never go back.

I must close for this time as I have a dozen unanswered letters before me. Think I will have to employ a secretary for I could spend a whole day on one letter and still have something to write about. Lou is sewing. She sends her regards. Hoping to hear from you soon. I am as ever your friend.

Mollie



March 3, 1892

Dear Friend Leslie:

I sat down this sunny afternoon for the pleasant task of answering your kind letter which your uncle brought me a few hours ago. I have not done much of anything since I wrote your last, but entertain company, have teeth extracted, sit up with sick people, and write letters. Pa bought a house yesterday and four lots, he paid \$800.00 for them and deeded them to Lou and me. People by the name of Reed are in the house. Mrs. Reed is sick and they sent for me last Monday to come and do the work. I like the place very much. It is on high ground. The house is neat looking and handy. It has six rooms, two closets and two porches. Lou and the real estate agent came to get me to sign the papers yesterday. Of course I was very much surprised to find it deeded to us. Mr. Reed asked how "I was going to get possession." I told him "I already had possession of the kitchen. That was all I cared for." I cannot realize that it belongs to us. Mr. Reed said next time he went up to his farm, I could go with him, and get all the trees, shrubs, and small fruits I wanted to set out.

I did not get the private school I spoke of in my other letter; but I have been offered three public schools since. Two of them at \$50.00 per month, the other at \$55.00.

I have not been downtown for two weeks - do not know what is going on down there. The last time I went was to have that sore jaw of mine attended to. You know I had come to the conclusion I would have to take



ether. The dentist flatly refused to give me ether or anything else, whereupon I refused to let him touch it. He said he would not urge me to have it done, for it would be a very difficult job for him, and very painful for me. Lou exhausted all of her persuasive powers, but it was of no use. I put on my hat preparatory to coming home. Just then cousins Jim and Will came in. Jim began making all sorts of fun of me. Said I was the first Clark he ever saw that was a coward. Of course that aroused all the grit I did have and I straight way took the chair. Oh! you have no idea how it hurt. In the first place he had to take a lance and cut the whole top of the gum off. Then he tried again and again to fasten on to one of the roots but the forceps kept slipping off. I held perfectly still. No one had to hold my hand. The dentist kept encouraging me all along. Said no one need tell him I was a coward - said he had no idea I could stand it half so well as I did, finally he gouged it out. I stood it very well until Jim came and put his arm around me and began to sympathize with me, then I had to take a good cry. Soon as I could quit crying he went to work on the other root. It was just about the same; but when it did come I thought now I was all right, but that was two weeks ago, and it does not heal. There is either a piece of the tooth left or else it has left the jawbone exposed. It aches most of the time. I will have to go back and have it examined. It nearly kills me to think of it.

I went to hear the Cosgrove family perform. If they go to Corvallis you must go and hear them. It was excellent.

I wish I could go to the dance at the Overlander Hall. Farmers here are beginning to plow.

I have not seen your twin brother yet, but do not worry about him anyway.

I must close and get supper. I doubt if you can read this scrawl. I am nervous this evening. I did a very large ironing this morning besides all the other work, and it has been so long since I worked any it nearly gets away with me.

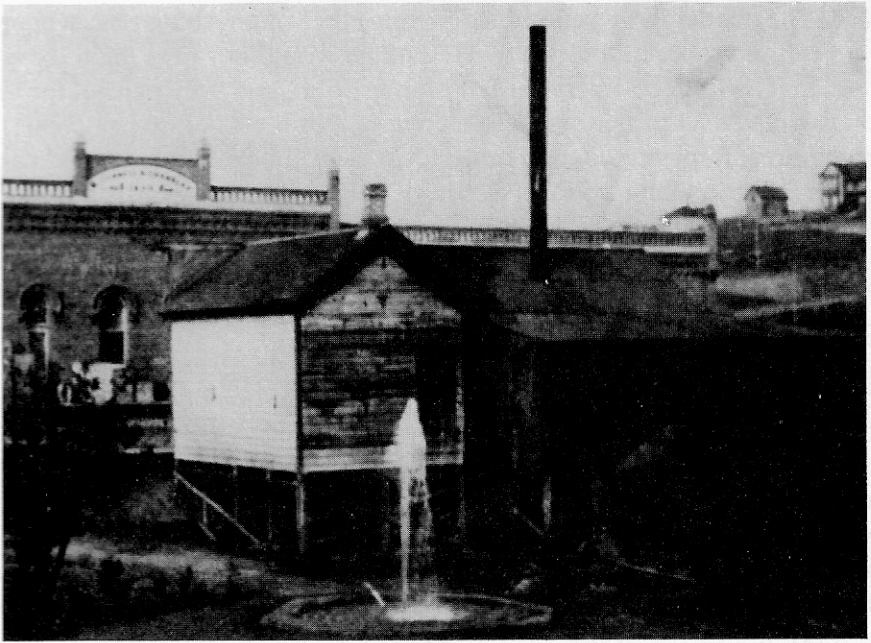
Trusting I may hear from you soon, I am as ever yours, Mollie  
Yes by all means do not forget to send us your picture.



March 29, 1892

MaChere Friend Leslie:

You will pardon me for not being more prompt in answering your kind letter which I received two weeks ago today. I intended to answer it next day, but Johnny Young came to town and Lou and I concluded to go out to George Clark's, which him expecting to return to town Saturday or



*Photo: WSU Libraries*

Sunday. We stayed at George's till Thursday morning and then went over to Uncle Henry Clark's. Friday Jim took us over to cousin Cap's in the hack. We found Cap's so crowded with his farm work we could not come to town. I knew it would do no good to write letters while there, for if I got a chance to send them I could come myself. We came in this morning with Mr. Meyers. We began to think we would have to stay there all summer.

We had a splendid time. Cap's wife is very lively and we nearly took the place. We went around the Snake river bluffs twice while there. Lou and Ella laughed at me good for being such a coward. When we got about half way around, I was afraid to proceed and afraid to turn back I kept my eyes fixed on the trail. I was afraid to look at my surroundings lest I might get over balanced and fall. It was grand sport to start rocks rolling down the bluffs and watch them bounce along at lightning speed until they almost reached the river when we would lose sight of them. It snowed all day last Sunday. Luther Jenkins, Harry Stout and Zoe (Joe?) Meyers spent the day with us. I have not had so much fun for a long while as I had that day. Although they all cried to see who could tease me most. Luthr, is the most wonderful tease I ever saw but he said he really felt sorry for me.

He is Lou's best fellow. I wish you could hear him talk. I never stop laughing from the time he comes (which is pretty often), until he goes away again. As I am the baby sister, he never fails to bring his pockets full of taffy and almonds for me.

It snowed this morning some, and there was a heavy East wind blowing in our faces all the way. It was summer when he went out there but our summer hats looked rather out of place this morning.

I believe I have heard your mother speak of having relatives in Oregon by the name of Rice. Was there a member of the family named Henry. Uncle Henry and Aunt Susan Clark are talking of living in our house to send George's children to school.

We found a letter from Abe awaiting us today. He said they were all getting along nicely down there. Sometimes I catch myself longing for a glimpse of our house. But I do not commit my thoughts to linger there for very long at a time or I would get homesick.

I do not expect I will return to Oregon in the Fall as I intended doing when I left there. I think Lou and I will buy a couple of lots just across the street from the ones Pa bought and it will take us some time to pay for them. I have not been to any more dances. Everyone is too busy farming. They have such large farms here, two or three hundred in one field is not uncommon. I saw seven binders in one man's shed.

I will write but a short letter this time as I have a dozen others to write. Some of them I received a month ago.

I suppose you have heard that one of my pupils (Lizzie Ross) was married. I was very sorry to hear it. Lizzie deserved a better man than the one she got. Thanks for the cards you sent. They are very pretty.

Lou sends her best regards. I will send you some pictures of Pullman.

Please write soon. I am your sincere friend, Mollie



April 13, 1892

Dear Leslie:

I received your letter last evening. If I were some girls I suppose I might say I was so taken by surprise that I would have to have time to reflect on that, the most important step of all my life. But I have known you long enough to know that you are the kindest truest man I ever met, and that I love you far more than I ever have or ever can love anyone else. I have never had any desire to get married, after seeing the great unhappiness of my mother, - and sisters that are married; But if I marry you and am not happy, it would surely be my own fault indeed! I am not half good enough for you.

I know Leslie that you think I am one of the best-natured girls in the world because you have never seen me angry; but you mistake. I have a nasty temper which will get the better of me sometimes.

But now if you are willing to risk your happiness with all my faults I cannot say you no, and shall endeavor never to give you cause to regret the choice you have made.

Lou and I have been working in Gabberts Restaurant since I wrote you last. We get \$7.00 per week and have nothing to do but wait on the table. The clerk does all the scrubbing and sweeping. There are eleven home. The clerk gets me to write the bill of fare so I am detained an hour.

We have to be there at eleven. We get through with dinner about 2 o'clock and are off then till five. We get through the evening at eight. I like the place very much and Lou likes it better than anyplace she ever worked. The proprietor is very good to us, - never scolds about anything.

We stay at his house. It is two blocks from the restaurant.

They have three chinamen employed in the kitchen.

We have beautiful sunny weather but we are always too tired to go out in the afternoon.

It is almost supper time so I must close.

Please write soon I am as ever your, Mollie

P.S. - I received an April Fool letter from Corvallis. I thought for awhile you sent it but came to the conclusion you did not. It was quite pretty. Lou send her regards.



June 10, 1892

Dear Leslie

I received your kind letter in due time.

- Was very glad to hear from you, and was satisfied with your decision.

I have been very busy this week. The Circus was here Tuesday. - Went to the Theater two evenings. They played Solomon Isiacs the first evening, East Lynne the last. They were both very good.

Mr. Gabbert and family went to Oregon on a visit last Wednesday. So I have no help.

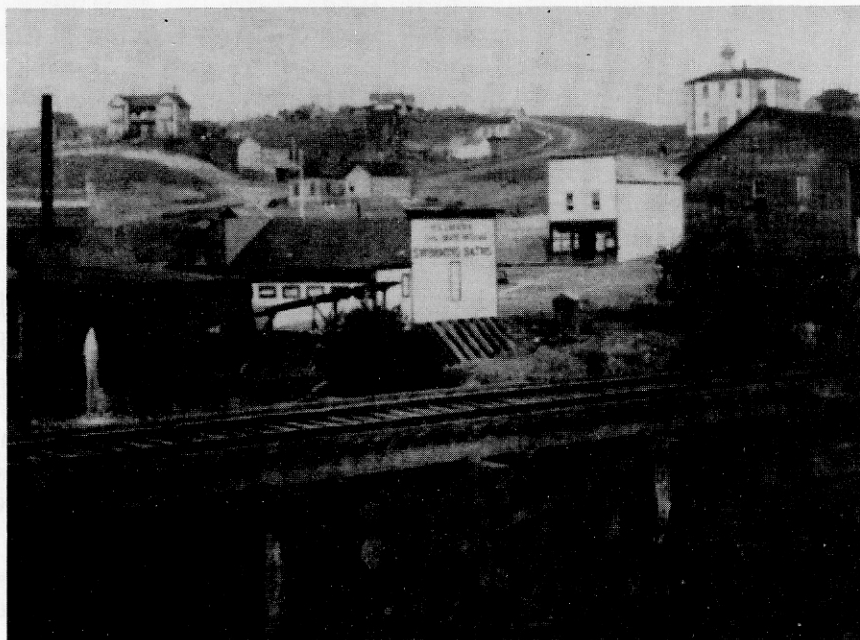
It makes it very hard for me at dinner time.

One of my boarders kicked to Mr. Ellis yesterday because he had to wait so long but he brought me some lovely rosies this morning to get me to forgive him.

The clerk helped me some today.

There was a ball last Friday eve at Raeneys Hall. Lou went but I got sick and could not go. Mr. Gabbert's brother brought my supper up to my room. It consisted of a tenderloin steak, buttered toast, coffee, strawberries and cream, oranges, and a bottle of wine.

Everyone is so good to us here I suspect we will be pretty badly spoiled here.



*Photo: WSU Libraries*

Cousin Jim came for me Saturday and I went out home with him. I felt almost well before I had been out of town an hour. I felt like a bird freed from a cage.

Sunday we went down to Wawawai to a picnic and strawberry festival. I think Wawawai the most beautiful place I ever saw. We had a very nice time. Snake River was up high. It was a grand sight. The Johnson Band was there. Strawberries and cherries were the main features of the day. It rained on us before we reached home.

Jim brought me back to town on Monday.

Lou is going to start next week. She said for me to ask you (if you were not too busy), if you would not meet here in Albany Thursday evening. She wants to go on over to Alsea Friday, as Ma is quite sick, but wants to leave her trunk and part of her things in Corvallis. If she lays over in Albany, she will either have to stay in Corvallis until Monday or not stop at all.

It is raining quite hard today.

The farmers were needing the rain badly. The crops were beginning to look pretty bad.

I have not been to church yet. - Will forget how to act. Do not be afraid of Lou giving you away. There is no danger.

I must close as it is supper time.

Write soon, as ever yours Mollie

June 25, 1892

Dear Leslie:

I rec'd your most welcome letter last evening. I was very glad indeed to get it but it made me so homesick. If it had not been for Lou coming back I believe I would have boarded the train for Corvallis this morning. I should like to see you better than to have the strawberries and cherries.

I am humored, petted and spoiled so much since Lou went away that it makes me tired. I would like to get away for awhile.

Mr. Gabbert gave me peaches and strawberries last night for supper. The Clerk gave me ice cream for dinner. One of the boarders gave me black raspberries for supper. Peaches sell for 5¢ apiece.

The cook always fixes up extra nice dishes for me. So I live pretty well.

I took Lou's tables when she left thinking they would be easier for me, but all my boarders followed me so I have hers and mine too. The other waiters are very good to me; they help me a great deal. We have had three new waiters since Lou left, all men.

Thursday evening one of the boarders came in drunk but no one noticed anything wrong with him. He gave in his order all right. After he had been eating for awhile he called me up to the table, shook his fist at me and talked but I could not understand what he said. I told one of the waiters to send Mr. G. down to look after him, but before he could get there he had picked up his chair and was going to brain a fellow who sat at the same table. Several came to the rescue. They scuffled all over the dining room with him finally succeeding in throwing him out on the sidewalk. They tried to take him across the street. He knocked some of them down, and they finally had to drag him.

Tonight a fellow that I never saw before came and sat down at one of my tables. I thought he was pretty full. Presently one of the boarders came in and sat down opposite me. The stranger made some remark about me. I do not know what it was but the boarder knocked him clear across the dining room. He was not able to get up without help.

I never saw such an eye on men in my life. I told Mr. G. that a few more like that at my table and I would be frightened to death. He said he did not think it would happen again soon.

Sunday Eve:

Last Sunday Mr. Henry asked me to go riding but Mr. Gabbert's brother had asked me to go just 5 minutes before. We went up to Moscow nine miles from here. We left here a quarter past 2 o'clock, got back 20 minutes till five, I think Moscow a very pretty place.

Today Mr. H. asked me in time and we went up to Wheelin five miles from here. Mr. H. asked me to go to the Fourth of July Ball with him. I promised to go if I was not too tired. I am glad he asked me, for this eve-

ning the clerk and Mr. Gabbert's brother both asked me to go. I do not expect I will have time to breathe that day.

(Monday) - The sun is scorching hot. I'm about to melt.

The farmers are very uneasy about their crops. They think everything will burn up.

Pullman, Washington - June 25, 1892

If it were not for the ice cream I think I would suffocate sometimes. I have eaten three dishes full today.

It is supertime. - I must close. Please excuse this miserable letter. I have to write in such a hurry and it is so warm. I hope you will have a nice time on the fourth - Wish I could be there. You and Lou must enjoy yourselves for me too. Write soon to your homesick Mollie.



July 22, 1892

Dear Leslie:

I received your most welcome letter a few days ago. I am very sorry indeed that you could not come with Lou.

You know I had been going everywhere with Murry while Lou was away so everyone had come to the conclusion that it was me instead of Lou that he was going to marry. They teased us good at the restaurant but we never let on but what they were all right in their surmises.

So Wednesday when they saw us walk down Main Street to the depot together and board the train they were quite sure that I would come back Mrs.H. There were several on the train that we were acquainted with. One fellow came to us and said, "Well Murry has made up his mind at last which one he wants has he." I told him I guessed he had. When we went to get off the train he shook hands with us and wished us much joy. We found Lou, Inez, and Murry's mother and sister at the depot.

They were married in the hotel parlor between one and two o'clock.

I was never so surprised in my life as I was to see Abe and very much pleased you may be sure. You should have seen people stare when they saw Lou after we got back. Mr. Ellis had told all the boarders that I had gone down to Colfax to get married. People haven't hardly got it straight yet, which one he married.

Sunday Evening:

Guess I never will get this letter finished.

The clerk from the restaurant and his girl went to Moscow this afternoon to get married.

I had a very nice time the evening of the fourth but not much during the day. Mr. Gabbert paid me my regular dollar and five dollars extra for that days work. I did not charge anything extra at all but he made me take it.

I went to church last Sunday evening for the first time. Mr. Gabbert's dog followed us and some way or another it got locked up in the church

and was there two or three days. It ate the contribution boxes up. The preacher came in this morning and dunned Mr. Gabbert for five dollars to pay for them. I don't know how they made it. We did not tell anyone that it followed us. Abe has gone out in the country to work through harvest.

I am not so homesick as when I wrote last. I haven't time to write more this time. Write soon and tell me all the news. As ever yours, Mollie



Pullman, Wash.  
August 19, 1892

Dear Leslie:

I rec'd your most welcome letter this morning. It seemed a long while since I heard from you.

I am getting along very well, though I long for cool weather to come.

I go up to see Lou nearly every afternoon. She wants me to room there and I guess I will after while.

She has things pretty fine, and one of the kindest husbands in the world.

She has never had to get a single bucket of water yet. I wish you could come up to see us this Fall.

Use your own judgment and pleasure about setting the time for our marriage. When you get a house and think you want some one to scold and boss you around, let me know and I will come.

A week ago last Sunday the Union Pacific gave an excursion to Coeur d'Alene Lake. Lou, Murry and I went. Had a delightful time. - Wish you could have been with us. We left here at 6 a.m. There were thirteen passenger coaches four cabooses one baggage car and two engines. Every seat was full there was hardly standing room in the aisles and the Cabooses were piled full on top. Nearly everyone that I knew went.

We arrived at Harrison landing about eleven o'clock. That was as far as the train was to take us. There were two steamers waiting to take those who wished to go on up to Coeur d'Alene City about 50 or 60 miles further up the Lake.

So many went on board that we were afraid to go. About 100 of us stayed at Harrison. The Lake there was about a mile and a half wide. We spent most of the day rowing. It was very rough for a while but in the evening it got smooth as glass.

It was eight o'clock when we left there. The moon light on Lake St. Joe as we came by was grand. The scenery in the mountains reminded me very much of home.

We slept most of the way. We were in a chair car. So we could lie in any position we liked. Some of the men requested the conductor to not turn on



the gas, so it was dark as Egypt. Just about the time we would get to sleep good someone would come stumbling out of one of the lighter cars and wake us all up.

It was 2 o'clock in the morning when we got here I was very tired.

One of the boarders works in the electric dinamo. This evening he invited us up to see the new Engine work. It made my head swim to look at it.

August 23

Mr. Gabbery sold the Restaurant today to Murry. Mr. Gabbert is going to take charge of the Palace Hotel. He does not want to give me up at all; but of course Murry and Lou will expect me to stay with them. Gabberts have been so very good to me. I am sorry indeed to quit them.

I rec'd a letter from Babe yesterday. - said she was coming up the first of Sept.

Tell Hettie Lou and Murry have not had their picture taken yet.

I have about given up all hope of ever getting yours. I must close for this time. Write soon.

I am as ever yours, Mollie

(This was written as an after thought on this letter)

What's a letter? Let affection tell. A tongue that speaks for those who absent dwell, A silent language uttered to the eye, which envious distance would in vain deny; a link which binds, where circumstances part. A nerve of feeling stretches from heart to heart. Formed to convey like an electric chain, the mystic flash - the lightning of the brain and thrill at once Through its remotest link the throb of passion - By a drop of Ink.



September 20, 1892

Dear Leslie

I rec'd your kind letter a few days ago. Was delighted to hear from you. I am well but want to rest so bad I don't know what to do.

Babe came last Wednesday. I never was so glad to see anyone in my life. I was the only girl in the dining room and it was very lonesome.

I think Murry is doing very well in the Restaurant. They take in about \$2,700 a month and the expenses are about \$1,700 a month.

Lou has been sick the last two weeks. I do not know whether we will stay with them all Winter or not. Will not unless they get us lodging down Town. It is too far to walk. It rained all day yesterday. The sun is shining today though it is quite cool.

I went to Moscow a week ago last Sunday evening, had a very pleasant time, but it was pretty dusty.



*Pullman after Fire of 1890*

*Photo: WSU Libraries*

Abe got through harvesting last Saturday, he had forty two days run. There is considerable threshing to do yet, but we went to work in the Farmers Warehouse. I saw a string of teams there this morning a quarter of a mile long, waiting to be unloaded.

We went down to the Palace Hotel Sunday afternoon to see Mrs. Gabbert. They want us to go there to work awfully bad. They cannot get any one to please them at all.

I have not gone to a single entertainment of any kind, not even to church since the evening Lou was married.

Babe has not been very well since she came but we have lots of fun anyway. She takes pretty well with the boarders. I thought for a while that my tables were going to be deserted but they are coming back now. One of my old boarders told me yesterday that when I was sick or real tired then he would go to someone else's table but not before.

Have you forgotten the picture you promised me? If I am not to see you this Fall the next best thing will be your photo. I get pretty home sick sometimes to see you and Mamma. - Do not know if I can wait until next Summer or not.

It is almost supper time so I must close.

Write Soon. Y's with true love,  
Mollie

October 5, 1892

Leslie Lilly, Corvallis, OR

Dear Leslie,

I rec'd your most welcome letter last evening - Was sorry to hear you had been sick. I have been sick too. - Was not able to work more than half the time so they gave me a week off. I came out with Johnie Young Sunday eve to George Clark.

It is so nice to be out on the farm. I do not know how I can ever go back to the Restaurant. Bristow Gabbert and Babe are coming out after me tomorrow or the next day.

The evening I came I told them I was sick, that I had not eaten anything for a week but I have acquired such an appetite now that Geor. says he does not want me to ever come when I am well.

He and his wife went to town yesterday. They brought your letter. Ines Warfield is staying here, we have a fine time. - Have to get up at four o'clock every morning - Do not like that much.

Lou is still sick - Am getting uneasy about her.

Abe likes his position in the Warehouse splendid. He gets \$2.50 per day. Harvest is nearly over a few machines are still running.

There was a grand Republican rally in Pullman Saturday night. The torchlight procession was immense. But in Babes excitement over it, she and her fellow ran off and left me to go home alone. That I did not enjoy very much.

We went to two shows last week. One was Grace Eden the girl of supernatural strength. It was wonderful indeed. Did you ever see her?

We have been having very hot weather; but it is a little cloudy this morning. I hope it will rain before I go back to town, for the roads are fearfully dusty.

Babe is better satisfied with the country than she was at first.

The cook we have had all summer fell out with me about a week ago. He talked so mean to me that Murry fired him. I was very sorry for he was the best cook we ever had. It was just in the midst of Supper. I was crying so I could not take orders and he was raving around in the kitchen so that no one else could get their order.

Babe had Murry to in and tell him to get out.

He came back Sunday morning and begged my forgiveness. Said he did not know himself what he was angry about, - that I did nothing at all to cause him to act as he did. He had been drinking.

If you succeed in renting a place and wish it I will come. Do just as you think best.

I must close for this time. I doubt very much if you can read this. There is not a pen about the house.

Write Soon

As ever yours, Mollie

October 7th

They came for me yesterday. They did not leave Pullman until nearly two o'clock and had to get back by half past 3 o'clock. I was visiting at Ed Youngs about a mile from Geor's making about 26 miles for them to drive in all.

They were all pretty glad to see me back again.

We went to a show after supper. It was the Worlds Fair Comedy Co. It was very good.

Lou is no better. I told Babe that perhaps I might go home this Winter when Abe does. (He is going soon as he gets through in the Warehouse) but she would not listen to me. - Said she would go crazy in no time if I were not here.

It is suppertime so goodnight.

M.C.

# **Narrative of a Pioneer**

## **Minnie Perkins Tower**

**As told to**

**Howard W. Lawrence**

**1955**

This narrative is that obtained from the oldest living native of the city of Colfax, Mrs. Minnie Perkins Tower. Minnie Perkins was born in Colfax, April 18, 1874, and this has always been her home.

It is my opinion (that of Howard Lawrence) that much of this material is already in recorded print. Mrs. Tower is a very well-known and beloved citizen of Colfax and Whitman County and many of her narrative on early day life in the community have found newspaper publication. The material for this narrative was given to me directly by Mrs. Tower through a series of visits with her and I feel greatly indebted to her for giving the information and for giving of her time -- I enjoyed every minutes of each visit.

Mrs. Tower now resides 623 Perkins Avenue, Colfax, Wash, and is employed as an assistant librarian in the Colfax High School library. she informed me that she has been working in or with this library since its beginning.

Minnie Perkins Tower is the granddaughter of Joel Perkins, who came to the Waitsburg area with his wife and family in 1861 from the Willamette valley, having crossed the plains in 1852 by wagon. Mrs. Tower's father, James Allen Perkins, was but a young man at the time. The family survived the trip very well except for two babies who were born in the journey and who failed to survive.

Her grandparents on her mothers side were thr Ewarts who arrived in Waitsburg July 3, 1871. The grandfather, Capt. James Ewart was a cavalry officer who had served under General Grant in the Civil War. He later became the first Justice of the Peace of the territory from the Snake River and north to the Canadian boundary. The Indians brought their troubles to "big tyee." (Editor: This seem to mean that Ewart conducted some type of court or jurisdictions for Indians.) The Ewarts had resided in Virginia and Kentucky and came west in 1871 by rail and wagon after floating the Illinois River.

Mrs. Tower's father, James Allen Perkins was a young man of about 19 years of age when he came to the Waitsburg area in 1861 from the Willamette. He arrived at the present site of Colfax, July 10, 1870 "after riding all day over the upper country following Indian trails. He stood and gazed at Spokane Falls, knowing that because of the power and location, a city

would eventually arise but there wasn't an inhabitant then. He returned and chose this sheltered, well-watered valley -- Colfax area -- for his home and never regretted it."

He was in Waitsburg with his parents on July 3, 1871, when Capt. James Ewart arrived with his family, including a daughter, Jennie, whom James Perkins was later to marry and who became the mother of Mrs. Minnie Perkins Tower.

The Ewarts were bound for the Puget Sound but James used his power of persuasion, undoubtedly excited of meeting the fair Jennie, and convinced Capt. Ewart to come to the Palouse Country. James Perkins hurried on ahead and anxiously awaited the arrival of the Ewarts, who set a camp across from the present site of the courthouse. James Perkins supplied them with fresh vegetables and berries which he had raised in the home ground.

Jennie Ewart was then only 16 and James Perkins was about 13 years her senior. The Ewarts settled in what came to be called Union Flat, so called because of the settling of so many former Union Troops, as Rebel Flat was similarly named due to the settling of former Rebel troops. There on Union Flat, Capt. Ewart set up his first saw mill and the two years to follow, James Perkins "wore down" a trail from Colfax to Union flat to visit Jennie Ewart. This trail came to known as "Perkins Cutoff."

The day before Jennie was 18, on April 6, 1873, she was married to James Perkins in what was the first wedding in Colfax. "When the village was still very young and had had but three years existence, the outstanding social event took place -- the wedding of Jennie (Sarah Jane) Ewart and James Allen Perkins, the 'Father of Colfax,' the first marriage in Colfax and the second in Whitman County." The wedding was performed by a Presbyterian minister from Walla Walla, Rev. S. B. Sweeney, who journeyed from Walla Walla on horseback to perform the ceremony.

James Perkins has prepared laboriously for the event by constructing a very fine log house which was the first building in Colfax. This he covered with a form of weatherboarding transported from Waitsburg and this flat outer covering of the house was painted white. he built the house so the kitchen was over a well, this he offered his wife the first semblance of water in a home in the west. The house still stands in Colfax and is now located (it has been moved) on the present home of the Perkins'.

Minnie Perkins was the first child born to Jennie and James Allen Perkins and the second white child born in Colfax. The first was a daughter born to a Mr. and Mrs. Nosler, but this child died in infancy. The Noslers built the first hotel in Colfax. Mrs. Tower's grandparents, the Ewarts, built the second hotel in 1878-79. This was an elaborate three-story frame structure but it burned down three years later. Mrs. Tower related that her grandfather had brought the first piano into the area, had the piano in the

hotel and during the course of saving it from the fire, one leg was destroyed. Mr. Ewart then sold the piano at a low price and this, leg repaired, is still in a Colfax home, a Sanders house.

(Editor: The following are statements made by Mrs. Tower, but were not incorporated into a narrative presentation by Mr. Lawrence, the interviewer. These were in response to a series of standard interview questions used in interviews with other persons. Mrs. Tower had no information regarding many questions, but offered these responses. These included here are selected from a much longer list of similar bits of information.)

-- Kerosene lamps were the common sources of lighting. One winter was so severe the kerosene froze in the lamps. Perhaps it was not the same grade of kerosene as in use today (1955).

-- Logs chopped from the wooded area were used for heating.

-- The early settlers did not feel the hills of this area were suited for farming, hence cattle raising was the chief agricultural aim.

-- All the settlers raised their own garden vegetables. Berries and fruit trees were brought in and they enjoyed bountiful harvests of fruits. The Indians were awed by fruit trees and they prized apples highly. Gardening was essential.

-- Hunting and fishing was excellent.

-- Joel Perkins (grandfather of Mrs. Tower) was a horticulturist and successful at crossing different strains of fruits.

-- The first farm implements brought into the area were plows and garden tools.

-- The first industry in Colfax was the saw mill built by James Allen Perkins in 1871. Soon afterward a flour mill was established, in 1873-74, by John Davenport.

-- There was no mining in Whitman County. Mrs. Towers husband was a mining engineer in Steven County.

-- All possible fruit and vegetables were dried for winter use. Canning was done in tin cans sealed with wax.

-- The first teachers institute was held in 1879 by Rev. Cushing Eells.

-- The first school opened in 1872. This was the only school in Whitman, Franklin, and part of Adams Counties. This was a one-room, frame structure, 26 by 36 feet. It served for many years as a civic center. Often the school was dismissed in favor of other activities. The school burned and a second was built in 1883.

-- The high school building, the Hamilton school, housing both elementary and high school students, was begun in 1891.

-- Four major fires pretty well wiped out the town. These were in 1881, 1882, 1892, and 1893.

-- An interesting sidelight on the lonesomeness of the early settler is told by Mrs. Tower. When her father first settled in the present site of Colfax he was the only resident here. He hired a man to aid him in building his log house. While Mr. Perkins was away on a trip to Waitsburg for supplies, the man was left along to carry on with the work and take care of the premises. When Perkins returned, the hired man had a pet field mouse for which he had made a harness and had the mouse tied in the house. The man stated that he had to have some living thing for company.

Information on Mrs. Tower:

-- Attended school in Colfax until 15 years of age.

-- Parents took the family to Oakland, California, in 1889. Father ordered to go there for reasons on health.

-- Minnie Perkins and her sister attended Mills Seminary, now Mills College. She graduated in 1894.

-- Returned to Colfax and taught in the Hamilton School in 1895.

-- Mrs. Tower has four children, 15 grandchildren and four great grandchildren, the best known being Allen Tower, a professor at Birmingham, Alabama.

-- Mrs. Tower's mother owned the first sewing machine in the area, and, as it was the custom to help your neighbors, Mrs. Perkins spent most of her time sewing for the neighbors.

-- Settlers began to appear in Colfax in 1872, making Colfax the oldest town in this area. The settlement was first called "The Forks Settlement" due to the location of the forks of the rivers.

-- Whitman County was originally part of Steven County. Anderson Cox put the bill through the legislature in 1871-72 for establishing Whitman County. James Perkins was also instrumental in this.

-- Grandfather Ewart organized the G.A.R. in Colfax, or on the Union Flat settlement. He was the one who raised the money for the monument now found in the courthouse yard.