

Bunchgrass Historian

Whitman County Historical Society Quarterly

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The Rise and
Fall of the
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The Rise and Fall of the Mercantiles in the Town of Colton

**Written by Lambert Haupt
Edited by Ivernia Haupt**

This is a history of two successful Mercantile Stores in Colton, Washington, before 1923-27, when merchandising and times had changed. With better roads, the automobile, and much credit, these small stores failed.

The Haupt Family took the challenge for thirty-one years with some success, but finally had to close for lack of business.

I (Lambert J. Haupt), born January 19, 1905, am the sole survivor of the merchandisers who operated these General Stores in Colton, Washington.

There were so many "angles" involved in surviving, believe me, the general public had no idea what it was all about.

LAMBERT J. HAUPT



After its inception in the late 1800's, the eventful coming of the railroad, the establishment of its schools and churches, it appeared inevitable that prosperity should follow in the town of Colton, Washington.

It was imperative that the population living within a 4 or five mile radius should purchase variable merchandise in Colton. Dirt roads and mobility by horse made it possible to take advantage of this self-sufficient town.

My parents moved from Uniontown, Washington, to Colton, where they purchased a "saloon." My father, Peter Haupt, established a cream-



Haupt Store Interior, 1927.

receiving station which became a lucrative business for him and his family. In spite of this, he decided to attempt farming.

After 10 years the lease on the farm expired, so the family moved back to Colton.

There were two General Stores in the town, the Burkett Mercantile on the west side of Main Street and off Steptoe Avenue next to the Security State Bank; and the Farmers Union Mercantile on the south corner of Main Street and Steptoe Avenue.

During my junior and senior years at Colton High School, I received my first actual experience in merchandising by working at the Farmers Union Mercantile.

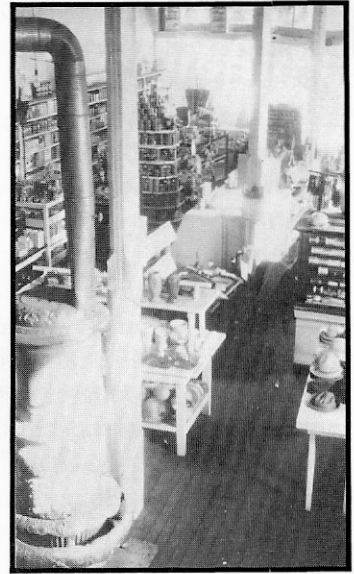
About the year 1916, a new means of transportation, the automobile, made its appearance. The Lewiston Hill Improvement¹ was completed by 1917 and provided the people of Colton at least eight miles of additional good road.

From Colton to Lewiston, Idaho, was twenty² miles of road and a view of the valley from the Lewiston Hill vantage point, and attracted would-be travelers. This began the impulsive buying in Lewiston by the Coltonites.

The road to Lewiston apparently began to affect business at the Burkett Mercantile, and it was about to close its doors. In spite of its failure, my father decided that the Burketts would be a good investment for the family. In February of 1923 Burketts became "Haupt's Supply."

Frances Haupt, my sister, became a so-called manager of the store. I worked after school, and Dad, who had difficulty hearing, helped a great deal without dealing with the public.

Another view of the Haupt store, 1927.



Refrigeration was lacking in our store, so we reluctantly refused to accept lard, which came in various sized cans. Butter was brought to us in huge amounts also, but we were forced to pass it up as a saleable product in our store because we had no proper storage.

Another problem for us was the system of handling eggs. They were brought in all types of containers, and also in wooden cases of 30 dozen. These cases of eggs were sent by us to the creameries in Spokane, Washington. The store was reimbursed for the eggs commensurate to the size and perfection. We did not question the honesty of customers who brought us the eggs. Sometimes rocks, or even chunks of dirt were packed into the bottom part of the cases of 30 dozen. The creameries sent us a report which classified the eggs as being “pewee,” medium, large, dirty or cracked. We suffered many losses from the inconsistency in the eggs packed in those cases. Something had to be done to correct this problem.

My wife and I conducted an extensive research in libraries and with agricultural department people. The creameries were unable to find any records on how it was decided to establish “grades” on eggs. Egg laws³ did not exist until 1925, and those were only tentative laws. Not until 1934 were official standards issued.

Grading in the stores was unheard of. Dad set up his own grading system. With a hole in one end of a can, a light bulb inside, he viewed (candled) the eggs. The dirty eggs he washed or scraped clean with sandpaper. Eggs could not be weighed because there were no scales, but they were sorted by color and size.

A reasonable market price was obtained from the Spokesman-Review (Spokane newspaper) and our farmers were paid accordingly.

By corresponding with mine personnel, we discovered a profitable market for the eggs at the Kellogg and Wallace, Idaho, Bunker Hill Mines.

Charge accounts or credit were the backbone of our business. Without them we could not carry on, because so many waited for the end of the season to collect our accounts. It was a difficult undertaking to collect whatever was due us. Other customers besides the farmers were also reluctant to pay their bills, so we occasionally suffered the losses.

Our bookkeeping system was a time-consuming, inefficient method. It was a complicated double-entry system whereby we recorded each customer's daily purchases in duplicate in a ledger, and at the end of the month we sent out the itemized statements (Oh for the computer!).

We began to make changes in the bookkeeping system as well as the type of merchandise we handled. We riddled the store of outdated items, such as hundreds of pairs of men's pointed-toed shoes, women's high button shoes, various sized corsets; black, pink, and white crepe bloomers and velvet cowboy hats.

Progress was not as constant as we expected, so additional income was a necessity. We added a room where there was none between the store itself and the storage room or warehouse. This room became the cream testing station.

My dad and I acquired State licenses for weighing, grading, and testing cream.

An old vintage Dodge pick-up truck was used to deliver the cream to the Mutual Creamery in Lewiston, Idaho.

All the surplus eggs we had were taken there also to sell to the stores. On our return to Colton, we had groceries that were purchased from the wholesale grocery to restock our shelves.

Sanitation laws and inspectors were non-existent, so groceries were displayed and sold in bulk quantities.

High shelves in our store held the packaged or canned grocery stock and from under the check-out counter from bulk bins we sold white and brown beans, white and brown sugar, peaberry and flatberry coffee. A brown paper bag tied with twine sufficed for packaging.

Unwrapped bread, packed in returnable boxes, was shipped by train to Colton from the Pullman Bakery. "Cannon Ball" or "Colton Flyer" was the nickname given to this train.

Five gallon cans of kerosene were housed in the back room of our store along with a fifty-gallon kerosene tank with a pump on it to service bulk sales. Vinegar was also a bulk product contained in a fifty-gallon barrel. Coffee beans were ground on a customer demand by means of a huge double "flywheel" grinder.

Dried prunes and raisins were delivered to us in boxes but they were rather unsavory because the dried fruit often contained worms also. The wholesale would accept them when we sent them back; but all they did was wash the fruit and return it, which didn't especially please us. An alternative for us was to wash prunes and raisins ourselves. The fruit was placed in a pan of water, and we waited for the worms to appear on the top of the water; repeating the process as long as needed. This washed fruit was put out to dry and the result was some nice fluffy fruit which sold quickly.

In 1925 the Farmers Union Mercantile was failing. We still had high hopes of doing better so we made the gamble and bought it.

We moved all the merchandise and creamery across the street into a large building.

In 1927 we became affiliated with the I.G.A. (Independent Grocery Association). As expected, certain specifications had to be met to satisfy their I.G.A. requirements.

We now had in mind a meat market also. So we remodeled the Farmers Union Store. A walk-in cooler and a refrigerated showcase were installed; also, a meat grinder coffee mill combination.

Other changes followed later, such as replacing the stove with a floor furnace. We changed our customer services for the better. The store was opened daily from 7 AM to as late as 11 PM. However, on Sundays we were open until noon.

We slaughtered beef which was purchased from the farmers in the area. When an animal was needed for our purposes we would take off to the farm field late in the afternoon, and approaching the animal as near as possible, we would "drop" it with our 30-30 rifle. A simple derrick with a block and tackle was fastened to the back of our pick-up truck. With this, we could raise the dead animals high enough to slit them. The remaining entrails were left in the field for the coyotes, except for the heart, tongue and liver.

A high derrick (portable tripod) was set on our lawn near our home where we hung the animals for skinning and quartering. The lower bottom quarters were left hanging. On warmer days, we would haul the carcass early in the morning (around 4 AM) to the cooler, before the botfly could get to them.

Hogs were bought from the farmers, already butchered.

During 1930 and 1931, a new highway to Pullman, Washington, was already in use, and the roads to Spokane, Washington were fairly usable by this time, and one could easily make a round trip in day. Not only traveling elsewhere was a hindrance to our progress, but the country was feeling the pangs of the "Depression" of the thirties.

Depressed farmers or anyone owning a cow or raising a few chickens

could sell eggs and cream, or even some of their stock, to supplement any income they might have. Some jobs were lost and income, so they existed on whatever their gardens could provide.

When the county rock crusher situated here closed down, many of our customers had tremendous problems until the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) was instigated in 1935. Incomes were still very meager, and the paychecks allowed people only selected groceries and meats, but nothing to pay any accrued grocery bills that had earlier been put on charge accounts.

In our General Store we felt the lack of sales in our dry goods or shoe department, even though the prices were marked down to an extremely low price.

All cotton products were inexpensive. Print material was 11¢ per yard. Women's Berkshire silk stockings were \$1 a pair, a small pool of cotton white thread sold for 5¢, the large spool was 10¢, Red Top (brand) 12 ounce canvas gloves were 10¢ per pair.

Pork chops sold at 25¢ per pound; the price of ground beef was 19¢ for two pounds, and round steak was 19¢ a pound. Even at those low prices it was difficult for customers to purchase meats. We even gave, at no charge, such meats as liver, heart and tongue to whoever wanted or needed some.

Following the major impact of the Depression, "warrants" were issued to the teachers and other public employees — negotiable bank checks were not being paid to them, so we accepted the warrants, hoping to pay our county taxes with them; but the county would not accept its own "warrants." Only cash was accepted by them.

Somehow Haupt's Supply seemed to be "holding on" for a while following the major impact of the Depression of the 30's, but time and progress took their toll. Regardless of the improvements we undertook, by 1938 there was hardly sufficient business to support one individual.

Super markets and dry goods stores were making great strides in the larger towns and cities. The advancement of transportation facilities, such as cars and improved roadways, helped this movement to larger cities.

In 1954, Haupt's Supply Co. of Colton closed its doors.

The trend goes on — even today competitive pressures greatly affect smaller businesses.

With the closing of Haupt's Supply Co. it was the end of the "General Merchandising Stores" in Colton, Washington.

References

¹Lewiston Hill Dedication program, Oct. 28, 1977. Idaho Transportation Department.

²Greater Lewiston Chamber of Commerce.

³U.S. Department of Agriculture, Poultry Division.

The Time of Change Is Yet the Same: The Roaring Twenties From A Small Town Perspective

**by
Nancy Tadlock**

Following World War I, the American people moved from a “nation at war” production system and mentality, to a “nation at peace” consumer-oriented society. Widespread disappointment over the terms of the peace increased the isolationist mood prevalent in America around 1900. During the war there were shortages of basic items such as shoes, clothing, meat, household items, and more. During this period, the government promoted private investment in savings bonds to finance the war as evidence of patriotism among non-combatants. By war’s end these two situations resulted in an abundance of individual savings, which accumulated due to existing circumstances rather than an individual’s desire to forego merchandise.

As American industry changed from the production of war material to domestic goods, a great variety of merchandise entered the market place. In order to stimulate the sluggish economy, companies invested in advertising campaigns which urged Americans to reject their stringent war-time budgets and indulge in their wildest dreams. Concurrent with the rising expectations of abundance were the realities of the postwar labor problems and severe housing shortages. Former servicemen freed from the rigidity of military service and changed by the experiences of war rejected many existing cultural conventions. Veterans and civilians joined in resisting which had been necessary for the war but continued after the peace when such restrictions on individual liberty and local autonomy were no longer needed in a democratic society. Underlying the economic and political problems were a general frustration and disillusionment caused by the failure of the Wilsonian dream of the American involvement in the war as a quest to make the world safe for democracy. According to historians, the interaction of these forces gradually altered major values and living patterns in America.

In areas of Eastern Washington, far removed from urban cultural centers, only a small amount of cultural change was evident. This at least seemed clear in four of the Palouse area newspapers: *The Palouse Republic* which served a population of 1,565, *The Uniontown Journal* serving 750, *The Enterprise* (Garfield, Washington) serving 1,406, and *The Colton Newsletter* serving 647.¹ The increased consumerism centered on practical items rather than lavish living, yet saving money continued to be important. Movies were popular, but did not replace community-sponsored events. Prohibition apparently received support from the area majority due to the decrease in violent crimes. No evidence existed of any type of nightclub activity either before or during Prohibition, so alcohol consumption retained the connotations of barroom excesses. The papers reported major national and international news, emphasizing the rebuilding of America rather than supporting the concept of America as a world leader with a responsibility to solve world problems. They showed concern for the famine conditions facing the innocent victims of war in Europe and the Far East. Articles then reflected the conviction that these nations should care for their own needy. On the whole, the stresses and changes that historians attributed to this era, 1920-1925, did not touch the Palouse area significantly.

Historians have typically seen the 1920's as a "me" centered society which was disillusioned with the concepts of reform, the effectiveness of reason in solving problems, or American responsibility for foreign problems. The flapper, known by her bobbed hair and raised hemline, who demanded instant fun, loud music, fast dancing, and flashy clothes, symbolized the period. Everybody seemed to have money, threw off old restraints, spent their money conspicuously. From the movies came exaggerated images of carefree, glamorous big cities; and popular magazines like *McClure's*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Saturday Evening Post* reinforced the Hollywood and Broadway images of fun and success. Advertisers applied the new techniques of psychology to increase sales and credited the rise in consumerism to these methods. They claimed an ability to shape the desires of the public at will and by presenting alternate living styles and values did become an active element in the process of change.²

Towns like New York and Hollywood led the nation as cultural innovators, and other large cities followed these trends. According to Robert H. Weibe, rural America, no longer composed of "island communities" with little effective contact with the outside world, had by 1920 become part of a new national middle class mentality because of forces introduced by improved communications and commercial agriculture.³ Yet many of the influences for change which reached these small towns were not readily accepted. The allure of new dress styles, dancing, smoking, or drinking meant rebellion, not only against the moral code and authority of the

home but also direct conflict with a cohesive community culture. According to historians the rise in juvenile delinquency and crime, the increasing numbers of tourists with their cars, mobility, and objectionable life style created so much anxiety in small communities that there existed a vast reservoir of support for the Ku Klux Klan which rapidly grew in strength nationwide as the protectors of virtue and morality. Possibly because the Palouse area of Eastern Washington was fairly remote from major cultural or marketing centers, the newspapers for Colton, Garfield, Palouse, and Uniontown did not reflect most of these major national themes regarding the evolution of the society.

According to social historian Christopher Wilson, popular magazines like *Saturday Evening Post* and *Ladies Home Journal* followed a specific editorial policy intended to create a nation of spectators who accepted the editor's expert analysis of events. By design, readers would feel somewhat insecure because they were not truly aware of the most current happenings and thus purchase magazines on a regular basis to remain as informed as possible. Recent statistical studies have indicated that these magazines appealed to the middle class in towns with populations of 10,000 or more. Based on the type of coverage included, the editorial policy of the small town papers examined in the Palouse area, in contrast, consciously strove to encourage community participation and promote cultural solidarity.⁴

In general, the major areas of concern for these communities were local happenings, farm or livestock news, and area politics. National and international events received only a few sentences or paragraphs. The information appeared to be a factual condensation of articles from the daily newspaper or newspapers of the editor's choice, although there was no in-

"In Spite of the Heat"



Editorial cartoon, 1926, depicts perceived frustrations of the federal administration.

dication which papers this might include. The editor reserved commentary about specific events for the editorials, or separate columns directly responding to that news item. General editorial themes addressed honestly, hard work, area optimism about the future, and major community concerns. Political conventions were well covered and the editor did not always approve of the outcome. A particularly effective political cartoon during the 1924 election showed the editor's disgust with current conditions. A large, burly, mean-looking fighter labeled "crooked politics" stood in the middle of a ring, his right glove labeled "libel," and his left glove labeled "slander." Along the outside of the ring were the feet of those he had knocked out, labeled "victims," and into the ring slipped a skinny, scared opponent labeled "honest candidate." The editors argued about city and county responses to problems and constantly urged their readers, regardless of political affiliation, to become involved in government to ensure the protection of area interests.

The editors of the local newspapers acted as the town's conscience and voice. By their standards, honorable men worked hard, paid their debts, raised their children conscientiously, worshipped God, and supported their community. In their view, the nation was merely an extended background for these values. This seemed to be the major cause for dismay over the lavish spending habits of the nation and the discrepancy in wealth. The same year that 25 million Americans lived in temporary quarters, and a shortage of 5 million homes existed, an area editor found evidence of a national luxury index showing over \$18 billion spent on unnecessary goods. This information caused a blistering comment because the national government called for restraint and austerity measures to pay the war debt. It appears that editors recognized that their admonitions for good citizenship might not reach the big cities, but could have some effect on the local level, hence the editors of these four newspapers did their best to encourage their communities to act in a sound, moral manner.

In April each year the major headlines covered the public school personnel, the members of the school board who hired them, and the proposed textbooks to be studied. The editor urged readers to contact the school board if they had concerns or comments about the choices which had been made. This practice did not apply to the teachers or materials for the parochial schools in the area. The papers also encouraged scholarly performance by giving public acknowledgement to excellent students for their achievements. In addition, school sponsored activities, such as picnics, outings, plays, musical productions, special class projects, and graduation exercises, received enthusiastic editorial comment. Besides the school-related recognition for the accomplishments of young people, the papers also recorded the activities of youth organizations like the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Young Women's Christian Association projects, and

special church youth groups. Historian Lewis Atherton found the proliferation of lodges and national clubs in the Midwest to be an indication of the disintegration of small town unity.⁶ The evidence presented in the four Palouse area papers indicates these organizations may have strongly enriched the community by providing a constant round of activities which reinforced community values.

For the community as a whole, deaths, serious illness, and accidents involving area residents generally received first page coverage. The area was evidently proud of its pioneering families, and when a Pioneer died, the editor devoted several columns to these individuals and noted their contributions to the community. Where area residents went and what they did when they left town consumed at least half a page or more. A trip to Spokane, Seattle, Lewiston, or Walla Walla received notice together with the more rare instances of extended visits to relatives in the East, or vacation travels. Even the luncheons which bid vacationers farewell might warrant a headline and several paragraphs, listing the names of the guests, the hostess, a description of the home, and the menu. As Atherton noted, small weekly papers "dignified the lives of common people by assuming that their activities were important."

The papers varied from one another in their coverage. In 1920 the *Garfield Enterprise* included an increasing amount of items of interest to women. A political cartoon, captioned "She's Across," showed Eliza as "Lady Suffrage" carrying baby "votes" as she jumped the treacherous river of ice chunks, labeled as individual states, to get away from the dogs, labeled "selfish interests," to land safely on the land of "equal rights."⁸ Women received positive recognition through personal pictures with descriptive captions, or by entire columns on their accomplishments. This coverage was not restricted to American women but included notable female figures in such professions as medicine, education, social work, and the diplomatic service, from Japan, the Philippines, France, and elsewhere. By 1921 such individual spotlighting receded, but the paper included major coverage on the national and international programs of the YWCA, especially the programs in Japan. The papers also reported the activities of missionary women doing relief work in the Near East.

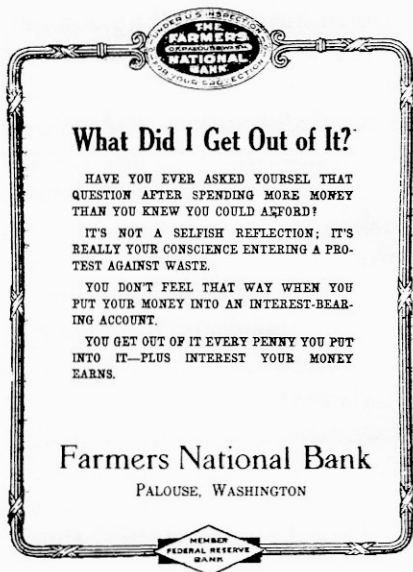
This local attention to women came at a time when Hollywood depicted women abandoning a life of responsibility and service to enjoy a life of pleasure and excitement outside the home, and suffrage activities on a nationwide basis were particularly strident. The *Garfield* editor apparently supported women in uplifting professions and provided these examples as local role models for young women. When women achieved the franchise and national attention to this issue subsided, the editor's early enthusiasm for the suffrage position also modified in keeping with the views of his readers and advertisers. The model of womanhood remained that of wife

and mother who maintained an orderly home, raised solid American citizens, obeyed her husband's wishes, and found fulfillment in making him happy.

In 1923 several pages of professional "gravures" appeared in two consecutive issues of the *Enterprise*. After that the pictures were smaller in size and concentration on political figures of a national or international level, farm animals, or area items like the county fair. In June 1924, the first pictures of female athletes appeared, one of a woman hurdler, the other of two tennis champions. By July 18, 1924 this paper printed its first picture of a bathing beauty with the caption stating that the suits were worn "at such beaches that per mit [sic] the wearing of these single garments." The editor admitted that athletic women existed, but the rarity of similar pictures or coverage suggested he found their actions neither acceptable nor feminine.⁹

The *Garfield Enterprise* usually printed four or five hackneyed or very dry jokes in each issue. In 1920 some issues carried a strip concerning a young boy and a heavy, middle-aged, successful business father, which played on the misunderstanding of words and also the problems encountered with some of the new "gadgets" in the home. It did not carry a consistent "comic strip." Comics disappeared until 1924, when another strip satirized every day life and promoted law and order. This paper contained only a few well-chosen political cartoons from major national papers each year.

The *Colton Newsletter* concentrated on local events and people. Its national and international coverage in 1920 consisted of two-line statements of major events. By 1922 this paper under new management,



NEW U.S. DIRECTOR
THE FARMERS NATIONAL BANK
MEMBER FEDERAL RESERVE BANK

What Did I Get Out of It?

HAVE YOU EVER ASKED YOURSELF THAT QUESTION AFTER SPENDING MORE MONEY THAN YOU KNEW YOU COULD AFFORD?

IT'S NOT A SELFISH REFLECTION: IT'S REALLY YOUR CONSCIENCE ENTERING A PROTEST AGAINST WASTE.

YOU DON'T FEEL THAT WAY WHEN YOU PUT YOUR MONEY INTO AN INTEREST-BEARING ACCOUNT.

YOU GET OUT OF IT EVERY PENNY YOU PUT INTO IT—PLUS INTEREST YOUR MONEY EARNS.

Farmers National Bank
PALOUSE, WASHINGTON

MEMBER FEDERAL RESERVE BANK

Bank advertisements reflected common concerns.

provided four to six descriptive lines on a reduced number of current issues, again without editorial comment. The paper gave strong support to requests for aid for the children and homeless in the Near East and Europe throughout 1920 and most of 1921, after which the coverage significantly decreased. By 1922 the paper reflected further editorial changes in the use of a quarter to half page of photographs which concentrated on vacation scenes, exotic locations, and big cities. Coverage of local events did not appear to be significantly affected by this change, nor did subsequent editorials indicate a more national perspective.

The *Uniontown Journal* carried the least amount of national or international news. It focused on local issues and people and included more farm-related items from 1923 on. This editorial change appeared to be based on the report of the Washington State Press Association that farmers equaled 51½% of the readers of town weekly papers. As the paper's main supporters were retail stores that ran advertisements, they deserved more items directly addressing their needs and interests in such weekly papers. Henceforth this paper carried livestock, feed, and pest control information, homemaking and canning hints, and new practical scientific inventions which could solve various farm problems.¹⁰

The *Palouse Republic* carried the most extensive national and international coverage of the four papers. It did not neglect local coverage because of this and vigorously commented on any and all issues which might effect the community or interested the editor. The most evident policy of this editor included positive coverage of area events, encouragement for political and community activity, and discretion in reporting events which might be embarrassing to an area resident.

The size of advertisements tended to increase over the period 1920-1925 and advertisers like banks, feed stores, clothing stores, grocery stores, and appliance outlets experienced an increase in business or needed to spend extra money to attract local residents to spend money at their stores. The latter seemed particularly true around the Christmas holidays, because editorials at this time urged customers to buy locally where they could see and test the articles purchased rather than find a mail order item unacceptable at the last minute which disappointed someone very special to them. Several editorials also argued against the growth of cooperative buying groups, declaring that area merchants would match the prices given if the group ordered bulk items from them. The editor reasoned that this action would save the business of their neighbors and the money would continue to circulate within the town and strengthen it.

The advertisers in the early months of 1920 were subdued, offering such basic items as food, men's overalls or modest suits, women's house-dresses, tractors, motor oil, livestock feed, and a variety of farm equipment and supplies. Illustrated advertisements rarely appeared. By the lat-

ter months of 1920 there was an increase in clothing advertisements including a greater variety of styles, and illustrated car, home, and food advertisements occupied more column space. Full page advertisements appeared for such previously rationed items as leather shoes and aluminum pots. By 1924 the ads in all papers were generally larger, illustrated, with peppier descriptions. In December, however, the bank advertisement showed a burglar breaking into a home, with the suggestion that valuables would be well protected in a safe deposit box.¹¹ Despite the lack of alarm in the coverage of robbery by the local newspapers, area residents apparently viewed theft as a distinct possibility because of national circumstances and the mobility afforded thieves by the automobile.

While the movies and popular magazines showed a preoccupation with crime in the big cities, glamorous living, and Prohibition Act violations, these four local newspapers pursued a different policy. They also reported spectacular, unusual crimes, but the crimes were not confined to the major cities. During 1920, reports on national crime varied from the mass murder of eight on a North Dakota farm, to the Sheridan, Illinois farmer who poisoned his seventh wife, to a major jail break in Chicago, to a doctor in New York City shot while passing the collection plate at church, to several spectacular robberies in both large and small towns, and to several bombings in New York City and Seattle.¹² On the local scene, the papers recorded the arrest of several bootleggers, the theft of cash in a display window, midnight raids on area flower gardens, violations of speeding laws, an occasional assault and battery charge, and several cases of boys recklessly breaking windows or injuring animals with their guns. Despite the alarming increase in violent crimes reported by large city daily newspapers, an area reader reviewing 1920 could have drawn the conclusion that although crime existed throughout the United States, there had been no significant increase in crime on a national level or in Eastern Washington. A similar conclusion could be drawn for the period of the reader saw only these four papers.

These local papers presented spectacular crimes from the Northeast, Midwest, and West. The criteria for choosing the story appeared to rest solely on the editor's discretion. Coverage of southern problems or successes was notably absent. Certain types of crime received more attention by 1923. Both national and area indignation arose over several minor war-fraud cases which the government prosecuted in 1920. By 1923 attorneys were prosecuting several major war-fraud cases which attracted the attention of both editors and readers of the *Palouse Republic* and the *Garfield Enterprise*. A \$75,000,000 fraud case against companies that constructed military camps during the war received extensive coverage.¹³ Editorials concerning these cases demonstrated anger not only because of the fraud itself, but also because of the evident lack of patriotism, the tremendous

cost of the war itself, the magnitude of the war debt which this and succeeding generations would fight to pay off, and the problems with national and international farm prices which had depressed the area economy.

Regardless of the national experience with crimes like robbery, the local newspapers recorded little change between 1920 and 1925. Information from other sources must have affected resident attitudes, however, because by mid 1924 the local bank advertisements, addressing the apparent feelings of local insecurity due to an increase in area robbery, urged area residents to put their valuables in a safe place.

The American judicial system's failure to punish offenders caused this rise in violent crimes, according to the editor of the *Uniontown Journal*. An article in October 1924 presented the findings of America's largest insurance company (name not revealed) on killers. The editor included no further elaboration on the study, so readers would have had difficulty determining its accuracy, geographical extent, or time period. Of 146 killers analyzed by this company, 32 killings were deemed justified, 45 of the remaining killers were never indicted, and 22 committed suicide. Of the 69 killers who were indicted, 16 were acquitted, 11 were never brought to trial, 1 case was declared a mistrial, and 41 were declared guilty. Of those 41 guilty killers, only 35 received prison sentences, 6 successfully appealed their cases, 3 received new trials, 1 was paroled, and 1 was fined. With no further information than these hard numbers, the editor concluded that there would be less crime if there were more convictions. He went on to point out that Lewiston had a man-slaughter case just like the "big city" with crowded court room, lots of newspaper coverage, bouts between the prosecution and defense attorney, and a situation which required the judge to send the jury out of the room to settle an argument. Unlike the "big city," however, the jury returned with a verdict of "guilty as charged."¹⁴

Prohibition items received coverage in the Palouse and Colton papers. Defending prohibition from some large daily newspapers' assertions that it led to increases in crime, the Palouse editor argued that any reasonable man could see for himself that this law actually reduced crime. According to state-released statistics, fewer men were in jail in Oregon, Pennsylvania, or New York for violent crimes, and New York City admitted to 90 percent fewer alcoholic patients in its hospitals. Prohibition reputedly affected American foreign relations. State Department officials halted the Prohibition officials search and seizure tactics with diplomats' luggage, thereby avoiding the potential for a series of major international incidents. Lest area residents feel so comfortable about the pervasiveness of this problem that they thought it was confined to large cities or the East, the *Palouse Republic* noted that between 8,000 and 10,000 stills were in operation in the state of Washington: 2,500 in King County, 1,500 in Pierce County, 700 in Grays Harbor, and 400 in Kittitas County. Federal reports

indicated that the Eastern half of the state had few stills, but the Palouse area still needed to worry about the bootlegger. By 1923, three hundred lawmen of the Pacific Northwest met in Portland to discuss the related problems of prohibition, costs of enforcement, storage, and the related crime wave.¹⁵

Throughout the 1920-25 period articles and editorials warned about the debilitating effects of illegally distilled whiskey, or moonshine, and described the problems of blindness or death which could be caused by badly made alcohol. For the individual who insisted on consuming moonshine, an editor extracted information from prohibition records demonstrated that most moonshine was made from "swill or garbage," which passed through a "lead worm" once used in a bathroom, and contained poisonous crystals of arsenate or lead, acetic acid, and also contained lethal wood alcohol to give it "kick."¹⁶

Not all of the local editors considered in the increased crime coverage of the big city dailies as evidence of a major change in American morals. L. F. Gibbs, editor of the *Colfax Gazette*, observed:

The constant, unending stream of murders, robberies, breaches of trust, scandals, and other off-colorings of humanity portrayed in the daily press lead many to the belief that the American people as a race are deteriorating It is probably no more than the placing of emphasis on the weaker side of humanity, whereas the better side attracts little attention The daily press did not go into every sensational detail then [in earlier days] as much as now, but the press was more considerate in the matter of publishing nauseating details and placing them before the young people of the day We have millions more people than we had 50 years ago naturally [there is] more crime to be expected and chronicled.¹⁷

In his opinion the percentage of crimes had not risen, but the editorial standards of big city newspapers had definitely declined. Instead of maintaining their integrity and respecting the rights of citizens, these men had discovered that sensationalism sold newspapers. They were perfectly content to foster panic in the nation and embarrass respectable families if it would increase their profits.

Other problems like labor also received mixed coverage. The actions of the Industrial Worklers of the World (I.W.W. or Wobblies) in the Pacific Northwest received continuous coverage. Members of the American Legion solicited funds and support from the Garfield Legionnaires in February 1920 to aid in defraying legal costs for the Centralia Legion's prosecution of the I.W.W. According to the report, the Wobblies had fired on an American Legion parade in Centralia with the intent to kill several of

those valiant Legionnaires who had risked their lives fighting for their country. In another major incident, Uniontown officials arrested two Wobblies on August 2, 1923, who were trying to organize field hands to demand higher wages before working in the fields. The editor urged the farmers to get together the following year to establish a fixed wage for hired hands which all farmers would pledge to support regardless of the consequences. By August 16, 1923, the editor elatedly reported that the Wobbly attempt to organize farm hands in the Pacific Northwest failed totally. The area, however, did not rid itself of I.W.W. influence. By September 17, twelve Wobblies started a hunger strike in the Colfax jail's dining room. There was no indication of what activities had placed the additional ten men in jail and the hunger strike received no further coverage in the *Uniontown Journal* or *Garfield Enterprise*.¹⁸

The Palouse area's problems with a handful of union organizers might have seemed insignificant to local readers, in the context of national labor incidents also noted in their papers. According to the existing standards, no editorial comment accompanied articles on major strikes across the nation. As with other national coverage, these articles appeared to be condensations of information from daily papers which usually presented the management view of the strikes. Responding to the growing number of strikes in meat packing, mining, and milling industries, the *Palouse Republic* argued that workers attempts to force wages up would result in increased product price, and thus not improve their lifestyle. The only way, according to the editor, to improve the laborers living conditions for each man was to increase the number of hours he worked. The editor C. F. Brown reminded his readers that "work is the price we pay to live," and God made that rule.¹⁹

When the railroads in 1921 decreased wages by twelve percent. Five Brotherhoods with 2,000,000 men joined the 800,000 man railroad union walk-out in a sympathy strike. In an editorial, J. K. Buchanan argued that railroad workers were overpaid for the present economic conditions. Not only was the hourly wage significant, but by clustering his hourly shifts, a man could actually put in his forty hour week in three or four days and then accumulate overtime hours at a higher wage level. Because of the depressed national economy, the editor believed that these workers should have accepted the pay cut to keep the railroads operational.²⁰

Such a lack of sympathy for industrial workers may have reflected the sense of estrangement from urban industrial problems as well as the sagging economic fortunes of farmers in Eastern Washington. By the end of 1921, major wage reductions resulted in strikes in the meat packing plants of Chicago, Illinois, the railroads of St. Paul, Minnesota, and subsequent unemployment in nineteen states eventually reached between two and five million people. During this period, the Palouse suffered from depressed

grain and livestock prices and from increasing railroad charges. Possibly due to this experience, R. M. Schofield of the *Uniontown Journal* argued that "The greatest discovery of the present day is the farmer's discovery of the industrial worker as his best friend, his necessary customer, and his natural ally."²¹ This could reflect a developing awareness of class affiliation, similarity in needs, and commonality of problems with big business and big government.

In order to counteract undesirable national influences and the debilitating effects of economic recession, the entire area became more involved in spiritual activities to rebuild society and the nation. Residents turned to organized church functions and rededication programs. Garfield had numerous revival meetings, the Baptist church and other denominations pursued membership and fund raising drives, and the paper noted that, nationwide, thirty denominations had joined together in programs to rebuild the world. Palouse gave special coverage to the national reunification of the Methodist Church and also had major fund raising activities among five of its denominations.²²

In the communities, local and national organizational activity increased. Groups such as the American Legion, Knights of Pythias, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and various civic, social, or religious clubs were very visible. The papers carried constant references to service projects and special community events sponsored by these organizations. Not only were many individual events planned, but most major celebrations like Christmas, Fourth of July, or the annual picnic represented the cooperation of all groups. Although there may have been some competition between the groups to demonstrate which was a better organization, the fact that most individuals belonged to more than one organization and friends often belonged to competing groups probably decreased the potential gulf such competition could have created between neighbors.

It is impossible to ascertain the extent of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in these four towns. None of the four papers printed articles favorable to the KKK which had active groups in Moscow, Idaho, and Colfax, Washington. In February of 1920 there appeared an article and editorial praise for the action of Kentucky governor, Edward P. Morrow, who stopped a "hemp party" (lynching) for a Negro and banned any such activities from that day forward. In 1921 the papers of Garfield and Palouse covered the United Spanish War Veterans condemnation of clandestine bodies as un-American. The articles noted the Georgia delegation's vigorous protest that the action was aimed at their members who were KKK; yet the measure passed with a decided majority.²³ The lack of coverage on KKK activities does not necessarily mean that the group did not operate in the area. It may only indicate editorial hostility to their aims and objectives.

In 1922 the *Uniontown Journal*, which serviced a largely Catholic population, warned its readership that the KKK claimed responsibility for passing the compulsory public school attendance law in Oregon, and that the Klan threatened to seek similar legislation in Washington. Residents were urged to study issues, and vote very wisely. During the night of October 4, 1923, unknown individuals put KKK posters around Uniontown. The editor observed that the town's residents were broad-minded enough to allow the KKK to put up posters during the day. He observed that the Klan would probably not receive much support for its program or beliefs because the town's residents, as loyal, law-abiding Americans, saw no need for vigilante-type activities.²⁴

In January 1923, the pastor of the Pullman Christian Church addressed a gathering in Palouse and recommended the formation of a chapter of the KKK in Palouse for no better reason, according to the editor, C. F. Brown, than that Moscow and Colfax each had one. When residents sought further information, the pastor admitted he was unfamiliar with the organization, but felt it could cure the society's current problems. Brown observed that sufficient laws already existed to solve these problems, but they needed to be vigorously enforced. In his view, the KKK was not a reasonable solution or cure. Positively covered also was the September 1923 decision by Governor Walton of Oklahoma to place the state under martial law in order to drive the KKK from the state and end the "reign of terror." During the 1920-25 period, editorial comment in the four papers supported stricter law enforcement and encouraged readers to be conscientious, law-abiding citizens. The editors did not support the Klan nor urge their readers to do so.²⁵ This reaction from Colton and Uniontown which

Earning Your Income

is but half the battle; the other
is managing it lest it manage you.

People of all incomes and in all
walks of life save themselves a lot
of needless worry through the use
of the Checking Account.

An account here will solve the prob-
lem effectively for you.

THE STATE NATIONAL BANK
of
GARFIELD, WASHINGTON.

Another bank ad; banks advertised heavily during the 1920's.

were predominantly Catholic is readily understood. Exactly what prompted this rejection of the Klan in Palouse which hosted Methodist, Mormon, Baptist and additional Protestant denominations is not clear. Also, since the papers reflect only editorial opinion, they are not necessarily a good indication of community response.

Another outside influence which probably affected these towns came from Hollywood, though the effect was probably greater on Palouse and Uniontown than on Garfield and Colton if movie advertisements were any indication. Both Uniontown and Palouse carried large advertisements covering two movies each week. Besides the standard advertisement, a column of two to four paragraphs elaborated on the story line for these weekly offerings. During 1920 the movie fare was mostly romance palced in various exotic settings with titles such as "Under the Top," "The Egg Crate Wallop," and "Heart Snatcher." In 1921 the same type of fare existed. Of special note was one movie concerning a young Bohemian woman whose life in Greenwich Village changed with her marriage to a fine young man and motherhood. She had to struggle to retain her husband's loyalty when a bored, rich matronly client tried to woo him away from his wife. Several of the 1922 movies were less frivolous. One depicted the KKK as being similar to the Western vigilante committee. Another, titled the "Prodigal Daughters," explored the question of whether the modern, free, independent girl overdid it with her smoking, late hours, and rejection of societal norms. Could she in fact continue without destroying herself? The conclusion could only be discovered at the movies.

Hollywood brought the lure of the big town to Main Street. Weekly the fare showed new fashions, exciting parties, exotic places or fast-paced cities, romance, and fun. The city might be the background for crime and moral decay, yet to the young this might have seemed less real than the opportunities which large cities offered.

Played against this once-a-week allure from Hollywood, were the constant weekly activities in each town. The offerings ranged from glee clubs, to baseball games, potlatch dances, theater groups, school picnics, class plays, county fairs, town picnics, Masonic Lodges, other fraternal organizations, political clubs, sewing circles, basketball games, Fourth of July and Armistice Day Parades complete with bands and patriotic speeches, Lyceum courses, and the annual Chuatauqua. Besides these civic events, there were various church functions and socials, and highly active political parties. This constant community interaction probably contributed significantly to reducing the impact of movies, big cities, and popular magazines.

A sense of community seemed very much intact in each of these towns during the early Twenties. The awareness of outside events seemed to be increasing, the size and improved quality of the roads made the links with

the outside world stronger. Economic problems involving wheat, livestock, and orchard sales also drew the area farmers together into national or regional organizations and farm cooperative associations.

The area did not avoid all the problems of the Roaring Twenties. The *Uniontown Journal* noted in 1924 that the call for an increase in school funding would probably not receive voter support because of the number of high school students (average graduating class size equaled 13 students per year) who consistently appeared on Main Street in a drunk and disorderly condition, destroying property and defying property owners.²⁶ Throughout the period items appeared intermittently in the four papers on arrests of bootleggers in the region, robbery of nearby banks, the operations of several burglary gangs. Yet the communities themselves banded together for strength rather than succumbing to the growing host of outside influences.

Historian Robert Weibe studied small town America and found it so involved in national events by 1890 that it had lost its confidence in the town's ability to control its own destiny. The spread of middle class resulted in the loss of the traditional, personal, informal relationships once evident in the small town.²⁷ In contrast, insofar as the Palouse area papers were any guide, the small town environment, with only slight modifications, had adapted well to the industrializing economy and in the early Twenties was still thriving, at least in Eastern Washington.

Residents of these communities did not always agree on the problem or the solution to national or local difficulties, yet they shared a confidence in their combined ability to correct local problems. Simply because a few individuals chose to leave the towns, those who stayed did not take a defeated attitude. The message that strongly poured forth from the newspapers, area development projects, and community participation, was that life in small town America was good and had much to offer.

NOTES

¹Thirteenth United States Census. Colton and surrounding area (Precinct 26: 265, Precinct 45: 382); Garfield and surrounding area (Precinct 28: 630, Precinct 42: 400, Precinct 78: 376); Palouse and surrounding area (Precinct 4: 386, Precinct 44: 402, Precinct 52: 486, Precinct 73: 291); Uniontown and surrounding area (Precinct 1: 346, Precinct 39: 404).

²T. J. Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930," in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, ed. Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), p. 22.

³Robert H. Weibe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967), p. xiii.

⁴Christopher P. Wilson, "The Rhetoric of Consumption: Mass-Market Magazines and the Demise of the Gentle Reader, 1880-1920," in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History*

ry, 1880-1980, ed. Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983) pp. 62-3.

⁵*Garfield Enterprise*, 12 September, 1924, reel 5 (Microfilm Room, Holland Library, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington).

⁶Lewis Atherton, *Main Street on the Middle Border* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1954), pp. 181-216, for specific references see pp. 186, 189, 216.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁸*Garfield Enterprise*, 26 February, 1920.

⁹*Ibid.*, 18 July, 1924, reel 6.

¹⁰*Uniontown Journal*, 30 August, 1923, reel 2 (Microfilm Room, Holland Library, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington).

¹¹*Ibid.*, 11 December, 1924; 7 December, 1922.

¹²*Palouse Republic*, 30 April, 1920, 29 November, 1920, 20 November, 1920, 24 September, 1920, reel 5-6 (Microfilm Room, Holland Library, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington).

¹³*Garfield Enterprise*, 5 January, 1923.

¹⁴*Uniontown Journal*, 30 October, 1924, 1 February, 1923.

¹⁵*Palouse Republic*, 30 April, 1920, 27 August, 1920.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 3 December, 1920.

¹⁷*Garfield Enterprise*, 13 February, 1920; *Uniontown Journal*, 2 August, 1923, 16 August, 1923, 17 September, 1923.

¹⁸*Palouse Republic*, 23 April, 1920.

¹⁹*Garfield Enterprise*, 7 October, 1921, 11 November, 1921.

²⁰*Uniontown Journal*, 17 May, 1923.

²¹*Palouse Republic*, 23 April, 1920; *Garfield Enterprise*, 9 April, 1920, 30 April, 1920.

²²*Garfield Enterprise*, 9 April, 1920, 23 September, 1921.

²³*Uniontown Journal*, 4 October, 1923.

²⁴*Palouse Republic*, 19 January, 1923; *Garfield Enterprise*, 29 September, 1923.

²⁵*Uniontown Journal*, 27 March, 1924.

²⁶Weibe, pp. 4, 44.