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Zane Grey

Creator of the Modern Western Novel

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AUTHORS

William Wilbert, now a resident of Spokane, is a student of Western Literature and former contributor to the Bunchgrass Historian. His interest in novelist Zane Grey springs from Grey's association with Whitman county and Eastern Washington.

The authors of the various essays about, or touching upon, Penawawa area themes are introduced with the successive articles.

THE COVER

Book jacket illustrations of three of Zane Grey's novels, including his two best known books, *Riders of the Purple Sage* and *The U.P. Trail.*

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Zane Grey: Creator of the Modern Western Novel

by
William F. Wilbert

Zane Grey, dentist turned author, started writing about 1900 and continued for over thirty years. For a time in the 1920s, he had the greatest commercial success of any author of fiction in the United States. Several of his books are still in print.

He turned out books at a prodigious rate, although not quite up to speed of some later authors of light fiction. His themes were outdoor life and the "Western," which he, with many others, invented. Admittedly some of his Westerns were set in Pennsylvania and Ohio, but only those with 18th Century themes.

Grey wrote two novels with Eastern Washington settings. The best known is Desert of Wheat, *partly composed at Hooper in 1918; it is a story mainly about the effects of the World War of 1914-18. The other,* Horse Heaven Hill, *is the subject of the following essay, which takes the form of an article length review.*

Despite its name, Horse Heaven Hill *is not about an arid ridge located in present Benton County, but wanders about Washington and Idaho. Perhaps this sort of geographic license is standard for the novelists of the Palouse; another novelist, lesser-known, once put a town named Washtucna at a site near the actual town of Steptoe.*

Readers of The Bunchgrass Historian *may recall an earlier article on Grey, "Eastern Washington According to Zane Grey," by Ron Szabo, which appeared in the 1982 Fall issue (Vol. 10, No. 3).*

Horse Heaven Hill
by Zane Grey
Pocket Books, reissued 1984

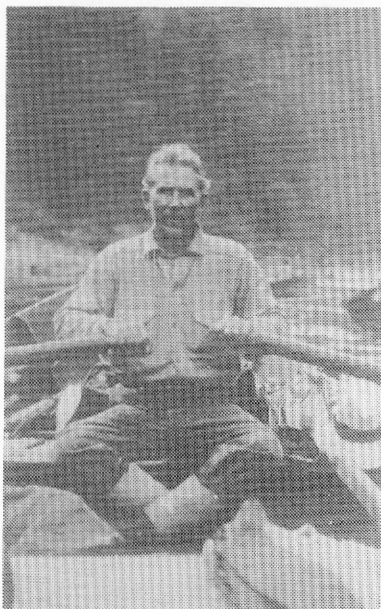
I

Zane Grey, a generally useful volume in Twayne's United States Authors Series, tells us that *Horse Heaven Hill,* a western romance set in Eastern Washington, is "the worst novel Zane Grey ever wrote." This potentially damning charge is, as we shall see, unwarranted, especially when viewed in light of unusual circumstances that occasioned the book's first publication. But in order to defend the novel properly, it behooves us to come to a fair understanding of who Zane Grey was and what he attempted to do as a writer of western novels. Over the years, Grey has been persistently misconceived. Academics dismiss his books as trivial without having read them and new generations of entertainment-oriented readers think of him simply as an old fashioned Louis L'Amour.

Writers should be judged on their strengths, perhaps in Grey's case in spite of obvious weaknesses. Zane Grey has something to tell us, often in a roughshod, haphazard manner, about what it means to be a westerner—the essential American. My intention is not to exalt Grey by claiming that he is a fine writer of high literary merit somehow overlooked by the critics. He is scarcely that. But it is unfortunate that his real strengths and his enormous contribution to the modern western novel has been accorded so little serious attention. There is a pervasive myth that there is virtually nothing of merit in his many volumes of novels and stories.

Grey's books won him worldwide fame and considerable personal wealth, but his critical reputation has never been high. During the mid-1920's, when his works were consistant best sellers (in fact, the *only* series of hardcover western best sellers in American publishing history), one New York critic quipped that the substance of his books could be written on the back of a postage stamp. More recently, Howard Lamar's *Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West* (1977) summed up Grey's current critical status by saying: "At his worst Grey wrote sentimentalized escape literature of the most banal kind, marred by pompous moralizing against various kinds of simplistically conceived sin, and by an unthinking racism, presented in a pretentious and awkward style; at his best he wrote little differently."

It is easy to find fault with Zane Grey and many of the charges against him are accurate, as far as they go. He is hardly Chekhovian in his analysis of the inner workings of the human psyche and his frequently extended passages of dialogue are often stilted and sometimes pointless. Although on the surface a realist, his plots are barely disguised Victorian melodramas—David Belasco yarns set amongst thundering herds or starkly isolated somewhere out on the purple sage. But there is more to Grey than first meets the perhaps self-important sensibilities of mainstream literary critics. Good popular fiction (and, at his best, Grey can be surprisingly effective) is not dependent on finely wrought style or intellectual complexity. Nor will enduring entertainments stand the test of time if they are merely sensational—violent or sexy or both. What makes for lasting pop fiction is a successful blend of unforgettable characterization with swiftly moving narrative. Sherlock Holmes, Tarzan of the Apes, Max Brand's Whistling Dan Barry or Silvertip, and Grey's Lassiter or Nevada all have something in common. Their characters are forceful, unique, pure and somehow magically exotic, and they propell their respective stories along at breakneck speed.



Zane Grey at the oars of a row boat. Grey was a steelhead fisherman, much attracted to Northwest waters. In addition to his better known novels and motion picture scripts, he wrote several books on fishing, camping and similar themes.

The difference between pop fiction and genuine literature is sometimes difficult to define soley on the basis of content. Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo or Robert Louis Stevenson's Long John Silver are every bit as unique and exotic as Tarzan of the Apes. Captain Ahab drives forward Melville's epic of the great white whale in ways technically indistinguishable from Sherlock Holmes' obesessive quest to unravel the singular case of *The Sign of Four.* And one can, with equal ease, read virtually depthless symbolic significance into high or low art. (Witness the French critical adoration of American pop fiction and films.) Indeed, popular art may be far more suitable territory for intellectuals in monomaniacal search for clear-cut social meaning. Marcel Proust or Henry James are not only too intricate for allegorical interpretation; they also sit comfortably far from the common crowd, great writers but nothing close to normal.

Zane Grey was, above all else, a normal American. Like his characters he was motivated by powerful, honest and rather plain emotions, often in reaction to what he considered wrong or unjust. When he became a phenomenally successful writer living in a Southern California mansion overlooking Catalina harbor, he was often plagued by self-doubt and endured hopeless bouts of dispair. He hobnobbed with Hollywood's elite while yearning for an always-elusive critical respectability. Following R. L. Stevenson's cue in *Across the Plains,* he was inspired to attempt "an enduring literary work" about the American West. As he penned *The U. P. Trail* (1918), his intended masterpiece, he felt woefully unequal to the task and slightly "presumptuous." Yet his

saga of the construction of the transcontinental railroad, in continuous print since its first publication, has nevertheless endured . . .

Few of our writers can boast a more typically American boyhood. Born Pearl Gray, the fourth child and second son of Josephine (nee Zane) and Lewis Gray of Zanesville, Ohio (about an hour's drive directly east of Columbus and situated on the banks of the Muskingum River), he grew up passionately devoted to the major obsessions of many of his male peers: dime novels, fishing and baseball. He attended the University of Pennsylvania on a baseball scholarship and studied dentistry, his father's profession. After graduation in 1896, he opened a dental practice at 100 West 74th Street, New York City, where, he may have reasoned, there were plenty of urban teeth in need of good-old-fashioned Ohio care. As it turned out, however, he found himself with few patients and many idle hours. In his spare time, he turned to writing. (On the surface at least, Gray's experiences in New York paralleled those of a young Scottish doctor who, about a decade earlier, opened a marginally successful practice near London. Conan Doyle gave us Sherlock Holmes and Professor Challenger. Grey, on the other side at the Atlantic, created the modern western.)

Pearl Gray's first publication was an article for a fishing magazine, but he soon tried his hand at fiction, producing *Betty Zane,* an historical romance based on the supposed adventures of an ancestress. Then, in 1907, as if following a script written by the gods of pulp fiction, he made the acquaintance of Colonel Charles Jesse "Buffalo" Jones, a self-proclaimed frontiersman in New York to promote wild-life films for Nickelodeon distribution. Gray proposed a biography, finally titled *The Last of the Frontiersmen* (1908), a work which as late as 1976 was still being reissued in paperback. On hunting trips out West, Jones introduced Gray to the rapidly waning frontier (officially closed in 1893 by historian Fredrick Jackson Turner on evidence gleaned from the 1890 census) and real-life westerners—hunters, trappers, guides, miners and cowboys. Gray (by now writing under the name Zane Grey) was enchanted. He had found his true subject in the American West, a fitting stage for endless adventures and romance.

Grey did not fabricate the western out of whole cloth, but he did, almost singlehandedly, transform a tired genre by populating dime novel stories with believable modern characters. Frontier fiction, an American literary staple from the very beginning, has remained remarkably consistent in theme and plot since 1823 when James Fenimore Cooper issued *The Pioneer,* the first of five Leatherstocking tales featuring the archetypical western hero, Natty Bumppo. Throughout the 19th century, Cooper's stories and character types were rewritten countless times by dime novel hacks—Edward S. Ellis, Edward L. Wheeler, Edward Z. C. Judson (Ned Buntline) and their like. (Did dime novel publishers from Erasmus Beadle onward invariably hire Eds and Neds in order to keep things simple?) The seemingly endless adventures of Seth Jones, Deadwood Dick, Hurricane Nell, Calamity Jane and Buffalo Bill entertained generations of readers, most of them comfortably ensconced in eastern middle-class urban homes, throughout the Victorian period. By the turn of the century, however, the heavy-handed conventions of the dime novel had begun to lose the cutting edge of realism. The western, like the American detective story, can be impossibly contrived in plot and populated by a supporting cast of outlandish caricatures (in fact, the more bizarre, the better) but readers must be made to believe that somehow the whole thing is "real."

One of the best ways to make an audience believe in the impossible is to give them characters with which they can instantly identify—characters, in other words, who are creatures of common experience, just like the guy and the girl next door. This is the challenge of the modern western, from Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902) to the latest Louis L'Amour saga. In many ways Zane Grey, a product of America's heartland, is unsurpassed in his ability to capture the normal American character, which, he insists, is also the western hero.

Aficiandos of *The Virginian* have habitually overpraised Wister at Grey's expense. While it is true that Wister was the first to give us a clear portrait of the cowboy hero, his courtship of an eastern school marm, and his showdown with a prototypical bad guy, he misses the true spirit of the American character. Wister's superficial charm as a writer is (for me at least) seriously undercut by an essential meanness of spirit inimical to the western ideals of democracy and fair play. Wister is at heart an easter snob, Harvard summa cum laude, at home with bluebloods like Teddy Roosevelt and Edith Wharton, by far a superior writer. *The Virginian* is a hodgepodge of Bull Moose Party politics and sagebrush fascism punctuated by a stirring endorsement of lynching. Grey, on the other hand, is a good-hearted democrat who champions the common man against impersonal authoritarian forces—often enough evil centralized governments (such as the Mormon empire in *Riders of the Purple Sage)* and greedy, unbridled capitalists (like the duplicitous backers of *The U.P. Trail).* Though morally conservative (sometimes to the point of prudishness) Grey's heroes and heroines constantly strive for justice and even his toughest gunslingers know that violence is ultimately self-defeating. Beneath his sinister black garb Lassiter, the outlaw hero of *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912), longs for the day when he can "put [his] guns away and be a man." The statement is also a confession that beneath Lassiter's exotic pulp-hero exterior lies the soul of a perfectly normal and peace-loving American.

Despite the fact that Grey wrote for the pulps (his work was commonly serialized in popular magazines such as *All-Story, Munsey's, Popular* and *Argosy)* he is serious in his attempt to do something Wister apparently could not do; that is, write full-blown novels with well-defined dramatic structure. *The Virginian,* regardless of its historic importance, is not so much a novel as a collection of local-color sketches with little interest in character development. However, Grey's devotion to the conventions of the Victorian novel compells a serious interest in character. Oddly enough, this commitment has the sometimes ironic effect of making his novels seem almost modern. The contemporary western, in reaction to the hard-boiled, "gut-busting" horse operas immediately following the Second World War, now demands characters capable of some range of emotion. Today's male western heroes are not stoically wooden in the face of psychological turmoil. And, conversely, women are once again vital to the western plot, as well as active and heroic in their own right. From the beginning, Grey's men and women displayed nearly equal emotional complexity and both were capable of genuine strength of character. Grey's males are real men, but they can weep freely when situations demand it. Warren Neale in *The U.P. Trail,* for example, is moved to tears on behalf of both his lover, Allie Lee, and his best friend, Larry Red King. By the same token, Grey's women can be every bit as decisive and heroic as his men. Although Jane Withersteen, heroine of *Riders of the Purple Sage,* finally submits to Lassiter's male authority, the moral crises she endures and her usually dominant

strength of will remain Grey's primary concerns. And, as we will soon note in *Horse Heaven Hill,* Grey's women can actually supplant men as the traditional heroic figures of the western . . .

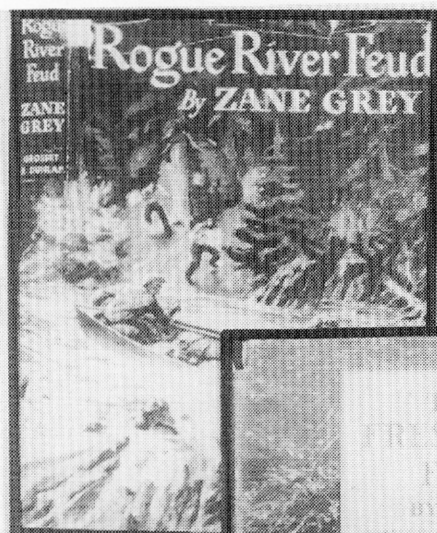
Character is always crucial to the best of adventure fiction. Huckleberry Finn is often a hair-raising suspense story, not simply because Mark Twain is good at describing action. We feel that action all the more because Huck is so real and so perfectly attuned to the environment that, often enough, threatens to do him in. While Grey's conception of human psychology never approaches Twain's, he is nevertheless a writer of character. His action and suspense are initiated by character and character is in turn defined by action. But true American character (in Grey as well as in Twain) is more than this. Somehow character has to be inextricably linked to environment, or, in Grey's case, to the western landscape.

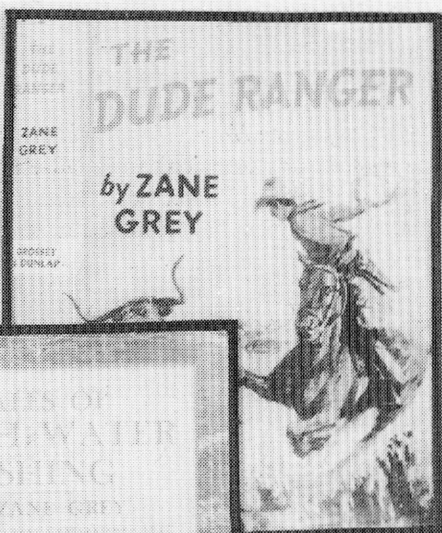
Much like historian Walter Prescott Webb, Grey believed that western environment determined character and, when all the ingredients were right, promoted both justice and benign democracy. Wister's westerner is an easterner cut loose from civilization and the result is really savagery sanctioned by a quick draw and a rope. Grey, all his life an avid outdoorsman who obsessively explored the West, saw greatness in the land and believed it good for all men's souls. Earl Stanley Gardner, creator of forensic sleuth Perry Mason and a Zane Grey fan, accurately summed up Grey's unique conception of western character:

> Zane Grey was a literary giant. He had the knack of tying his characters into the land, and the land into the story. There were other western writers who had fast and furious action, but Zane Grey was the one who could make that action seem not only convincing but inevitable, and somehow you got the impression that the bigness of the country generated a bigness of character.

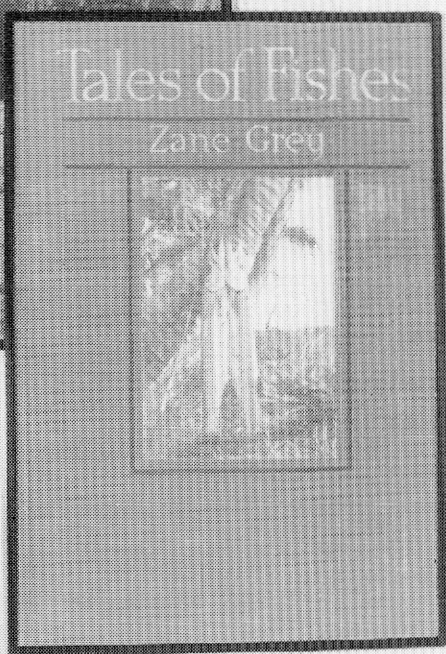
Grey's descriptions of the West, sometimes flamboyant and "purple," still ring true. He knew the land and the people about whom he speaks. And he has a fair grasp of that mad sweep of American history from Reconstruction to the early decades of this century—a time of Robber Barons, brave mechanical engineers, old trappers turned scouts, Texas Rangers, borderline outlaws seeking justice and women who endured. There are better western writers, but nearly every major talent to follow in the genre owes Grey a great debt. Could Jack Schaefer have given us Shane if Grey had not first created Lassiter? And what does the repressed and ultimately tragic love triangle in A.B. Guthrie's *The Big Sky* owe to a similar three-sided relationship in *The U.P. Trail?*

Grey was a well-read man who loved Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Hawthorne, R. L. Stevenson and Wordsworth, yet he knew he was not of their company. Still he hoped to his dying day that some of his work might last. He once penciled this line in his diary: "A cunning writer will avail himself of images likely to be stored in the minds of his readers; with appeal to their emotion, to the general experience of mankind." Apparently cunningly written popular literature survives as well as, or even better than, some critically acclaimed literature. Virtually all of Grey's major works are still in print, reissued annually in freshly designed paperbacks that can be found in every bookstore, supermarket, drugstore and airport across the land . . .


Rogue River Feud
By ZANE GREY
ZANE GREY


THE DUDE RANGER
by ZANE GREY
ZANE GREY

TALES OF FRESHWATER FISHING
BY ZANE GREY


Tales of Fishes
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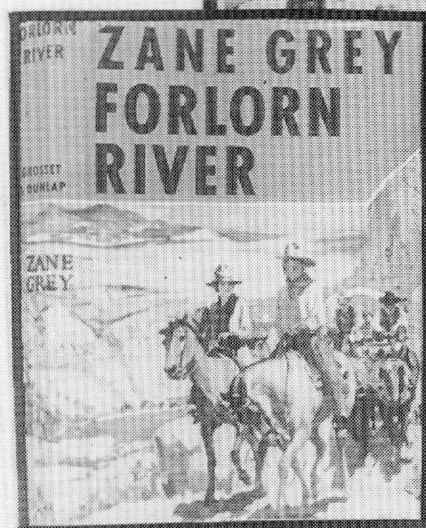

ZANE GREY
FORLORN RIVER
ZANE GREY

II

Zane Grey wrote *Horse Heaven Hill* in 1934 near the end of his career when he was finding it increasingly difficult to serialize his work in magazines. A short novel, only 181 pages in the latest Pocket Books edition, the work did not see print during Grey's lifetime. When it was finally issued in 1959, twenty years after its author's death, Harper & Brothers' editors decided that the book did not conform to the "Zane Grey image." Grey's original manuscript places the story in the Roaring Twenties in northern Lincoln County Washington near the Columbia River and within sight of the foothills of the Kettle Range. Harpers' editors, for reasons now obscure, hastily fictionalized place names and moved the novel back in time to the 1880's, that semi-mythical era when the West was not quite tamed. As a result, the novel as it now stands is filled with jarring anachronisms, especially in the dialogue. Grey's cowboys frequently say unlikely things like "skip it" or "that's jake" or refer to fools as "bozoes." And disguising the Columbia River as "the great Oregon, mighty river of the Northwest" and the Colville Indian Reservation as the "Clespelem" reservation simply undercuts Grey's credibility as a writer who prided himself on the accuracy of his western descriptions.

Harpers, Grey's hardcover publisher since the heady days of bestsellerdom, did an old friend of great disservice and their shoddy editorial tampering may be a major reason why *Horse Heaven Hill* does not have much of a following even among die-hard Grey fans. Carlton Jackson, author of Twayne's critical tome on Grey, may not be alone in his contention that the novel is Grey's worst. But Jackson does not give the book a fair chance and never once alludes to obvious elements of the story that set it apart from, if definitely not above, Grey's extensive oevre. *Horse Heaven Hill* daringly inverts western conventions by casting an 18-year-old cowgirl in the role of western hero. What is more, the heroine's most dynamic and memorable relationship is not with the novel's ostensive male lead, but with another woman, the heroine's best friend and benefactor.

Like most Grey novels the plot of *Horse Heaven Hill* is slight but strangely compelling. Lark Burrell, a fiesty orphaned cowgirl from Idaho's Salmon River Country, is taken into the Wade family of more civilized Eastern Washington largely at the request of her socially "advanced" but good-hearted second cousin, Marigold Wade. Soon after Lark's arrival, she discovers a diabolical scheme on the part of one Hurd Blanding to drive wild horses to Montana and sell them for chicken feed, an unlikely enterprise in an 1880's time frame. Blanding is described as a "handsome" but "evil" man who is not "a regular cowboy" and hails from that very suspicious state to the south, California. Although Blanding's dastardly plan has little direct impact on Lark's personal situation, she instantly feels a powerful kinship with the wild horses of the open sage, in her and Grey's view the symbols of a West sacrificed to human greed and a heartless society that values economic progress at the expense of natural freedom. During the events of the novel that follow, Lark is instrumental in organizing the combined forces of human decency and virtually benign vigilante justice to set things right. In a daring midnight sortie, she single-handedly frees her beloved mustangs. Then, as her friend

Marigold and her stalwart but hesitant beau Stanley Weston look on, Lark confronts and defeats Blanding in a beautiful reversal of that most revered of male western rituals—the gunfight.

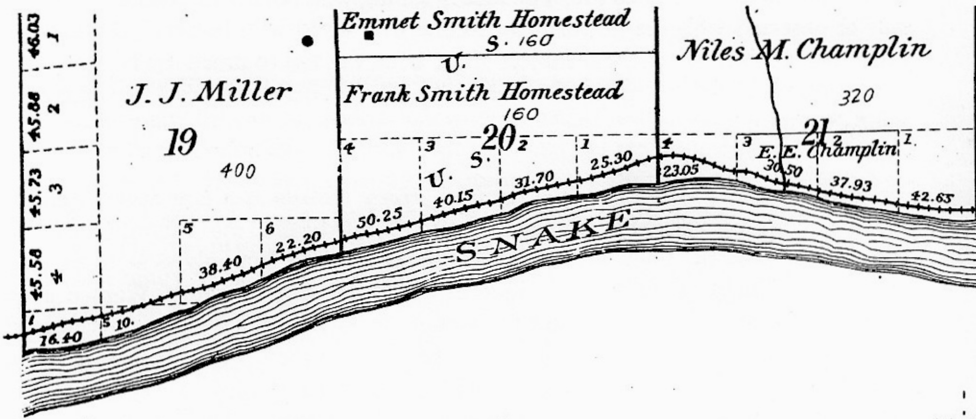
After he completed the novel, Grey explained in a letter what he considered its central theme: "it intrigued me. The idea of killing wild horses for chicken feed. I was sort of obsessed with the horror of it, to one who loved wild horses." But surely he must have known that the real subject of the book was not so much the horses as "one who loved wild horses"—in other words, Lark Burrell, perhaps Grey's most active and willful western heroine.

Although Grey was scarcely a feminist, *Horse Heaven Hill* now seems ironically modern. Until very recently, women have been firmly bridled into subordinate roles in the popular western. They were important to the formula, but only as mothers, diversionary love interests, or the mouthpieces of conventional morality. Women almost never fired a gun, or rode hell-bent-for-leather, or initiated the western novel's course of action. Heroic action was the exclusive province of men, while women sat by the fireside looking lovely in the purple twilight. If they were called to action at all, they were almost always portrayed as valiant servants, dressing the wounds of smitten heroes or fetching water in sturdy wooden buckets as the men fretted over the real stuff, such as how to get those Conestogas across the prairies, or how to stop the badguys in their tracks.

It is clear in *Horse Heaven Hill* that Grey wanted to portray, as positively as his own limitations would allow, strong images of western women. He may have opted to set the book in the Twenties in order to enhance the acceptance of heroines unconventional only in the context of the genre western. Grey probably believed he was drawing an accurate portrait of a typical Jazz Age young woman in Marigold Wade. (See John O'Hara for far more compelling descriptions of the real thing.) Marigold is a shameless flirt, crass materialist and user of strong language who maintains literal if not spiritual chastity during a potentially treacherous affair with Hurd Blanding. In the final scenes, however, she casts Blanding and the possibility for illicit sex aside in order to remain true to her pure friendship with her heroic cousin Lark. Nevertheless, it is Marigold and not Lark who develops an accurate vision of what may be wrong with the West (and America as a whole?) when she pronounces with characteristic cynicism that, when all is said and done, "Men are to blame" for the corruption of wild nature and the unjust subordination of women.

Lark Burrell may well be one of Grey's best heroines. She embodies, perhaps even more than gunslingers like Lassiter or Nevada, everything that Grey holds dear. She is independent, intuitively intelligent, resourceful, physically brave, pure of heart and perfectly in tune with nature. Lark, Grey tells us, "was a child of nature, a little mystic in some sense, and passionately fond of horses, in fact of all animals."

Lark can do everything a man can do and more. She prefers blue jeans to dresses and revels in the fact that ranch hands mistake her for a young man when she appears in cowboy garb. Like Jane Eyre, she begins the novel as "not bad looking," then becomes ever more radiant and sensual as her story progresses. Her father was a typical man of the West who "liked unfenced ranges" and her mother, whom Lark resembles, was "a dusky-eyed beauty" with Nez Perce "Indian blood." As a child Lark developed



7 8
18

Emsley Flincher

Lucinda

Residence

PENAWAWA

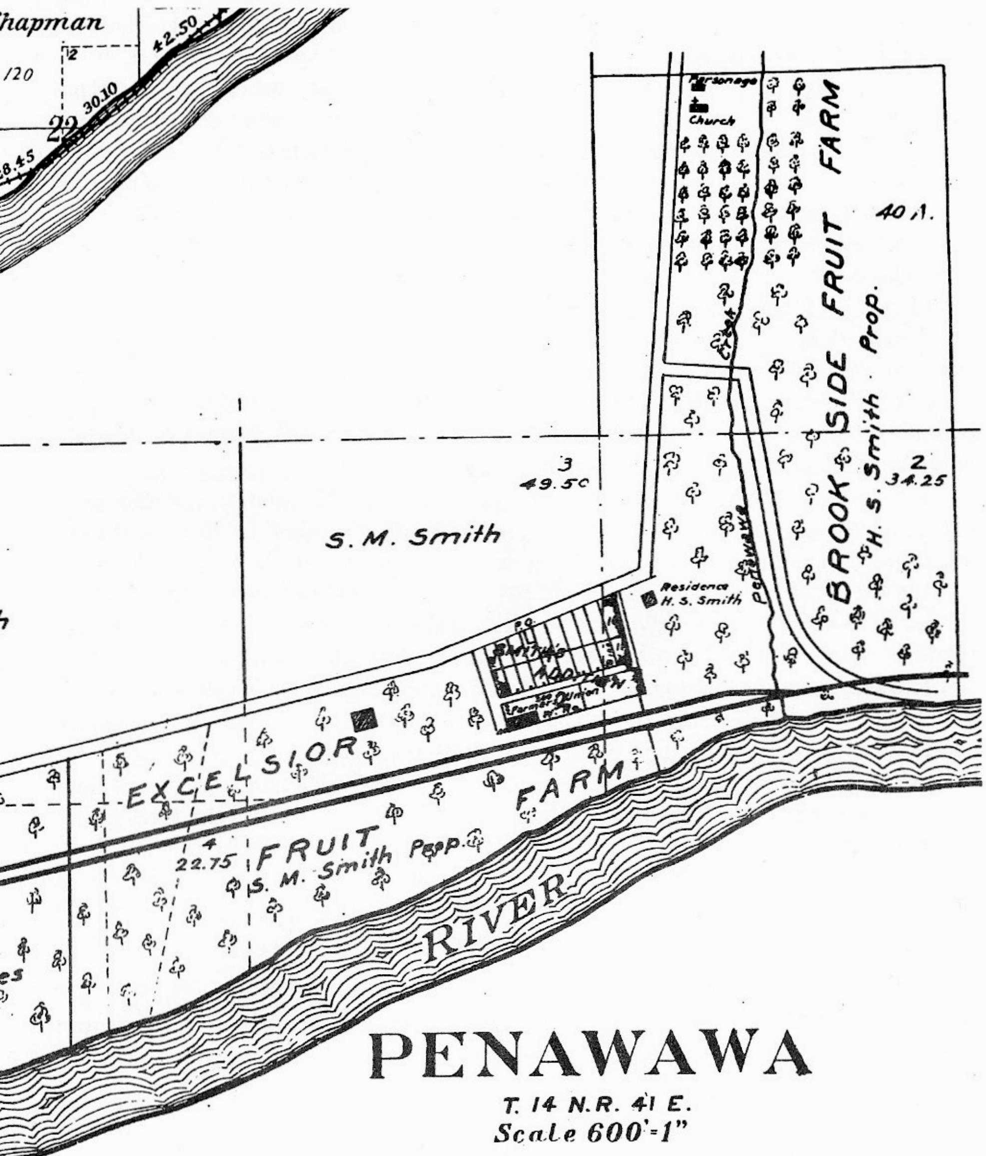
O. R. & N.

ORCHA

Lucinda Smith
Smith & Armstrong

3RD ST.
2ND ST.
UNION
LIBERTY ST.
MAIN ST.
COMMERCIAL
DUNWAY ST.
FINCHER ST.
Feed Barn
Ferry Ldg.

SNAKE



Accompanying text begins on page 15.

an affinity for wild horses, which she caught and tamed. As a passionate young woman she thrills at the touch of her lover's hand. In quite another mood, she is thrown into violent despair when she suspects Marigold has gone astray. But when the situation calls for it, her moral decisions become instant actions. She is "*man* enough to let those wild horses out" of Bladings corral and, when the time comes for the final showdown, her hands fill with iron in the blink of an eye and "a shot cracked out. Blanding screamed like a wild thing in agony. The impact of a bullet spun him around, as the gun went flying." Lark, "gun extended," turned to Blanding's cohorts and announced, "Get him up . . . pack him away—or some of you'll get another dose of Idaho."

The words might well have been spoken by Lassiter, or Shane, or Hondo, or Marshall Dillon, or the Outlaw, Josey Wales. But in *Horse Heaven Hill* they are spoken by a beautiful young woman with nerves of steel. Her grit is as true as Mattie Ross's in Charles Portis's 1968 celebration of the western heroine, and, once again, it was Grey who blazed the trail . . .

Grey's feminist vision fails him only in the final and forgettable last chapter of the book. Indominatable Lark is made to submit to milksop Stanley, her fiance, despite the fact that she will remain at heart a "lone wolf." She promises "to love, honor and obey" a modern, duplicatious and weak-willed man of the corrupted West because (apparently) Grey sees no other option. Marriage, in true Victorian fashion, is the only happy ending as far as young women are concerned.

Like so many popular writers, Grey wants it both ways. He wants a book about unconventional, active women (one an urban sophistocate, the other the spirit of the dying frontier), but he must conclude by giving lip service to the status quo. Marigold repents her fleshly sins even before she has actually committed them and Lark, her mustangs freed, travels meekly back home to Idaho with Stanley. All is well in the world of fiction; the sacred conventions of most readers have been reconfirmed.

It is almost as if Grey himself did not realize the power and resilience of his best characters. They were charged with just enough conviction and passion to inspire countless imitations, not a few of which surpass their prototypes. If we value the western at all, we owe Zane Grey a certain debt of gratitude. Even though his imagination had little depth, he got the basic images right. For better or worse, he gives us the modern western.

Five on Penawawa

A short tour through the Snake River settlement of Penawawa is provided by the following five short pieces.

The first is a description, written on 1882, of Penawawa at the time it was an emerging little town. The author is Frank Gilbert, writing in Historical Sketches of Walla Walla, Whitman, Columbia and Garfield Counties, Washington Territory and Umatilla County, Oregon.

The second and third essays are reminiscences of two parties who spent their youth at Penawawa. They also include some indirect recollections, that is, accounts passed on by an earlier generation. The authors are sisters, Iris Swift Pope and Mary Elizabeth Swift Beegle. Their accounts are provided to The Bunchgrass Historian *by Vivian Traphagan of Redding, California, the sister of two authors.*

The remaining essays touch on Penawawa, some ranging over a good deal more territory and presenting other stories as well.

One is an extract from a short family history, "The Chamberlains in the Nez Perce War," by Myrtle Johnson Miller Voshell, contributed to The Bunchgrass Historian *by Thelma Kay Miller of Colfax.*

The last essay is an oral interview from the mid-1930s, originally published in volume 3 of a series called Told by the Pioneers. *It is the reminiscence of George Miller, telling of his trip from Western Oregon to Whitman County and his adventures in crossing various rivers, including his experiences at the Penawawa ferry.*

Penawawa

Frank Gilbert

1882

The creek that bears this name heads near Union Flat, and runs southwest a distance of eighteen miles, emptying into Snake river fourteen miles below Almota. The first settlers along the stream were Montgomery and Trimble, who came with stock in 1870. They sold to Ed Johnson in the spring of 1871, who thus became the first permanent settler. He is still engaged in stock-raising and farming there. At the mouth of the stream lies the little village of Penawawa. In 1872 the territorial road from Walla Walla to Colville was located to cross Snake river at this point, and C. C. Cram established a ferry, which began running in December, 1872. This then became the crossing for Colfax and Walla Walla travel, as well as a landing point for passengers and goods coming up by steamer. The present ferry was built by Cram & Son in 1877, and is now owned by W. S. Newland. E. Fincher was the first permanent settler, and the town was laid out by Cram, Byrd and Fincher, in November, 1877. In 1873 Mr. Cram built a warehouse and A. L. Kiser a hotel and stable. In the summer of 1878 Elliott & Andrews opened a store, and Hawley, Dodd & Co. built a warehouse. A post office was established, and Penawawa became one of the recognized towns of Whitman county. It is fifty-three miles below Lewiston and twenty-five above Texas Ferry, at which point passengers change from the cars to the boat. Many of them land at Penawawa and take the stage for Colfax and other places. This is also quite an important shipping and receiving point for a large section of country. The town contains a store, hotel, livery stable, stage station, post office, ferry and several dwelling houses.

Growing Up In Penawawa

Iris Swift Pope

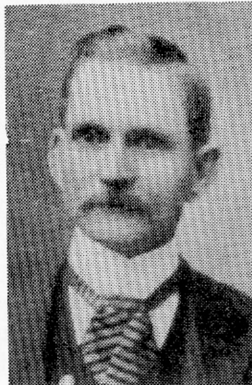
I came into this world on April 18, 1897 in a tiny rustic cabin in Southern Whitman County in Eastern Washington. I joined my parents, Silas Edward Swift Pierce and Delilah Lane Pierce Swift, and two brothers, Roy Virgil and John Elmer Swift. We lived on this fruit farm until I was about three years old. My parents bought an unimproved farm a short distance away on the bank of the Snake River. We lived in a tent until a house could be built and the house was our home until I was thirteen years old—excepting during school term when we left the farm and rented a house in some small nearby town so we children could attend school. There were many things in our lives to add to childhood fun and happiness. One highlight was our cayuse, Powderface—so named because he was white except for a scrattering of brown flecks like gunpowder all over his face. Old Powd, as we kids called him, was very gentle and careful even when the folks put all four of us on him at once. But, oh my, how stubborn he could be at times. As I became older and rode him myself there was no thrill to me like galloping up and down the road until my braids were undone and the wind whipping my face. We loved the river and played along its banks, delighted when we heard the

steamboat whistle and saw it come chugging around the bend. The stern-wheelers were the only means of transportation up and down the river until the railroad was built between about 1900 and 1906. We youngsters named Swift thought it was really something when one of the nearby railroad stations was named Swift after our father.

Other pleasant memories of my childhood included the perfectly lovely little wild flowers we gathered as we roamed the grass covered hills in the early spring—little fragrant buttercups, shooting stars, and adorable little yellowbells (which are really tiny wild tulips,) and also the large showy yellow daisies of the balsa arisa which turned the hillside into an immense patch of gold; also many, many others. Our toys and playthings were mostly of our own invention and I shall always cherish the memory of how much fun we had on the merry-go-round built by my brother Roy.

For many years a familiar sight was that of quite a large group of Indians—some walking and some riding cayuses—making their annual summer trip from Umatilla to Lapwai. It was said they went to Lapwai where they could pick wild berries which were a part of their diet. In time they went by train instead of the old way, so we saw them no more in their single file march.

When we children were of high school age our parents sold the farm and bought the ferry at Penawawa, which was a part of the old Territorial road between Spokane and Walla Walla. This was where I grew up and later met my husband, William C. (Bill) Pope. In 1914 we were married and lived there with our two daughters, Margaret and Myrtle until we moved to Seattle in the fall of 1924.



The three Cram brothers, mentioned in almost all accounts of early Penawawa and its environs.

This little story would not be complete without making mention of my grandparents—all four of them—. They all crossed the plains by wagon train. My maternal grandparents came from Cook County, Illinois. The paternal grandfather, John Nelson Swift, came from Missouri, and my grandmother, Elizabeth McDonald, was from Glasgow, Scotland. Grandfather Swift went first to California in 1848 and then to Oregon before 1852. They were married in Oregon when grandmother was just thirteen years old. There were twelve children born to them of whom my father was about the sixth.

When my father was about nineteen, in the spring of 1878, he went from Oregon to eastern Washington by horseback. When he saw the beautiful rolling hills and expanses of bunchgrass he fell in love with the country. He told of being able to ride all day without seeing a fence. In time he met my mother, Delilah Lane Pierce (named for Governor Lane of Oregon) who had moved to eastern Washington with her parents in 1888. My grandfather Samuel Andrew Pierce married Emily Jane Turnidge in Illinois. They came across the plains by covered wagon to Oregon territory. They raised a large family of which my mother was one of the younger ones. In 1856 Grandfather Pierce was a scout with the Army in the war against the Indians and served in the Rogue River and Yakima uprisings. At other times he was a builder of fireplaces (chimneys as they were then called) and this meant the family moved wherever he found work.

Over the years there were three sisters and one brother added to our family. They were named Mary Elizabeth, Belva Lucille, Vivian Elena, and Howard Edward, Howard being born between Belva and Vivian.

Our Childhood In Penawawa
Mary Elizabeth Swift Beegle

From a letter by Elizabeth (Lizzie) to her niece, Barbara.

Yes, you perhaps do have some of the pioneer spirit of your forebears. I think I do, too. It seems very fascinating to me to go out and dig and plant and build a home from what the lands afford.

When I was young I would dream (day dream) of homesteading. Our mother (your grandmother) was undoubtably a very brave little woman. She was very versatile. As kids we never knew how very poor we were, but I think she did. My childhood was one of security and I recall that comforting feeling I had in the evening hours with papa and mamma in our very humble little living room on the old ranch. Our parents read and knew something of what went on in the world and discussed the things they read. I feel that I have a rich heritage in spite of few earthly possessions. We received the newspaper "Spokesman Review" and across the top it read "Neighborhood News of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, British Columbia, and Alaska." It was published in Spokane and was a weekly, I think. When Iris and I were little kids we used to swing under two old Box Elder trees in a rope swing with a board notched at each end to fit into the rope. We used to sing at the top of our lungs and I really thought I was singing like an opera singer. How funny it seems now for I never could sing! Anyhow,

Steamboat moving upstream on the Snake River.

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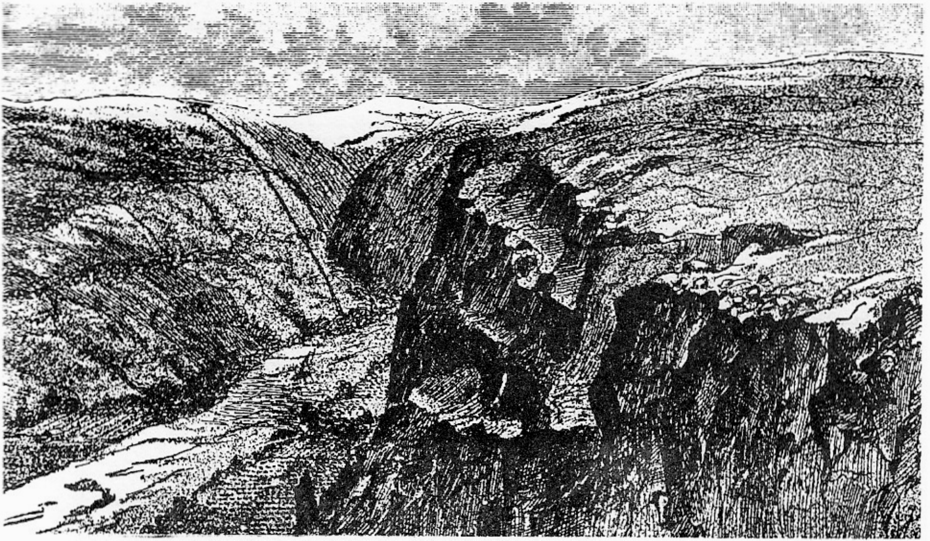
ignorance was bliss in that case. Iris remembers when a band of Indians would sometimes march right by our kitchen door. I can't remember that, but I do remember when an Indian (just one at a time) would come. I still have a tiny little bonnet that mama made out of a sleeve of a 'waist' (now called a blouse.) It may have been a 'muttonleg' sleeve. I must have been a tiny baby, but I've sure made up for it now. We had a friend who went to Alaska at the time of the Alaskan gold rush. We called Him 'Klondike' and I do not know what his name was. I was only about one year old when we moved out of Long Hollow to the ranch on Cromwell Bar. That Bar was named for friends of mama's and papa's. When the railroad was put through the station was called "Swift." We sold the ranch and moved to Penawawa when I was eleven years old. But those first eleven years of my life seem to hold more than that amount of history. Time seems almost endless to a child.

I think so often of our dear mother. I realize now that she was quite a brave woman, and she really was not old when she passed away. How hard she worked through my very young years—made gardens, took in washing from some of the civil engineers when the railroad was being built up the Snake River. She saved eggs in an egg crate in the cellar to take to Colfax to trade for staple groceries like sugar and flour. Papa worked in harvest fields and dear mama was left alone with us little kids in that lonely place. But they fed us well and kept us warm. Such common people are the *real* heros to me.



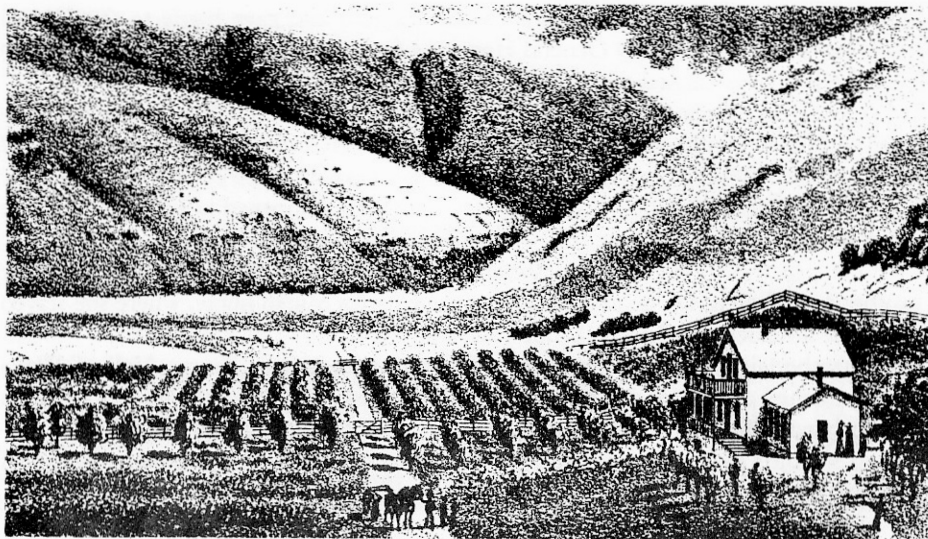
Early Penawawa pictures are very rare. This drawing depicts an artist's conception of an orchard viewed from the top of the Snake River canyon in 1888, location unspecified.

The Chamberlains in the Nez Perce Indian War of 1877

Myrtle Johnson Miller Voshell

James Chamberlain, born Jan. 5, 1825, in Indiana, married Angelitha Jones in 1849. He was the son of Henry Chamberlain who came from New York to Indiana. After James Chamberlain was married he came from Indiana to Oakland, Oregon. From there he came to Whitman County and took up the homestead later known as the Byrd place now owned by Frank Miller and farmed by his son-in-law, Gary Kneale. From the Byrd place, James Chamberlain moved with his family to Grangeville, Idaho, three miles from Mount Idaho which was then the seat of government in the Idaho Country. During the Nez Perce War in 1877 James served in the Idaho State Militia as a sergeant.

His daughter, Cleantha, born June 22, 1852, married James Madison Johnson in June 1871 at Roseburg, Oregon. They were accompanied to the Palouse Country by Emsley Cannutt and a man named Driver. Seven hundred head of sheep were brought along for capital to make a new start in the Palouse Country. Arriving in the Palouse Country at their chosen home site near Onecho, Mr. Johnson went into partnership with his brother and purchased the land which had been taken up by Trimble and Montgomery, now owned by Florie Parnell. Cleantha was the mother of the first white child born in the area. Probably the first sermon ever preached in the Palouse country was at the Johnson home, where in 1872, Father Wilbur of the Umatilla Mission, with a body-guard of thirteen Indians came to the Snake River to settle an Indian distur-



Another artist's drawing of an orchard and farmstead along the Snake River (1881), this on the Garfield County bank.

bance. He was invited to the Johnson home, where he held services, the audience consisting of five families, living in the neighborhood.

Victoria Chamberlain, born Nov. 10, 1854, dauthter of James, married Jacob Crooks on Jan. 4, 1872. They lived in the Salmon River Region and engaged in the cattle business. They went through the Nez Perce War of 1877. They were forted at Mt. Idaho and Jacob was on guard duty.

Jonathan, born Oct. 8, 1847, a son of James, with his wife Emma McLaughlin and children, Effie and Hattie, came to Washington in 1872 and then went to Camas Prairie. On June 14, 1877, during the Nez Perce Indian War, he and his family were returning from a visit to the Palouse Country. The Battle of Whitebird Canyon was in progress and they were attacked near Cottonwood, Idaho and he and his son were murdered. The boy was killed by having his skull crushed. Effie was snatched from the arms of her mother and her tongue was nearly cut off because she cried. The mother was taken by an Indian and placed behind him on his horse. He said he wanted her for his squaw. Because she fought and screamed, he threw her off and drove an arrow into her breast. She recovered after being taken to Fort Mount, Idaho. An old lady by the name of Cambridge sewed the little girl's tongue together with silk thread. She recovered but always talked with a lisp. She married a Mr. Smith and had four children. He died and she was shot by a crazy woman.

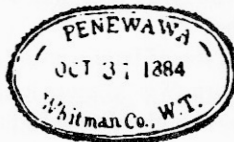
Jerome Chamberlain, born May 7, 1859, son of James, married Alice Byrd at Fort Steillacom, Washington in 1884. They came to the Snake River in 1870 when all the freight to Spokane and the northwestern part of the state was being sent through the Palouse Country.

Charles, born June 12, 1864, son of James, married Anna Mahala Fincher, Nov. 22, 1899. They were married by Rev. Paul R. Aeschliman. Charles attended school in the log cabin just west of the Onecho Cemetery. Anna Johnson and Elliott Johnson

taught him. When the Indians went on the warpath and gave battle to the United States troops commanded by General Howard a fort was thrown at Mount Idaho. The Chamberlain boys carried water to those marooned during the attack.

During the Bannock and Snake River Indian War, Anna Chamberlain was fortified in Fort Umatilla. In those days the money was gold. She carried $200 in gold of her own and $400 of Jacob Price's on her person day and night for two months. Her husband carried $200. They did this so that if anything happened to either of them the other would still have money.

One trip from Penawawa to Almota she traveled with Mary Spalding and her brother Joe Warren. On another trip from the Charles Marsh home, where she stayed when she attended the Onecho School, she stopped at the Matt Johnson home. Cleantha Chamberlain Johnson accompanied by her sister-in-law, Fannie Hall of Walla Walla, hitched up a team and took her to the Englewood place, where she lived with her husband, Charles Chamberlain. The rear rim of the hack wheel persisted in coming off so Anna took a hammer and gave it a whack every time it turned over. In this way she kept it on until they reached their destination.



Pioneer Days in the Palouse Country
George Miller

One afternoon we came down to a good sized stream, a small river, where there was a ferry boat with a couple of men to operate it. The fee was one dollar per wagon, in advance. We were ferried over, one wagon at a time. The boat was equipped with long oars, or sweeps, and the passage took some time, each man tugging at an oar. The water was slack with no current to speak of, but at that it looked like hard work to us, and I thought it well worth the price, especially when I remembered what a strenuous time we had in crossing the Blue river. I was thankful those men had the enterprise to build and operate this ferry.

There was a nice camp ground near the crossing, so we concluded we had gone far enough for one day. While we were cooking supper, five freight wagons came down the grade. They swung off the road and across the river a few yards above the ferry. The water was not up to the hubs of the wheels. I changed my mind about those good men and true. Crumbaker said he'd wager they put in their spare time hauling water to keep their boat from going to pieces.

This pilgrimage of ours was a happy-go-lucky affair. We had, on the whole, a pretty good time, visting each other evenings about our campfires, telling stories and singing songs. We were all young and felt the world was a good place, our journey a sort of long drawn out picnic.

One evening I went into camp with a large party of emigrants, my party having out-traveled me and I had seen none of them since morning. Just as I commenced unhitching, I saw Sam Crumbaker coming down the road with one of his horses. Little Harry Lawrence was riding it and Sam was following with a switch, making it travel. "Men," he said, "I've got an awful sick horse. Any of you know anything about doctoring a horse?"

No one said anything, so finally I told him I was no horse doctor but would do what I could. The other men, all strangers, at once started caring for my teams, and Sam and I started in on his horse. I had some whiskey and asafetida. We dosed the horse with that and worked with him all night. In the morning he was better. I don't know whether we cured him or whether he lived in spite of us.

Sam and I traveled in company until near Pilot Rock. The Lawrences had some relatives near Hepner, and turned aside to visit with them. Sam announced his intention of coming on and joining me in Walla Walla, from where we would go up into the Palouse country.

I failed to find Crumbaker in Walla Walla, so finally resumed my journey alone. At Penawawa I came pretty near losing my dog. He failed to get on the ferry boat and started to swim the river. Out in the middle of the stream the poor brute began going in circles. The two young men who operated the ferry, the Cram Brothers, took a skiff and rescued him.

I got into Colfax about dusk of a Saturday evening. In the edge of town I met a man and inquired the way to the Loomis place. He told me to follow him up the hill, as he was on his way home and I would have to go right past his place. His name was Tom Baker and he had a livery stable in Colfax. When we got to his gate he opened it and said "drive in here and unhitch. You must not go any further tonight. I have plenty of feed and you must have supper and breakfast with me."

He fed our horses hay and grain and insisted that we have supper with him. The next morning after insisting on our having breakfast with him, and refusing any money and urging us to remain over Sunday, he directed us to the Loomis place. Tom Baker was a fine man.

Well, Sid Loomis was glad to see us. He was just a boy, about grown, at the age when the boys of today are completing high school, and he had held down the claim out in those lonely hills during the Nez Perce war.

On Monday morning, Sid hitched up a span of mules and we started for Colfax. I wanted to get settled for the winter and young Loomis thought a place belonging to an old man named Perkins could be rented. About half way to town we met Sam Crumbaker. I yelled, "hello, Sam." He didn't know me. That morning I had shaved off a month's growth of beard and it had changed my looks.

We told Sam to follow the mule tracks to the Loomis place and we drove on to Colfax. There we found Jim Perkins and rented his father's claim. The land was on Dry Creek about seven miles north of Colfax. I was to have posession at once and was to give one-third of all I raised on the cultivated land and to have all I raised on any sod I broke. Back at the Loomis place I told Sam of the deal I had made and invited him to go into it with me.

The next day we rode over to the Perkins place and cleaned out the house, and the next day pulled our wagons over and set up housekeeping, two families in one little cabin, fourteen by sixteen feet, quite a houseful, myself and wife and the two children, Sam and his wife and Harry Lawrence.

The cabin was built of quaking asp poles, of which there was quite a grove nearby. We were not bothered much with furniture. We had a cook stove and there was a fireplace at one end of the cabin. We had a table nailed against the wall and we made some benches and stools. We were happy in getting settled so easily for the winter. The trip up from the Willamette had taken about 30 days and it was now November.