

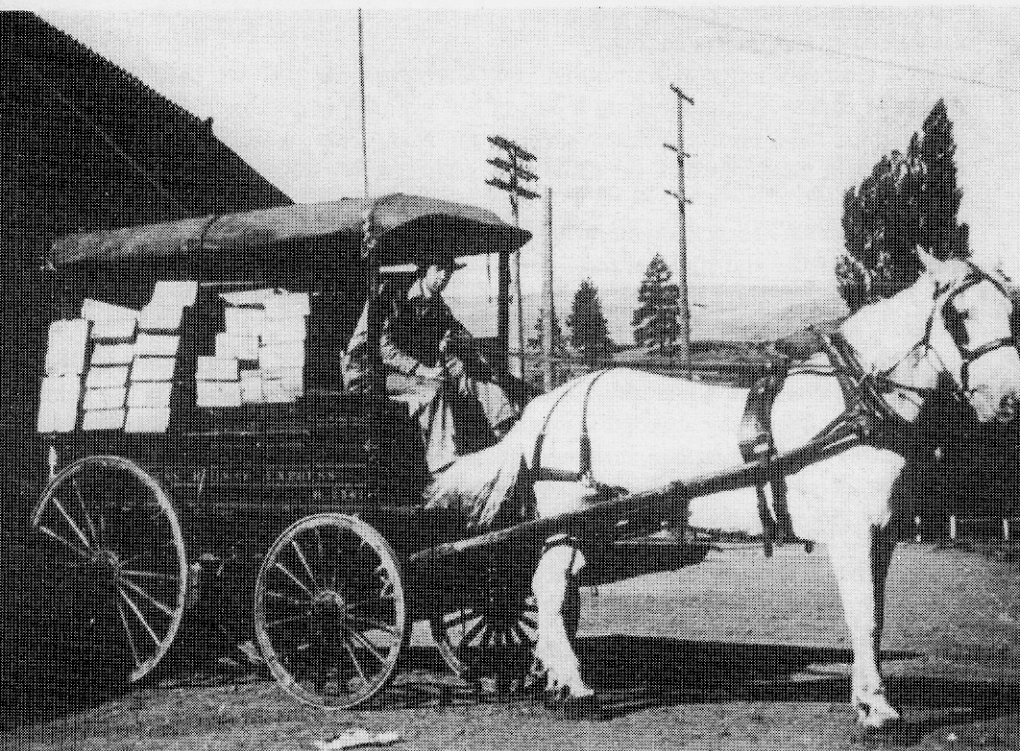


The Bunchgrass Historian

Volume 7, No. 2

Summer 1979

Milton L. Crawford Railway Expressman, 1919-1962



—Photo courtesy M. L. Crawford

Morning trip with a load of fruit—1928

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From the Editor:

During the past year, a number of interesting articles have been submitted for publication which did not fit the particular special feature stories being presented during that period. These articles are being published together in the present issue as pleasant reading for a summer's evening. We are grateful to the authors for taking the time and having the interest in the **Historian** to prepare and submit them.

The article about Mr. Milton Crawford is an excerpt from a longer transcript of a taped interview by Kay Turner. In order not to lose the flavor of this interview, Mr. Crawford's statements have been transcribed and presented here as they were spoken by him. Editing was reduced to the barest minimum and then only to assure clarity and understanding.

Mrs. Gosney's letter of transmittal was so entertaining that we have taken the liberty of adding it to and making it part of her original manuscript.

It must have been a pleasant surprise for Mrs. Ickes to discover notes of interviews with pioneers which she made sixty years ago. We welcome her sharing them with us.

Mr. Lyman Babcock's name will, no doubt, bring to the mind of many of his former colleagues and students recollection of early days in the county schools. This article by his daughter is an expression of her respect and affection for an honored father.

The clippings from early newspapers are, unfortunately, not identifiable as to the publications from which they came. However, they do provide the reader with interesting and amusing anecdotes from an earlier day.

We have added a cartoon at the end of this issue as a dash of seasoning.

CORRECTION: In the last issue of the **Historian** we stated that Dr. Roderick Sprague had had an archeological dig on the Lance Batty farm near Wawawai. The dig was on the Veryl Henson farm which adjoined the Batty Farm.

Palouse, Washington, May 11, 1913

The 13-year-old son of C. W. McFarland, a local grain man, was seriously burned yesterday afternoon while at a theater. The fire started from a portion of a stick of phosphorous which he was carrying in a hip pocket of his trousers. After the fire started, the boy rushed to the street and tried to roll in a puddle of muddy water by the curb, but someone started the cry that he had gasoline on his clothes and he was pulled from the water, which would have been useless in quenching a gasoline fire.

Milton L. Crawford

Railway Expressman, 1919-1962

as told to Kay Kenedy Turner

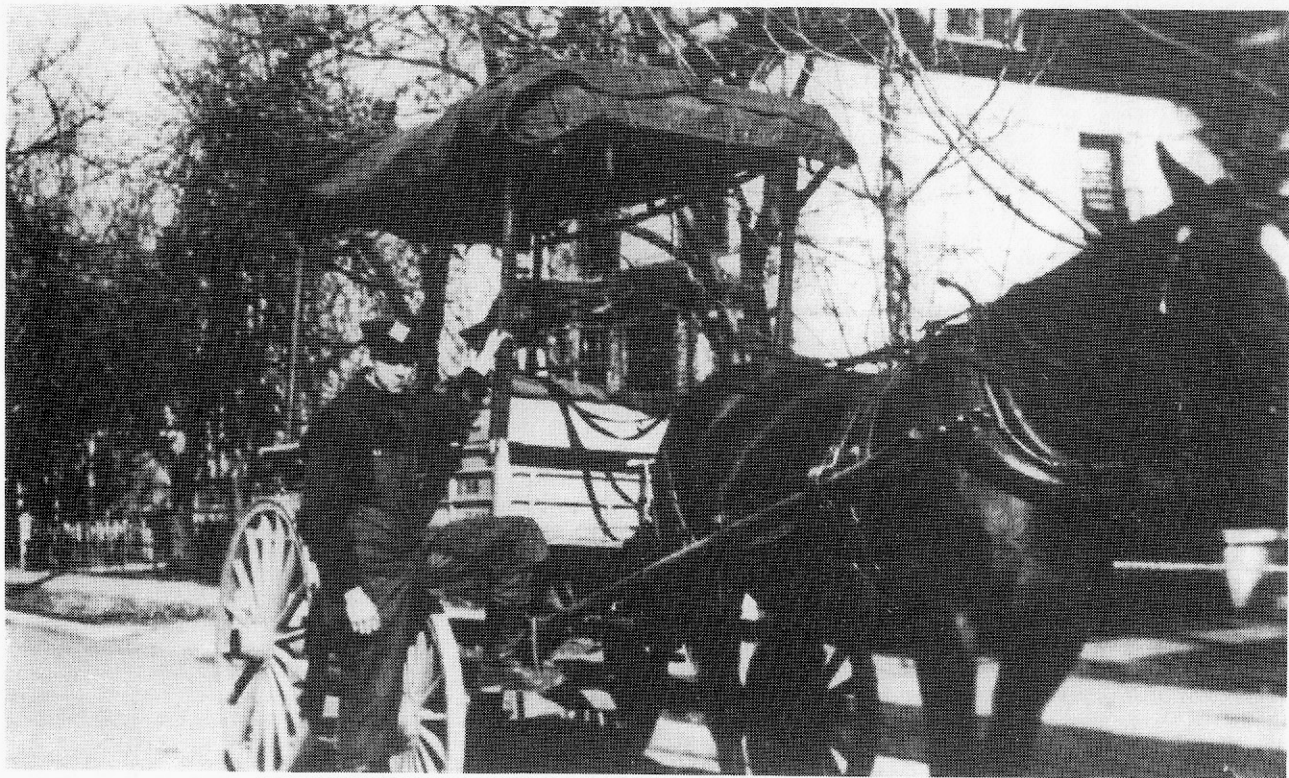
My Granddad and Dad were carpenters around here. I don't know just why they came here. They came from Pennsylvania or Massachusetts, back there. They came out here once, to down around McMinnville, Oregon. I guess they wasn't satisfied and they went back to Massachusetts. My oldest brother was born out here when they were out in 1894, then they went back and I was born. Then they came out here again and settled in here and stayed here, in Colfax. My grandfather was with them.

They worked on houses, carpenter jobs you know. J. R. Good had a contract and my Dad worked with him there in the lumber mill part where Nuxoll (the lawyer) and Elite Cleaners is, along in there. My Granddad had a little carpenter shop over where Mrs. Brown lives now, over on Mill Street. Next to the Mormon Church. At one time he was Whitman County Coroner, too. He lived over there by himself, he was about eighty-four years old when he died. He went to Portland to my aunt's down there and stayed one winter. Then he got tired of staying down there so he came back up here and the winter was too much for him.

I started at the Main Street School there (put four or five years in there), the Greer sisters were teaching. Then they had what they called the Duechmann building up where the Richfield service station is on the corner. They had a four room school house there, that was 1910 when the flood was. Then we went from there up to the departmental school, the old Hamilton, was there until the eighth grade. Then went to high school after they built the high school where the City Hall is now. I spent four years there, or five. I went out for athletics and only made two credits my sophomore year! I went for football. I got my letter in playing football. So then I graduated from there and went to work for the Washington Water Power for the summer after I graduated. I worked for them awhile as what they called the "grunt", just helped the linemen and flunky around the place of business.

I worked there until I was called for the service. After I got out of school I tried to enlist but they wouldn't take me, I was too light. I was ten pounds underweight! There was three of us went up to enlist the same time, one of them made the Army but he couldn't make Navy, and the other guy made the Navy. So I came home and waited for the draft. I came home and ate a lot! Yeah, that's what the guy said, "Eat more beans." I said, "Beans won't put no weight on you!" So, I came back and waited there. I wanted to go back to work again at the Washington Water Power, but he said, "No, we're not putting on any more now, we're going to cut down." So then I stood around the streets and around home. And, I believe, if I remember right I was janitor for the Congretational Church around about that time, maybe a little before. Took care of the church, attendance, Sunday School and everything else. Got pretty friendly with Mr. Bainton, the preacher. Awful friendly with him. He'd call up and say, "Well Milt, I think it's going to freeze tonight. We'd better shut the

Footnote: Milt was born in Spencer, Massachusetts in 1896 and moved to Colfax with his family in 1898. After graduating from Colfax High School he went to work for the Railway Express Company where his career spanned forty years.



—Photo Courtesy M. L. Crawford

Ready for the day's work

water off.” He had a little old Austin car, I believe, a little bitty thing. He’d get in that and come up and I’d meet him over at the church and we’d drain the pipes and fix her all up for the winter. It got down cold here in those days, down around fifteen or twenty and stayed there for awhile. Yup!

Anyway, Bainton must have spoken to this man, the express agent. Spoken to him about me wanting a job. So, I was standing in front of what’s now the Hyde-Out (it was a pool hall then) about 9:30 or 10 o’clock. See, a train come in about ten minutes to ten, they called it the Spokane to Pendleton train. The old man was driving horse and wagon at that time was his (the express agent’s) wife’s father. Big thick glasses, he couldn’t see very well, he was pretty elderly. So I was standing in front of that place and he was going down to meet the train that morning and he hollered over to me, “Are you the young fella that Rev. Bainton said is looking for a job?” And I said, “I’m looking for one, I didn’t know whether he did or not.” He said, “Well, he told me about it. Do you think you can drive this horse and wagon?” I said, “Well, I could drive two of them if you had ’em!” And he asked me a few questions and then he said, “All right, go around the corner to where the express office is and my wife will tell you what to do. How to do it.” So, I rushed around the corner and she dug out a couple of application blanks about like this. She said, “Sit down and fill these out.” Then she dug out a bond application so I had to fill that out and go home and get a picture of myself. I brought back a graduation picture and she says, “That’s too good to send down to the bond company.” I said, “Let ’er go, I got another and that’s the only one I got.” So, they sent it down I guess, I didn’t get it back anyway. That’s where it started.

When the agent came back from the depot and meeting the morning train he looked ’em over I guess. About that time it was noon, I went home and got the picture and brought it back and stuck around there in the afternoon and kind of learned. Figured what to do. That next morning he said, “All right, come down—you can drive the horse and wagon. I started April 1st, 1919.

I kept the horse and wagon in the livery barn and I didn’t have to do much of that for awhile. I just drive in, get up in the wagon and drive out. I had to load the wagon at the depot, sort packages and everything like that, but at the barn I didn’t have to take care of the horses for awhile. At night, I’d take it back and turn it loose; the night man took care of everything.

There were quite a few trains coming in that I had to meet and pick up freight and load too. There was one in the morning—Spokane to Pendleton, and from Walla Walla to Spokane and what they called “The Bug”—the train from Colfax to Moscow that had freight on it. At night, it would have quite a bit on it because it’d transfer from that train to another train. Then there’s the electric train there at the Great Northern Depot—there’s one out in the morning at 8’clock and back at 11:00, one out at 12:30 and back at 4:30 and out at 4:30 and back at 8:30. There were three or four on the train, both ways. I put in a long day, but the night one I wouldn’t (meet). Ed McCutchen, he’d unload that train at night and put it in the warehouse and then I’d take care of it the next morning. I didn’t have to work on Sundays for awhile, meet the trains or anything.

I was only getting about sixty dollars a month so then he told me if I’d meet the morning train and take care of the horse and wagon I’d get sixty-five or seventy dollars more. So I took the job on and I had to quit the church business. I took that job on, Sundays and things. They came in about the time church was starting, so I quit that. Had to unload ’em Sundays and put it in the depot baggage room and sort

it out. That's after this place moved down to the depot down by where the Kiwanis Club has the park now. That used to be the Union Pacific Depot. They done away with the uptown office and moved down to there because the Union Pacific boxed in one end of the depot and made an office for the express company on the east end of the depot. So that was the express office for years until they done away with that and moved over in the freight office over in the freight yards. They didn't like the trains backing up over the tracks and then having to back over Main Street all the time. Too much chance of accidents.

I think it was in 1920 or 1921, the big barn was burnt down. We lost the horse wagon and everything in that big fire. Only thing we saved in that was the colt and they traded the colt to a farmer for a ton of hay. I'd been working for them for a couple of years when that happened. They sent to Spokane and had an outfit sent down, another outfit. Another horse and wagon and everything. They just put it on a boxcar and sent it back, right away. Come down on the Great Northern train out of Spokane. Yup.

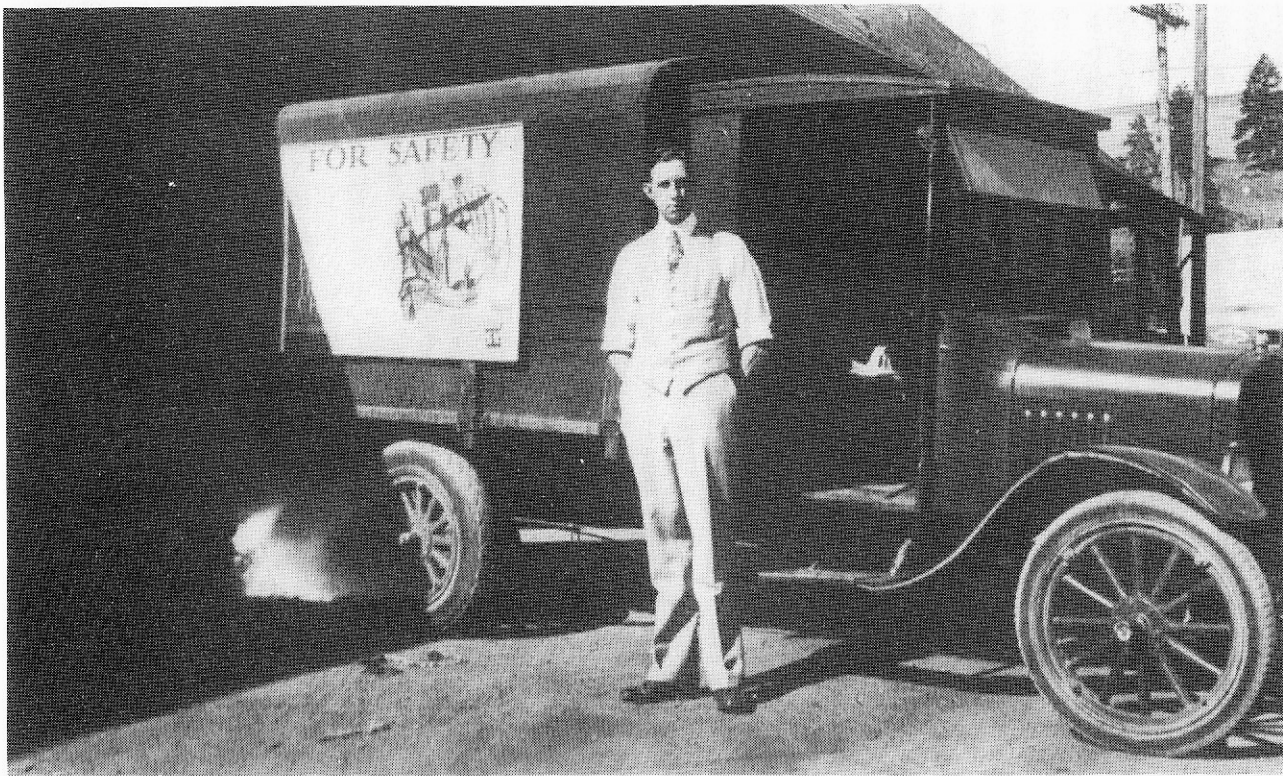
There was a circus in town one morning, and a white horse I had was backed up to the depot like this but it didn't have nothing on it. He turned his head I guess and saw the elephant or smelled it and away he went. He took off! They stopped him up there by the Courthouse, I don't remember who did it but they brought him back down. That was about the time the train come in, too, a little before. I was still down there.

When I first started to work for the Railway Express Company there was just three—the agent, myself and then his wife was cashier. He asked for more money for her being cashier and the superintendent over in Seattle wouldn't pay it so he quit and went to Spokane as bookkeeper for the Union Oil Company. His name was E. T. Hawes.

Then they brought this little fellow over from Tacoma and he was here for quite a few years until he began working on the side, doing a little business on the side. Wouldn't tend to business, I guess. I was cashier then for him. This was Roy Brakebill, one of the Brakebills from around here. His dad was fireman on the switch engine, the Union Pacific switch engine around here. He's the one that got to move down to the other depot down here so we'd be closer to our work and everything. Business got pretty good and they put on another man, I think Carpenter was his name.

After driving awhile, I can't remember just how it happened, I went to work on the railroad. Went on the Great Northern, worked on the Great Northern out of here to Spring Valley and back. Then they done away with that or something and I went to work over at Lewiston for about six months. Then a fellow had more seniority than I did so he what they called "bumped" me and I went to Spokane to work. We moved to Spokane, I was married then living in Lewiston and we moved to Spokane. I ran on the Union Pacific and the Northern Pacific to Lewiston, to Wallace, Idaho. In other words, I took the regular guys place when they wanted a vacation. On the extra board, what they called the "extra board," This was for the Railway Express.

I handled the express on the trains and everything like that. From Spokane to Walla Walla and Spokane to Wenatchee and different places. In other words, I just extra boarded and they'd call me whenever somebody wanted to lay off for a couple of weeks. I was up there for quite awhile until this other agent, they brought him over from Lewiston, called me up in Spokane and said, "You want to come back down and drive the horse and wagon?" I thought, well, that's a pretty good idea so I



—Photo Courtesy M. L. Crawford

My first truck—Model T Ford 1932

decided to come back down here and drive the horse and wagon. So I quit rail-roading and come back down, quit on the road and came back down here to drive the horse and wagon for this fellow for years. Until he got fired, then they got another man from Lewiston, Bill Edge was his name. When he came over here he said, "I'll only be here about four years," and by George, it was nearly four years to the day. I don't know how he knew it! They moved him from here to Pasco, he was only in Pasco a short time when they moved him to Baker, Oregon. Yup. Then back to Lewiston, but he didn't stay with 'em. He's passed away, all of them, except this fellow—he's in Seattle. I had a Christmas card from him. This other agent I don't know about, I haven't heard from him in years, he's most likely passed on. Edge was only here four years, he was the agent and I was the driver and everything like that.

It was in '32 that I came back to Colfax and bought the truck, the first truck, too. I had a box put on it, built on it and signs on it. I didn't have to worry about the truck running away! But I had to worry about gettin' it started in the winter time. They used to put a blanket on the horse, then the harness and then another blanket 'cause they had to stand around so much you know. The school kids would come running out there and get on and take rides.

When I was driving the truck, there were only the agent and me. Then several years later, before they moved over to the freight office, they cut down to one guy and I was it. On a commission basis.

Well, that worked all right for awhile, but business started going down and I wasn't making much on that kind of business. I was for awhile! I was making so much commission on business hauling stuff like that, I blame it on the agent in Pullman who knew I was making more than he was, so they cut me down. That's when the express office was over at the freight office, it was over there. They finally got it down to one man and I was doing it all, doing the office work and driving and everything on a commission basis. Then they done away with the trains around here and things.

So Pullman was handling the express business, they had an agent over there and office and everything. So he'd bring the stuff over here down to the express office and I'd deliver from there. I'd take it from there. If I'd go around and pick up anything he'd come over and get it and took it over to Pullman and put it on the train. Yup. Same way with the banks, when the banks had anything to ship or anything I'd call him up and tell him to bring the safe over.

Twice I had someone try to steal our shipments. One night somebody, I don't know, they never did find out—never followed it up or anything—didn't bother them much. Went down one morning with the horse and wagon and backed up and I see'd the sheriff, Bill Dailey, and a couple of other guys standing in the door over there. I thought something was wrong. I backed up and went around there. Bill Dailey, the sheriff, he says, "Why don't you lock this door when you leave at night?" And I said, "That door's locked, don't fool me. What you guys standing here about?" I looked over the counter and said, "Oh, oh! Somebody knocked the combination off the safe!" But they didn't get into it or anything, they just destroyed the combination. I said, "What you going to do about it?" He says, "Ain't going to do nothing, you take it up with your railroad outfit." So I called Spokane and got hold of the auditor (for the express company) and he came down on the morning train. He looked it over and he didn't do anything either. He just took the door off the safe and sent it to San Francisco. They put a new combination on it and sent 'er back.

So I put 'er back on and let 'er go.

Then, one other time some kids got under the depot and built a fire and burnt a hole in the floor. Yup!

Oh, yeah, and over at the other place in the freight yard I had a little—what they called a “pony” safe, used to put the valuables in and the money for the bank and stuff like that. One night I guess some guys thought they was going to do something. I had it covered up, nothing in it. They got fooled! I had it covered up in the corner and everything. They dug it out from under there and took and beat it. That time the city police come down and took some finger prints and I called the express guy about it and everything. Nothing done about it, nothing said. That shows how they cared about it. Anyway, they finally found the little safe out in the country out towards Palouse. All jammed up and everything. Sheriffs called me up and I went over to look at it, they kept it over there until the traveling auditor came by and I took him over and showed it to him. He said, “Well, you guys can have it, we don't want it.” So, I don't know what they ever did do with it, I don't know. That's the only time I had any trouble.

I've had lots of experiences, different things like that. When you're working by yourself on a commission basis. Some lady out in the country ordered a dog from up in Canada, sheep dog. It came and she didn't want it, wouldn't take it. So I had a dog on my hands! I fed it and kept it for about a week and then sold it for five dollars I think it was. Yeah, I wired back up to Canada to the shipper and he says well give it to her if she'll pay the charges, but she wouldn't even consider nothing. I says, “Well, gosh, you ain't going to take it? You ordered it so why not take it?” “Well, it tain't what I ordered, tain't what I want!” I said, “Well, I got a dog on my hands!” So I went to some restaurant to get soup and bones and trash to feed it.

Even chickens, too. Little chickens. One shipment came in and a guy didn't take 'em and things so I sold 'em to the section man for two or three dollars to pay the freight. Quite an experience all right. One good thing about it when you was working there you don't know what you were going to have from one day to another. Maybe you'd have three crates of monkeys for the carnival or circus in town. Yup. Then you might get a great big box of dead fish for the circus seals, truck it on down there to the circus and back up and unload it. I got along fine with the circus business, they didn't bother me. Carnivals, too. All kinds of strange freight arrived when they came to town.

And then dogs and cats and everything. Bees, too! A little swarm, a box of bees. There'd be a lot of what they called “hitch hikers,” they'd be on the outside. I was pretty lucky though, I didn't get stung at all. Yeah, they called 'em hitch hikers. From California, down in there. A fellow here in town had 'em, then in the winter time sometime after he took the honey out of the supers he'd give me a comb sometimes.

I delivered a lot of animals, dogs and things like that. One time, well I don't know whether I want to tell that or not. She got a little dog from someplace, I don't remember where. Anyway, I delivered it up in the south end to the lady and I said, “You'd better take this dog out on the porch or outside and let it loose for awhile or something like that.” “Oh, no, it's all right, you just . . .” She opened the crate and took it out and oh, oh! I said, “I told you lady!”

But they didn't seem to come in the winter like that. I don't remember having any trouble like that in the winter, it was always in the spring or summer. Even one

time, you know the dog races down in Portland? There was a crate with three of 'em in it one day, come in a big crate. This Faye Hubbard, they were addressed to him so he came in and looked 'em over and picked out the one he wanted. Said, "Send the rest of 'em on to Montana." I said, "Wup, wait a minute!" "Now, that's right." He showed me a letter so I tagged 'em up and sent the others on and I never heard anything more about it. He was getting a greyhound to run coyotes or something like that.

Fruit that would come from down in Oregon, raspberries and strawberries. And fruit from Penawawa and Almota. Yup. Come up on the morning train about 7:30 or 8 o'clock, then I'd load up and deliver the fruit and stuff like this. This agent would hire a little dray line bus, "Fat" Ripley. Why he'd hire a dray and he'd deliver the packages and I'd deliver the fruit. It would be faster for them to send the fruit up the river on the train and back this way then it would be to haul it themselves. We got lots of fruit everyday. Yup, every morning. Oh, ten, fifteen, twenty crates of strawberries for S & S Grocery and different ones. City Grocery Store—Lacey brothers had that one. S & S Grocery, that was Stapleton, Short and Kimborough. Table Supply up here where the Abby Apartments is now, that was a grocery store in the basement and a meat market. Oh, yes, I delivered—up the alley there and delivered all the fruit and that kind of thing.

I'll never forget Fred Stapleton, I guess he's passed away now. He was one of the S & S Grocery. I'd come up there in the morning with the strawberries and the fruit and everything and start unloading and he'd come on out. "Hurry up, we can't sell the stuff out here! Bring it on in!" He hollered that at me a couple of times, so the next time I fired back at him and he stood and laughed. I said, "If you don't like it come out and unload it yourself or I'll go up the street and deliver it." He laughed and he never said much about it after that. Then Fred Stapleton said, "If you'd keep your fingers out of the cracks of them strawberries we'd have more to sell!" Oh, yeah, he was a good one, but after I fired back at him and things he was all right, a good friend. That was a great thing.

I can remember when I would take a whole load up and unload just at Penney's. Where Fonk's store is now was the Great Eastern and they had a lot of dry goods stuff. Yup. Then the garages and things like that, too.

Then, shipping out of here used to be two what they called "produce houses." The farmers would bring in chickens and stuff like that, turkeys, geese—things for Christmas and Thanksgiving business. They'd put 'em in big crates and ship to Seattle, Portland, different places. I'd pick them up in the afternoon about 4 o'clock and put 'em on the night train. Sometimes there'd be seven or eight crates of chickens, sometimes more than that going out of here.

Cold Storage Market was located about next to where Hamilton Drug Store is, right along in there. They used to butcher veal. They were both, Brass and Marler, from Wallace, Idaho, so they had a place to dispose of the dressed veal. So, they'd dress up the veal, put a tag on and ship to Wallace. Yeah, sometimes five or six at a time—one or two.

Another produce house was down, well right off from over here (near Perkins House), George Perry and his brother had it for awhile. Then another fellow took it over, by the name of, oh—he went over to Palouse from here—Hollett I think his name was. Anyway, I used to have to stop there and pick up stuff and like that and ship it out. Chicken and turkeys and everything for Christmas and Thanksgiving, over to Seattle. Go on the afternoon train to Spokane and then over to Seattle.

When they had the opera house across from the Congregational Church, a theater house. The big road shows used to come in on the trains and everything like that. Then this Ripley that had a dray line, why he'd haul the scenery and the trunks and all the equipment up there and unload. Yes, that all come up, even the traveling salesmen for the different stores had great big high trunks (samples), they all come by baggage on the railroad. Now they come by truck or by their personal car or campers or anything like that. But them years—there used to be a jewelry salesman had a little bitty trunk like that, pretty heavy. Then I'd help the baggage man, Manuel Lee was the baggage man and Bill Eastep was a baggage man there, too. Stokes was agent, ticket agent—he's still around, too. T. R. Stokes, Turner Stokes—he had the oil company here, he used to own the one down on Main Street where the Jackpot is now. Oh, he had three around here—service stations. Then he had one at Moscow and one in Colville, he was quite a guy. Yeah, he's still around, I'm quite sure he is, a couple of weeks ago I saw him at church.

Hod Kincaid was out in the country there for awhile then he moved in down on the flat and had the hatchery. I used to have to go down and pick up baby chicks and take the hatching eggs. He'd get a shipment from eight, ten, fifteen cases of eggs from back east—they'd come in by express. I'd take 'em down there and unload 'em for him and pick up the baby chicks. Sometimes when he'd get in a hurry he'd bring 'em up himself. Many a time we had to hold the train for him. Yup. He had a customer over in Montana he used to ship when half-grown—be eight or ten crates at a time. He shipped a lot of baby chicks out of here and a lot of eggs. One time, it was in the winter-time, too, I think, I had a hundred and ten cases of eggs piled up in the express office. He came in and got 'em and I think half of 'em froze before he got home. I'm quite sure they did, 'cause he had to come in from the ranch and get 'em and take 'em back home. That was on a Sunday, too, he come in on a Sunday and got 'em.

That was quite a thing. Farmers out in the country would ship hogs and sheep and everything. The Kammerzells out here was shipping them. This Paul Cocking out here, I don't know whether he's up at Farmington yet or not, he used to get hogs from Iowa and Illinois, back in there. Breeding stock.

One instance I had when a farmer up here by Steptoe shipped one down to Vancouver, Washington (down by Portland.) It was a big one, a big sow. I don't know it at the time but I guess it was going to have pigs in a few days or so. Anyway, it died on the way down there. I had more trouble over that than a whole stack of monkeys.

Instead of turning it around and bringing it back up here so I could have it examined by a veterinary and everything they sent it on into Portland and the Humane Society got ahold of it. Then I did hear about it! The traveling auditors came up three or four times about that, maybe more. Blamed me for doing it, for accepting it. So I told him, "All right, maybe so, but the next farmer brings a pig in here to ship I'll get a boxcar!" "Oh, no, don't go that big. But make sure they put 'em in big enough crates, see that the crates big enough for 'em." So, it wasn't long afterwards a farmer out here by Palouse brought one in. The tail end was sticking out one end and the nose was out the other and I says, "Wup, don't unload that thing. Take it out and build a bigger crate 'cause I won't accept it." So he did, by gosh, he took 'er back.

Another time a farmer up by St. John, a big hog raiser, too and he ought to have known better than that. He brought one in one night in a crate, about 5 o'clock to

put on the night train to go down in southern Idaho someplace. Anyway, he had two pigs in there with a board across like that (kitty-corner), one pig on this side and one pig on that side. I says, "No, don't unload that. Go get another crate and we'll take this pig in that crate and put this pig in another." So he did, he went out in the country and got another crate. We changed them around and got 'em ready for shipment. I missed supper that night! Now, he knew better than that. I was so good as a zoo keeper.

I can remember one time a fella brought in a sheep to send down southern Idaho someplace, went down on the night train anyway. We was loading it in there and the bottom of the crate fell out! I jumped down there and grabbed 'em by the wool and drug 'em in the office. I told the conductor, I says, "Go ahead and I'll fix the crate and send 'em tomorrow night." Had that done to crates of chickens, too, the bottom drop out and they'd be all over. I'd catch most of 'em and let the rest go. Yup.

Lots of times for the circus or carnivals in town you'd get crates or something like that of snakes, too, all boxed up.

People shipped just about anything, even canary birds, cakes—decorated cakes. I had one, well, Mrs. Ryan was her name. They had the Shamrock Cafe. Her son was back in St. Louis, so she baked a big cake and decorated it all up and everything. Put it in a big can and sent it back there by express and it got there all right. She remarked about it so many times, how nice it went—the frosting wasn't cracked or nothing!

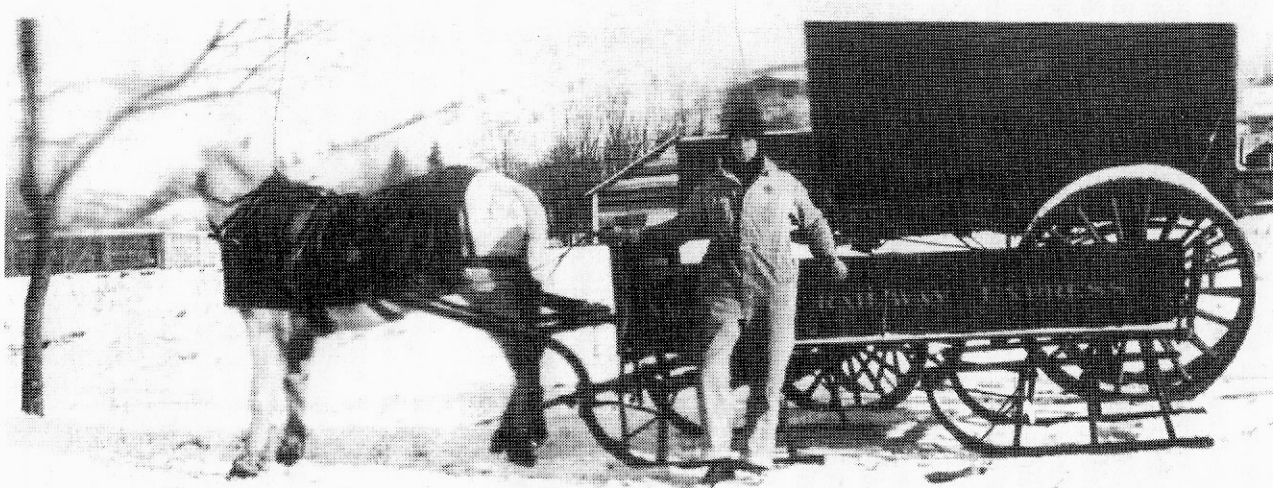
Used to be a girl who worked here in town, too, used to get a decorated cake from Portland from a boyfriend. I used to deliver it up there and I'd say, "Oh, oh, here's where I get a piece of cake!" Sure enough, I got one.

I would go around collecting from the guys for the express. I didn't have any trouble only one time. There was a grocery store back of the Great Eastern, a little fellow, his name was Billy Deno, worked back there. He had an old car and it broke down and he had to send to Spokane and get an axle. It come C.O.D., eight dollars I believe it was. So the boss told me, "When you take that thing over get the money or bring the thing back." C.O.D. meant "cash on delivery." So I delivered it to him and he says, "Gosh, I'm glad to see that, put it down there, I'm busy and I'll see you later." I said, "No you won't!" I says, "Well, I will." So, I started out the door and he says, "Come back and I'll pay ya." That's about the only time I ever had anything like that.

I can remember I was delivering packages and stuff and I was down the alley back of the Old National Bank one day and I lost a package for the Great Eastern Store, some dresses. Gosh, I ran around town trying to find that thing. Somebody picked it up and took it over to the Great Eastern for me. They kept it for a day or two before they told me about it.

When I worked on the train up in the Wallace country about twice a week they'd ship silver and gold out of there. When I worked out of Spokane they'd give me a big safe with a combination on it and a shotgun and a revolver. I knew what was going to happen.

Yeah, I'd take it up and stop at Kellogg and unload the stuff, except the ammunition of the guns, I'd keep them. So, the agent put the brick of gold in there and put the combination on and seal it all up and I'd sign for it and everything. Never did find out what the value of one of those bars was. Anyhow, the first shipment I got, the first time I made the trip for Spokane—well, it was going to



—Photo Courtesy M. L. Crawford

Handling the express in the snow—1925

“Frisco for the mints—they put about thirty-five of them in there, piled ’em up in there. I didn’t know any difference so I picks each one of ’em up and carries ’em back in the corner of the car and covers ’em up with a big tarp I had. Got into Spokane and the guys unloading the train there put it in a big chest and then seal it and bill it to ‘Frisco to the mint. Young fellows unloading the train there in Spokane said, “Hey kid, where’s the silver today?” And I said, “Back there in the corner under that canvas.” They said, “My God, kid, leave it alone where they throw it, if they throw it in there leave it alone. Leave it where they pile it.” So, the next time I did. The next time they just piled it there by the door. The guy in Spokane said if they tell you it’s no good to ’em why carry it back there and cover it over? They know about it, so after that I did, I left it out there. Same way with the gold, the trunk (safe) I’d leave it right where they loaded it, these two guys loaded it for me and I just left it. You had to sign for all the stuff, your name was on it until you got to Spokane. Then you’d go from the train down to the office in what they called the “money cage.” You’d have to take all that stuff in there and turn it over to them and then they sign for it and you’re out.

In the winter it was a tougher job, that’s right. Take care of the horse, blanket it up and everything and yourself. I had two or three suits on, set there and drive around and deliver stuff. For perishables, I had a big canvas, what they called a tarp. Insulated and everything like that, throw it over and keep everything from freezing. Yeah, take care of ’em and make a special trip up and deliver ’em before they did freeze.

The snow got so deep the wagon wouldn’t pull with the horse. Then in the winter, why the streets and pavement got so slick the horse would fall down, then you’d have to unhitch it and everything and get ’em back up again. They did finally put rubber shoes on, had it shod twice a month. Would wear out the others. Yes, a lot of times the horse would slip and fall down and then I’d unharness ’em and get ’em up and away we’d go! Jack Eastep, he shod the horse every time I’d go over there to Mechlin’s Blacksmith Shop, over there by Brunings. Yup.

Oh, yeah, there was lots of good business in them days. Like you say, they’d all come in by express, everything.

I retired October 1st, 1962. The business was going down hill so much and the express company wanted to close the office here and do all the business out of Pullman, let him do the delivering. Wanted me to quit and retire, so I says, “Well, my time is about up, sixty-five years of age. I guess I’ll take ’er, I’ll take my retirement.” He says, “All right, okay. We’ll make arrangements for you.” So he did.

I’d like to see a lot of the “Good old days” come back, I’d do differently myself. I’m quite sure I’d do different. I think I’d go back to college instead of going on into a job. I could have had my Dad’s carpenter tools and my Granddad’s—all them carpenter tools and all the necessary things except up here (touching his head). So, I’d do different.

Kay: More education would have been . . .

Milt: That’s right, that’s right—more education. □

Pullman, Washington, October 11, 1911.

A panic was created on a Northern Pacific train from Spokane to Lewiston the other evening when someone there put a pasteboard shoe box containing a live snake through an open window of the car, between Oakesdale and Belmont.

Early Days in the Palouse

by Ruth Ickes

About 1919, I was going to high school in Palouse, Washington. During summer vacation, my friend and I attempted to interview some of the old-timers and learn about pioneer days.

One unforgettable character whom we visited was "Aunt Hattie" Cox, widow of "Uncle Bob" Cox who had operated a pottery south of the town of Palouse. The town of Palouse, by the way was often called Palouse City and still appears on some maps as such. Aunt Hattie was very agreeable to being questioned by a pair of enterprising young ladies with note books in hand.

She said she had come to Palouse in 1872 when she was twelve years old. Her family had come from Walla Walla, taking fourteen days with horse drawn wagons to make the trip. They had brought their furniture with them. She said Bill Ewing was the first settler in the area where Palouse now stands. At that time, there was a flour mill but no town and her father had to pay a toll to cross the bridge. The mill had been built by a man named Breeding who had come from Missouri to make a fortune in mining but ended up building a flour mill. This flour mill at the east end of Palouse was a landmark for many years and we skated on the ice of the mill pond until the '30's.

The first store, she told us, was built on the north side of the river by W. L. Powers in 1873 or 1874. About the same time, a second store was built on the south side of the river by William Ragsdale. This building was near a house owned by Lazelle.

Aunt Hattie said the only recreation they had then was dancing and Mr. Ragsdale let them use the empty room over his store for dances. Aunt Hattie's father played the violin and sometimes the young people gathered at her home to dance. She said they always served "eats" after the dances. There were neither churches or schools, but they did build outside floors with corner posts supporting a thatched roof for dancing; these were called "boweries."

She told us that a new calico dress was considered a luxury. The women made their own dresses which were expected to last them at least a year. They also made themselves sunbonnets, for hats were not known to the pioneer woman. Colfax was twenty miles away and she remembered going there once on horseback to get gingham for her mother to make a sunbonnet. They purchased shoes and cotton stockings but knit their own heavy woolen sox and hose for winter. Shoes were all high topped and made of heavy leather.

She said everyone tried to help each other and would travel long distances to attend a funeral or care for the sick. She remembered going to Farmington, about twenty miles north, to a funeral. When one considers that thirty miles is a long day's journey for a horse and buggy, the effort involved can be appreciated.

Another old timer whom we interviewed was Charles (Charley) Farnsworth who ran one of the first livery stables in Palouse. His family had come from some place in California, the trip taking three weeks to go from California to Portland and three weeks more to get from Portland to Palouse. They arrived in Palouse in 1877. There were only four or five houses in the settlement when they arrived. At that time

FOOTNOTE: The notes from which this account was written were preserved by the writer's mother and were only recently discovered. Mrs. Ickes now lives in Spokane with her husband, Dean Ickes.

there was no Garfield, Rosalia or Oakesdale but there was a Mission school at Te-ko-a. Spokane Falls was a thriving community of three hundred souls and a small settlement at Spangle which was on a stage coach route.

The Farnsworth family made their own furniture after they had built a house. He said the price of kerosene was very high but they used it for light instead of using candles. Occasionally a shoe maker would come through the country and stayed at one's house to make boots for the whole family. The men wore boots that reached to their knees and the ladies' boots were high topped and laced. He said that some times a lady would wear high heels to a dance.

He told us the cooking was done in large iron kettles that were hung on cranes in the huge fireplaces. They baked in Dutch ovens dug into a clay bank. A space for baking was dug out, the inside was patted smooth and a hot fire was kept going inside for days. When baking day arrived, live coals were kept in the oven until it was hot after which the coals were scraped out, the bread put in and the oven sealed shut with a close-fitting baked clay door. An inexperienced cook could easily spoil the bread if the seal were broken before the bread was done. The oven would then have to be heated again before the half-baked loaves could be returned to the oven. On the other hand, one can see what would happen if the loaves were left in too long.

They prepared to do the laundry by carrying huge kettles of water from the spring and heating it on the cranes in the fireplace. Sometimes they carried the soiled clothes to the spring and heated the water over a bonfire.

Like Aunt Hattie, Charley Farnsworth spoke of the bowery dances and added that the Privett boys formed a dance band consisting of two violins, a bass viol and an organ and were very much in demand.

He gave us some interesting stories on Indians. He said perhaps the oldest landmark in the Palouse country was Kamiak Butte.

He said that in 1877 there was an Indian scare. Coeur d'Alene Indians and the Nez Perce from Lewiston were on a rampage (Nez Perce War). A rider came to the Palouse settlement with the chilling news that Indians were on the war path and as there was no stockade in the Palouse settlement at that time, everyone was badly frightened. They loaded their families into their wagons and ran their horses all the way to Colfax where there was a block house. Colfax was overcrowded and full of bonfires where families had made camp. One woman was baking bread when the news came so she took the dough with her to bake in Colfax. The drivers parked wagons across the roads leading into Colfax to slow down the attackers. One family, coming to camp late, was mistaken for Indians by a frightened man who tried to shoot them. Luckily, his gun jammed and he was saved from killing his own neighbors.

The second day, some of the men started for Walla Walla with their families while after a few days some of the braver men returned to Palouse to build a stockade there. Governor Ferry allowed them a certain amount of ammunition and some guns, but there weren't enough to go around so those who did not receive any were disgruntled. These fellows went up on Ringo Butte and built a fire to make the settlers think the Indians were that near. They left notched sticks near the burned out fires, this being a common method of the Indians for keeping track of time and could show what day they expected to attack. When the site of the fire was carefully examined they found boot marks instead of mocassin prints so they knew white men had been there; their elaborate ruse had not worked.

Many Indian trails were near Palouse; one well-traveled trail was two miles east of Palouse near the Randall farm where a watering trough still marks the place (in 1919). Other trails went through Farmington and on up into the mountains known as the Hoo Doos. Another well-worn Indian trail crossed the river at Kennedy Ford between Palouse and Potlatch and is now known as Riverside Park. □

“Down in the Rocks”

by Ethel Pierson Gosney

When I was a small child we lived on a farm not too far from the cliffs and crags that formed the natural boundary around Rock Lake and extend on into what we called, “Down in the Rocks.” There were little meadows and springs sheltered by high rock formations where wild life grew in abundance.

Among the many wild flowers were the always-first-to-bloom buttercups, followed by grass flowers, yellow bells, blue bells, bird bills and baby faces. And around every little spring masses of violets and purple and white iris grew right down to the water’s edge. These little springs were icy cold and pure enough to drink. Many birds nested in the shrubs and small trees or high up on the rocky cliffs. Ducks and geese also nested around the small lakes and springs, well hidden by the tall grasses and tules.

Besides badgers, ground hogs, squirrels and an occasional coyote, many wild horses roamed the area. These beautiful horses were always led by a big red stallion. Not far from our farm house was a natural salt lick. Quite often we would suddenly hear the thundering sound of running horses as they swept around the hill headed for the salt lick. They squealed, kicked and fought over the salt . . . and I might add, scared the daylight out of all the kids . . . then left as swiftly as they came. The salt lick was so hard and sun baked that my mother had it filled with water every spring and used it for a duck pond.

Let me tell you about those horses. Our closest neighbor was Mr. C. B. Henderson and he had a big Percheron stallion. Mr. Henderson is credited with building up the strain of those wild horses until many of them were sleek beautiful animals, though running free. Mr. Henderson was not a young man, he had a long white beard, and long flowing white hair. He rode a small white Indian pony, but he and that pony could put those wild horses any where he wanted them to go.

After Mr. Henderson passed away, his daughter, Mrs. Grace Heglar decided to sell off the wild horses that roamed her land. She asked the Pierson kids to round them up and put them in the cattle corrals on the Milwaukee siding at Ewan.

It was no small task to round up 75 to 100 wild, kicking horses and drive them down to the corrals at Ewan. But we had some very fast saddle horses, among them were two pure-bred Hambletonians that could easily outrun the wild horses. We got the job done and a public auction was held the next Sunday.

Finally enough fences were built that kept the wild horses down in the rocks where they roamed free for many years.

However, ‘Down in the Rocks’ was never the same after the wild horses were gone. What a thrill it was to watch them as they swept through the rocks led by Big Red. I shall never forget them. □

Footnote: The author is now Mrs. Charles Gosney of St. John, Washington.



—Photo Courtesy Irene Wiggins

Mr. and Mrs. L. T. Babcock in their Colfax home with their three oldest grandsons, Lee and Bob Wiggins and Dick Cadzow about 1937.

Lyman T. Babcock

Whitman County Pioneer

by Irene Babcock Wiggins

One of the earliest teachers in Whitman County came to the little town of Johnson in 1890 from Illinois. He was a young single man named Lyman T. Babcock, who was born and raised on a farm near Flora, Illinois, on land his grandfather had taken up as a land grant in 1839. The young man had attended a country school near the farm, and when he was 19 years old his father died. He assisted his mother on the farm for a time and then began his teaching career in his home school, walking the distance to and from school every day, studying all the way and preparing for his teaching certificates which he needed very much. The young man was always a real student from his earliest years and after taking elaborate teachers' examinations eventually achieved life-certificates in Illinois, Idaho, and Washington.

Lyman had no interest at all in farming as his Illinois ancestors had done, so after a few years of teaching in his neighborhood he left the homeland and ventured the great distance to the New West after hearing from an old family friend who had come earlier and was then situated at Moscow, Idaho. This man was really in love with his new home. Going west at that time was considered a longer trip than it is to go around the world today.

The young, adventurous Mr. Babcock had somehow earned a degree at some sort of small college in Flora, Illinois, by the year of 1890. It was done, for the most part, by attending summer sessions there, so it could not have been a very specialized or thorough training. The Orchard City College, as it was called at that time, was long ago discontinued, but part of the building still exists today and serves as a funeral parlor.

Young Mr. Babcock had met a certain young lady at the college in 1889 when she was also there on a teacher-training program of some sort. She was Allie Robertson from the LaClede area, only about thirty miles or so from the Flora area. She was almost six years his junior, but they became engaged. The next summer, after suffering somewhat from malaria, Lyman decided to visit the new western country, hoping to later convince his new eighteen-year-old fiancee to join him there for a life together.

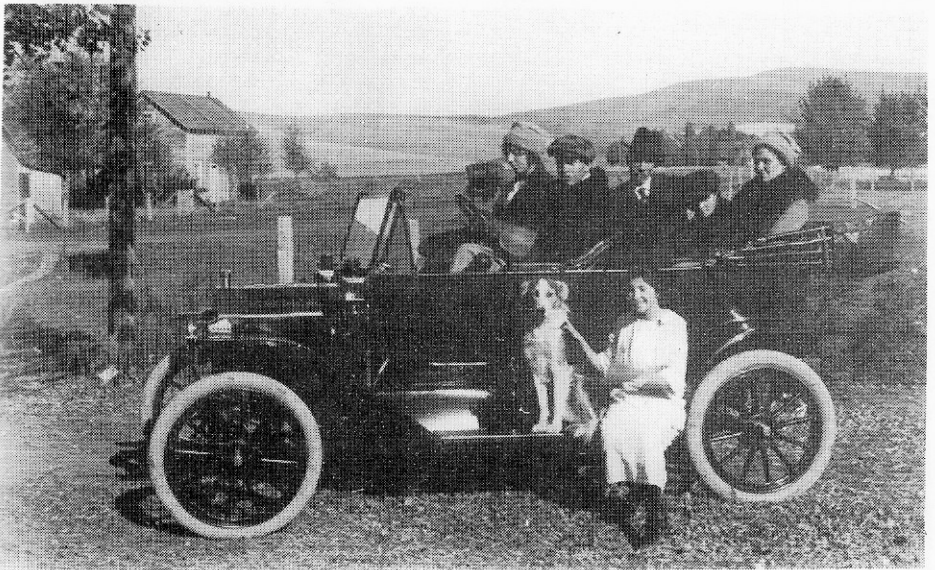
While visiting the old family friend in Moscow, Idaho, a Mr. Creekmur by name, Lyman suddenly got a teaching job in the village of Johnson, only about ten miles from Pullman, for the year of 1890 and 1891. He loved the West and remained in Johnson for the next year also, but during his absence the engagement with Allie really declined, and rumor had it that she was practically engaged to a friend in LaClede.

The young, worried Mr. Babcock quit his Johnson job in the spring of 1892 and returned to Illinois to try to reclaim his lost love as his very own. He taught school in the small town of Bible Grove nearby and must have been successful in the main reason for his returning to Illinois as they were married in May of 1893. All through the project he was hoping to soon return to his beloved West. But that turned into a real problem, too.

Footnote: Mrs. Wiggins, whose story of her revered father is told here, now lives at Joseph, Oregon, where she and her sons operate the Wallowa Lake Lodge resort.



Lyman T. Babcock—Teacher in doorway. Johnson, Wash.—1980-92.



—Photos Courtesy Irene Wiggins

The Babcocks about 1914

New Model T. Ford—The luxury car then. Convertible style (\$619.00).

His father-in-law, Elzy Robertson, was set against his oldest daughter leaving for the faraway West. He had served in the Civil War as a teenager and was with General Sherman when he took Atlanta and then made the devastating march eastward to the sea. Then the young Robertson took the measles and was sent to his Illinois home on a stretcher to die. But he did not die as expected, but joined the Ohio Cavalry and served with them for several months after the war ended, during which time he kept a rude diary which is now in the possession of his granddaughter, Irene Babcock Wiggins. In it he never mentioned in any way the assassination of Lincoln. He left no record of how that sad event influenced him or his associates in the Ohio cavalry.

The Babcocks became the parents of four children, and Lyman served several years as principal or superintendent of several schools in Illinois, some of which were in LaCledde, St. Elmo, Louisville and Kinmundy. His determination to return to the West did not weaken through those years, and in 1908 his father-in-law died. Things began to look hopeful again, and when Lyman's oldest son developed a bad case of malaria his doctor gave the verdict that settled the matter. The son must go to a better climate; Lyman knew just where that climate was.

In 1910, Mr. Babcock obtained the top position in the school at Troy, Idaho, one year there and two as superintendent of schools in Genesee, a town only a short distance from his old town of Johnson in Whitman County. Then in the fall of 1913 he accepted the smaller job as principal of his old familiar and beloved town of Johnson. At that time it had increased a lot in size, having a hotel of its own, a four-year high school, and two passenger trains every day between Pullman and Genesee, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. There were several businesses in the town but all that activity began to decrease as highways and automobiles came into use and schools were consolidated with larger ones nearby. Much of this latter mentioned activity happening when Mr. Babcock was county superintendent years later.

Mr. Babcock served in Johnson that time for three years, two of his daughters graduating from high school there. Then he served in several other schools in the county for several years, including Sunset and Thornton, both of which have almost disappeared as far as business and schools are concerned. Even the schoolhouses in those villages have disappeared long ago.

Loren, his oldest son, had fully recovered from the malaria, graduated from Washington State College, and had spent a year and a half in World War I as a Lieutenant in the Field Artillery. Daughter Zula had gone into the teaching field, Irene had attended the college for two and a half years before marrying and becoming a farmer's wife, where she served for many years. She also acquired a degree from the nearby college which had begun its existence while her father was teaching in Johnson for the first time.

Mrs. Babcock had gone back to the grade school teaching field as soon as her youngest son had started school. She always taught in the school where her husband was superintendent, and by various study and complicated teachers' examinations had earned her life-certificates in Idaho and Washington. She was always a very, very fine teacher and her pupils loved her, even to the point of asking for her if they had been hurt or sick. There may be a few people still living who will attest to my statements here.

In about 1922 or 1923 or so the Babcocks were in the Palouse schools. Palouse City, it was once called. All their four children were out in lives of their own by that time. The youngest son, Lester, had graduated from the State College in Manual

Arts and was teaching in the Pomeroy high school when he learned that his father had been appointed to the office of County Superintendent in Colfax. The man who had been recently elected had been called to the position of superintendent of the Colfax city schools, and hence the county office opening.

As was the custom the Babcocks purchased a nice, large home near the County Courthouse, where they lived and served until it was time for Mr. Babcock to retire. He served the remainder of the first term and was then easily elected for two full four-year terms of his own, and he always enjoyed his work and put his whole time and interest into it.

Sometime and somewhere in all these years Mr. Babcock had attended some summer schools at Washington State College and finally received his degree there in Foreign Languages. Hence it is at this date that four generations of his family have degrees from that beloved school. First, Mr. Babcock; second, three of his children, Loren, Irene, and Lester; third, two grandsons, Lee and Duane Wiggins, while several others attended there at times; fourth, two great-grandchildren, Tony Wiggins and Melinda Miles, granddaughter of his son Lester.

Mr. Babcock was devoted all his life to work in the educational field. While teaching in the various schools of the county he would always do some teaching in such fields as history, mathematics, science, such as physics or geometry, and his methods almost always got the interest and will to achieve in his pupils.

At the time he took over the county office work, there were about 147 schools in the county, but by the time he left the office there were only 45 or so. Highways, cars, buses, high costs and all such brought about the consolidation of so many small schools with the nearest larger ones nearby. While in office, he tried to visit every school at least once each year, and he was usually welcomed by the students because of his happy, encouraging speeches and his ability to recite dozens of poems such as "Casey at the Bat" and others of similar nature. His skill in such memory ability was rare.

During most of the time the Babcocks were in Colfax, Mrs. Babcock was the teacher in the "Opportunity Room" where children who were retarded in some way and couldn't make it in the ordinary class room were placed for special attention. Even new Japanese children who had little skill in the English language were given special attention by a lady who loved to work with such problems.

The Babcocks' influence over their children worked very well. Their daughter Zula spent much of her time in Wenatchee, Washington in different lines, all in the school system. She was Mrs. Thomas Cadzow, her husband spending his work-time with the railroad. During World War II she served two or three years as County Superintendent when men were so scarce for many such positions. One year, soon after that service, she was voted the Wenatchee "Woman of the Year."

Daughter Irene was a farmer's wife near Johnson, but after getting her degree from the college she taught in high school in Johnson where her father had taught fifty years earlier. It was during the depression and times were very hard, many men being unemployed. Hence it was that any woman who held down a job of such sort when she had other means of making a living came into disfavor. Hence, Irene left her much-loved job in her old school.

Mr. Babcock's oldest grandson, Lee Wiggins, spent twenty-two years in the Air Force after graduating from college, four of them in World War II. He was a pilot and then later in administrative work at various fields. He also served two years in Japan during the Korean War. Immediately after retiring from the Air Force, he ac-



—Photo Courtesy Irene Wiggins

Johnson High School—1931-32

Irene Babcock Wiggins—Teacher at left of picture, Mr. C. B. Thornton was superintendent, at right.

cepted a position as assistant to the Manager of the Food and Housing Administration at his old school in Pullman, now called Washington State University, where he is yet today.

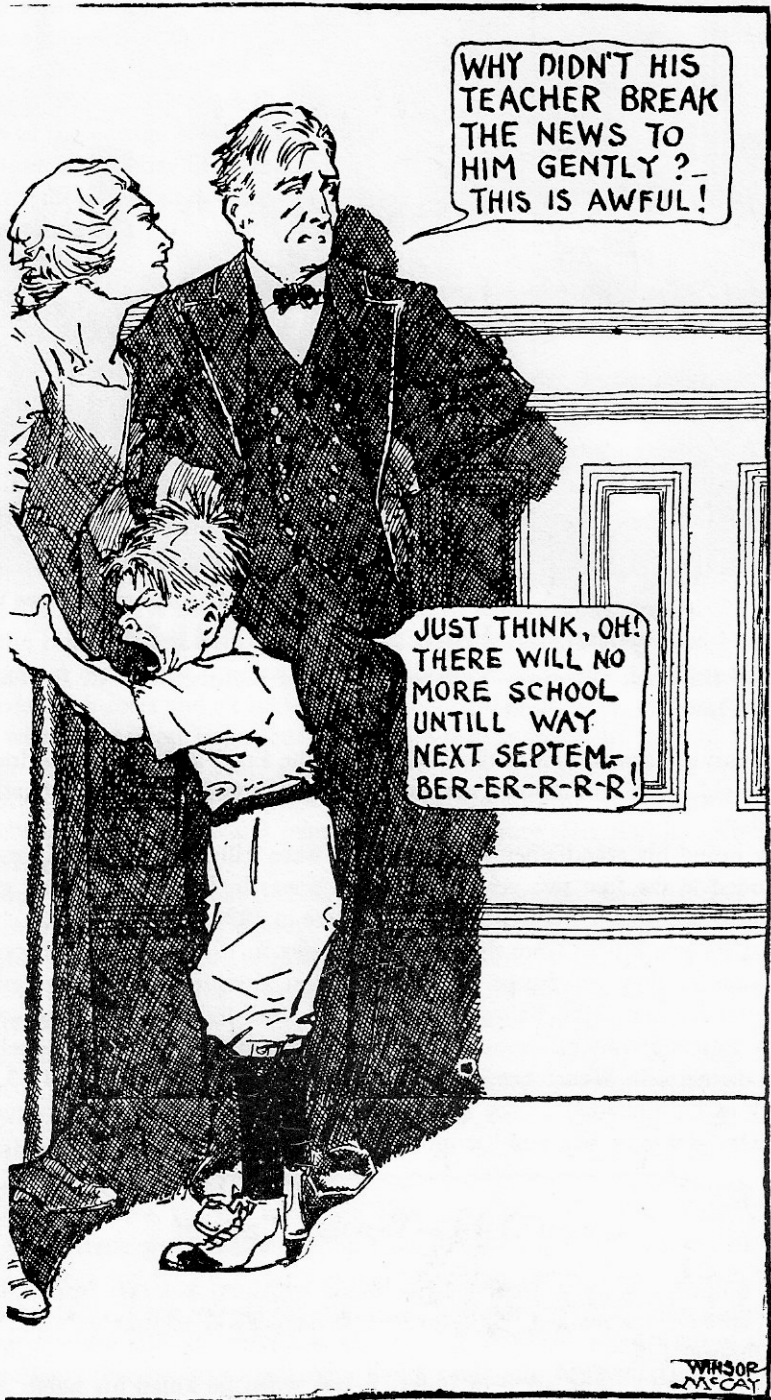
How proud his grandfather would be if he were still living today. That college was founded in the first two years Mr. Babcock was in Johnson, but had grown a great deal by the time he received his degree there in 1920.

The Babcocks retired from their work in Colfax in 1936 or 1937 and soon went to Clarkston for their retirement years as the lower altitude and kinder climate was much better for him. Mrs. Babcock died in 1946. Still living in their big home, he wrote an autobiography of almost 500 pages before going to spend his lonely years with his daughter in Wenatchee. Mr. Babcock died in 1949 at the age of 83. There is a copy of his life story in the library at Washington State University today for anyone who wishes to look into it a bit. □

Good Aim—Wrong Target

The following story is from a letter dated at Alton, Kansas, April 20, 1928, found in an envelope marked “Story of Paul Bockmier’s Grandmother’s and Grandfather’s Pioneer Life.”

“I don’t know of any accident unless it was when he killed his horse. He had put up a blacksmith shop in Bull City and was doing fine, driving back and forth in a cart he had fixed to drive one horse, one day a buffalo came right through town, he ran out, jumped on his horse with only a revolver to shoot and just as he shot, the horse threw his head around and he killed the horse instead of the buffalo.” □



Things that never happen

—The Spokesman-Review, June 20, 1925.