

Bunchgrass Historian

Whitman County Historical Society
Colfax, Washington

Volume 43
Number 2
2017

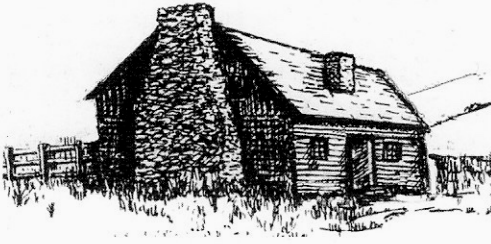


C.S. Dell & David Mitchell - Palouse Empire Fair - Sept. 1977 - David Mitchell

PHOENIX RISING: The story of the Carley Car

FARR CEMETERY

THE GI BILL AT WSC



Whitman County Historical Society Colfax, Washington

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

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Current Issues \$4.00

Back Issues (Vol. 1-35) \$2.50

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COVER

C.S. "Dell" Mitchell (left) and his son, David, drive the restored Carley Car in a parade at the Palouse Empire Fair, September 1977.

Photo courtesy of Mary Ann Mitchell.

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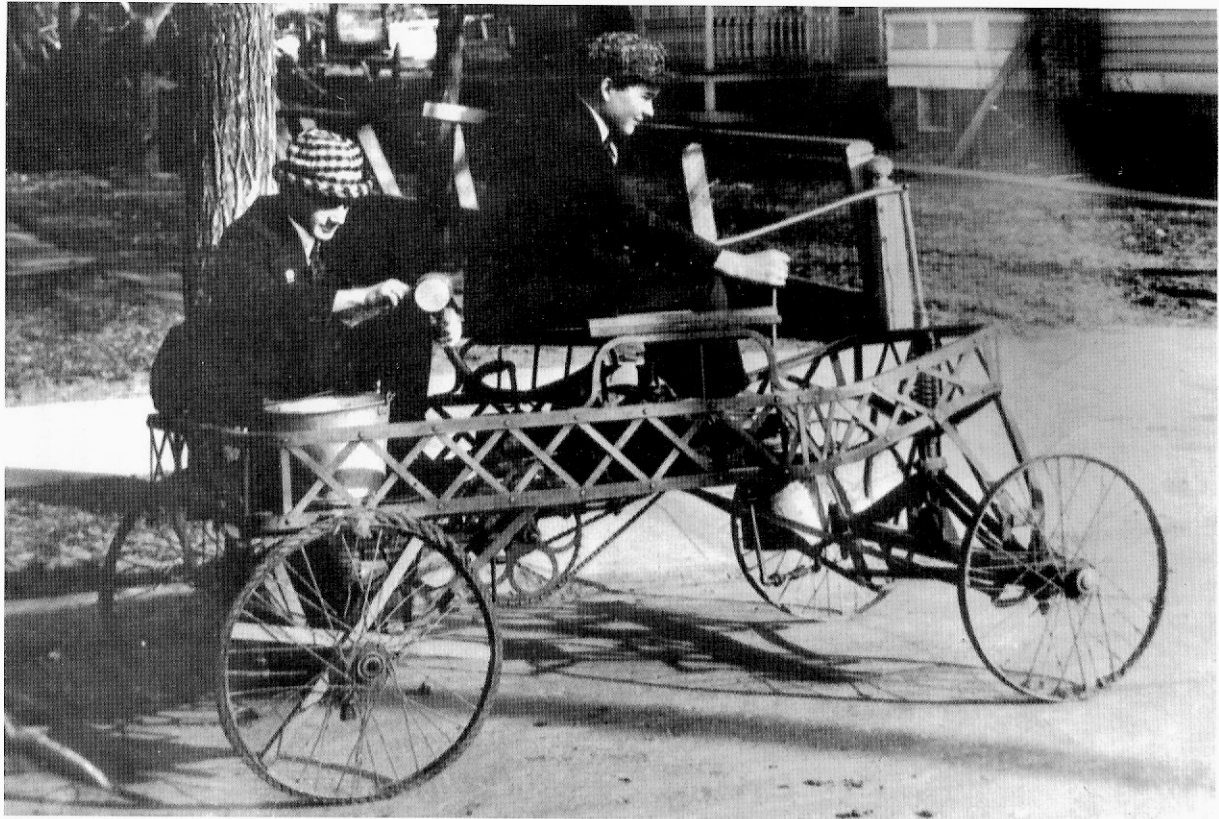
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FROM THE EDITOR

The 1901 Carley car of Colfax has long captured local imagination. The *Bunchgrass Historian* published a one page article on it in the Fall 1976. I have long felt it deserved more extensive coverage and was delighted when contacted by the *Lewiston Tribune* writer, **William L. Spence**, as he was doing research for a story on the car. I have chosen to reprint this fascinating story just as our newspaper man wrote it. He well captures the decades long interest in the car and has uncovered a continuing story of this car that many had assumed was finally destroyed in a 1994 fire. The original appeared in the July 2, 2017, Sunday, *Lewiston Tribune*.

Megan Ockerman relates that when she was a WSU senior a friend showed her the Farr cemetery on a walk to Sunnyside Park. After graduation, Megan did some research at Neill Public Library and later at the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation in Olympia. She found the history of this cemetery raises more questions than it answers, yet she wanted to write up this story to contribute to the history of the town that has been her second home for a number of years. Whitman County has many cemeteries similar to the Farr cemetery and we felt our readers would enjoy what is a typical story of these charming plots.

Claire Thornton's interest in this topic began in the fall of 2014 as she took a Writing in History class. The class led her to a research project on the effect of the GI Bill on WSC campus in the post-World War II years. Claire wished to pursue this topic farther and thus chose to make it the focus of her Honors College Thesis, completed in Fall 2016. I am pleased that her advisor Lydia Gerber recommended to Claire that she submit this fine piece of research on a local topic to the *Bunchgrass Historian*. I have selected appropriate parts of the thesis for publication in our journal. The staff at WSU Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections was most helpful both to the author in her research and to me in finding appropriate images.



Courtesy of Dell Mitchell

The Carley Car, first auto in Whitman County. While Orville Chase mans the tiller, the engine is cooled by Dell Mitchell with cup, bucket, and hose, in this 1913 photo.

PHOENIX RISING:

Washington's first automobile weathers countless storms By William L. Spence of the *Lewiston Tribune*

It was 117 years ago this week when Myron and William Carley helped make America great.

They're nearly forgotten now. No statues honor their memory, no streets recall their name. Donald Trump did not mention them during his 2016 campaign. But the spirit of the Carley brothers – and the vibrancy of the community in which they lived – is exactly what the president meant when he talked about “making America great again.”

For it was in Colfax that the Carleys astonished the citizens of Whitman County with what was likely the first horseless carriage to appear in Washington State.

Built entirely from scratch at their foundry in Colfax, the “Carley Car” made its public debut on July 4, 1900.

“The Carley Iron Works sprung a genuine surprise on the people of Colfax on the glorious Fourth,” noted the *Colfax Gazette* at the time. “They trotted out a 12 mile per hour automobile and flew over the streets and around corners, uphill and down grade ... (The car) went racing down the street at a pace amazing to the drivers of the swiftest road horses. All over town it rolled with perfect ease and grace.”

Looking a bit like an oversize toy wagon, the Carley Car weighed 550 pounds and could seat four uncomfortably. A tiller was used to steer the contraption, which was powered by a 2.5-horsepower “electro-hydrocarbon” engine.

“At full speed, it can be stopped within four feet,” the *Gazette* noted. “The machine and its builders were lustily cheered at every turn.”

The only hiccup came the previous evening, when one of the vehicle's pneumatic tires “exploded” during a trial run.

That would prove to be a minor injury, though, compared to the Carley Car's many subsequent travails. Given its history of neglect and resurrection, the vehicle could fittingly be called the “Phoenix.”

After that initial appearance, the carriage was put into storage and buried under a load of lumber. It barely avoided being melted down as scrap during World War II. After being tossed down a river bank, the vehicle was later restored, only to be burned in a fire and dropped off a balcony. What's left of it now is owned by an Oregon collector, who hopes to restore it once more to working order.

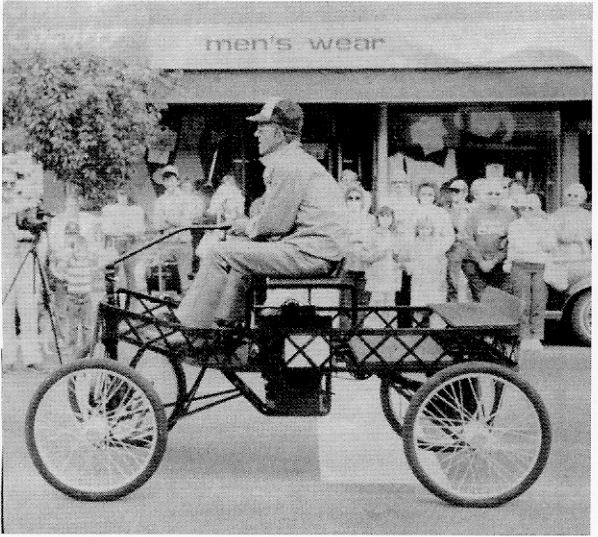
“The car has a long and remarkable history,” noted Ed Garretson with the Whitman County Historical Society.

That history began in 1886, when the Carley brothers arrived in Colfax.

At the time, the Palouse was as much a manufacturing center as an agri-

cultural paradise. There were major brickworks in Uniontown and Colfax, lumber mills and breweries in nearly every community, a pottery factory in Palouse. The world's largest fruit-dryer was built in Elberton – a community that today is a virtual ghost town.

The Carleys were part of the region's manufacturing base. They made a variety of agricultural implements that were sold throughout the West, including roller mills for grinding grain. They also had a foundry on the south end of town, where they made cast iron parts.



David Mitchell of Steptoe rides in a parade in the Carley Car in July 1989.

"The Carley's received lots of patents," Garretson said. Building the car "was a side lark for them. It was in the air; everyone was doing it." Mr. Franklin, an eastern manufacturer, came to learn from Mr. Carley how to build a differential so the wheel on the outside would turn faster than the wheel on the inside.

In the 1890s, inventors all across the world were exploring the possibilities of internal combustion engines, adapting them for all kinds of self-propelled vehicles. In Europe, for example, Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin began attaching motors and propellers to the rigid dirigibles that would later bear his name. The maiden voyage of LZ 1, his first successful airship, came on July 2, 1900 – two days before the Carley Car's debut.

In Ohio, the Wright brothers started manufacturing bicycles in 1896. They used the proceeds to further their research into heavier-than-air flight – work that paid off seven years later on a beach at Kitty Hawk.

At ground level, everyone from backyard hobbyists to major industrialists seemed to be experimenting with horseless carriages, trying out different types of motors, different steering mechanisms, different body designs. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of prototypes were built. Like the Wright brothers, many of the designers got their start working on bicycles, which had recently become a popular mode of transportation. Others, like Henry Ford, were machinists or engineers.

The Duryea brothers opened the first automobile manufacturing company in the United States in 1893, but there were still only about 8,000 registered vehicles nationwide at the turn of the century, according to the U.S. Department of

Transportation.

Washington State didn't adopt its first traffic code until 1905. The newly established Department of Motor Vehicles would register the cars, but owners had to provide their own license plates – or stencil the number right on the bumper. The state didn't start issuing plates until 1915.

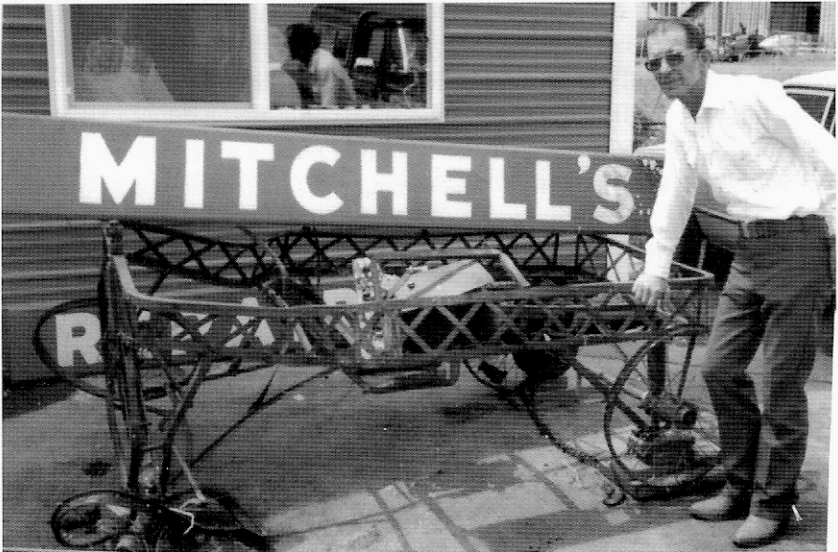
Prior to that, horseless carriages were still a rare and memorable sight. The *Seattle Times*, for example, noted the first appearance of an automobile on that city's streets – on July 23, 1900. The vehicle, a 3-horsepower Woods Electric purchased by one Ralph Hopkins, reportedly ended up at the Washington State History Museum.

The Carley Car spent some time in a museum as well, but not before it was buried and forgotten. After delighting the people of Colfax, the Carley brothers put the vehicle into storage at their iron works. There it stayed, buried beneath some debris, until it was rediscovered when the business changed hands in 1913.

C.S. "Dell" Mitchell – who would play a prominent role in the history of the Carley Car – was just a nosy teenager in 1913, someone "with wheels in his head" who liked coming down to the iron works to see the sparks fly.

"It was quite a thing for a kid to go down there and watch them pouring molten metal," he recalled in a 1983 oral history interview. "I'd stand there and watch, with my eyes popping out of my head."

Mitchell was born in Colfax in 1899. His father and grand-uncle were among the town's first doctors, but he was more mechanically minded. He started working for George Cornelius before World War I – whose shop offered "bicycle and gun repairing of every description" before it branched out into automobiles – and later moved to Steptoe to open his own garage.



David Mitchell with the Carley Car in June 1994

In the 1983 interview, Mitchell noted that he and Orville Chase were down at the iron works “taking inventory” after Orville’s brother, Howard Chase, acquired the plant from the Carleys.

“We weren’t invited, we were just snooping,” he recalled. “And we found this automobile buried under a load of lumber. We dug like beavers to get it out. If I recall correctly we paid \$75 to Howard for it ... There’s a story that it would go downhill and uphill and around corners as fast as the fastest race horse. I don’t know if it was that fast, but if you sat up there with the tiller stick in your hand steering down Main Street, probably going 10 miles per hour, it would seem like it was 110.”

The oral history interview, originally conducted by the Whitman County Historical Society, is now maintained by the Manuscripts, Archives and Special Collections Department at Washington State University (see web link below).

In the interview, Mitchell revealed that he now owned the Carley Car. “It’s down in the garage if you want to look at it,” he said.

However, the vehicle followed a long and tortuous road before ending up back in his hands.

Referring to a 1976 issue of the “*Bunchgrass Historian*,” a publication of the Whitman County Historical Society, Garretson said the car went on display at the Colfax History Museum after its rediscovery in 1913.

It stayed there until the museum closed, he said, and was then “parked in front of a local bank” for a time before being moved to a city park.

“It just escaped the scrap iron drive in World War Two,” Garretson said. “It was considered junk. The engine was stolen and the rest of it was shoved over the bank of the Palouse River.” It wasn’t until 1959, when Colfax’s concrete river channel was being laid, that the remains of the Carley Car were once again rediscovered.

That’s when Dell Mitchell re-entered the picture. He and his son, David, acquired the remains of the car and restored it to working condition.

“That was (Dell’s) livelihood; there was nothing he couldn’t restore,” said Mary Ann Mitchell, Dell’s daughter-in-law and David’s wife. The restored vehicle “was a conversation piece. They took it to the Colfax parade and the Whitman County Fair.”

The fate of the Carley Car took another unfortunate turn in 1994, though, when it was burned in a fire at the Mitchells’ Steptoe garage. After David passed away in 2010, Mary Ann sold what was left of it to Glenn Rohde, an antique car collector who lives near Pendleton, Oregon.

“I’m hoping I can put this piece of history back together,” Rohde said, during a recent telephone interview.

His interest in the Carley Car extends back almost 50 years. He first read about it in an article regarding early cars in Washington State. He spent years trying to locate it, without success. Then one day his son invited a young lady over to the house for dinner. Rohde took her into the basement to show her his collection of



Dell Mitchell with the Carley Car in 1979

antique cars and she mentioned her dad had an old car down at the garage.

The woman was Christine Mitchell, David Mitchell's daughter and Dell's granddaughter.

"I spent years looking for (the Carley Car) and then she walks into my house," Rohde said, with wonder in his voice.

The car was "pretty much destroyed" in the '94 fire, he said. Its frame was basically welded together in the heat and the tires are gone. He's located a 2.5-horsepower marine engine from the era to power the vehicle, but he expects it will take years to fully restore it.

He's up for the job, though. He once spent a decade rebuilding a 1903 Haynes-Apperson. He owns several other antique vehicles as well, including a 1918 Cadillac town car and 1931 Model A Ford.

"They're all nice running cars," Rohde said.

That's how he'd like to leave the Carley Car as well: in good working order.

So one day the first horseless carriage in Washington may rise once again, Phoenix-like, to remind us of a time when little boys and inventors dreamed big and imagined something new, when they worked hard to build their futures, build their communities and made America great.

NOTE: Photographs used in this article were provided by Mary Ann Mitchell.

NOTE: Dell Mitchell oral history link <http://content.libraries.wsu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p16866coll7/id/460/rec/1>



David Mitchell and the Carley Car in May 1994

FARR CEMETERY

By Megan Ockerman

This sleepy little graveyard has an elusive past. Although now known as Farr Cemetery, the tucked-away gravesites of Pullman pioneers have also been called the Old Pioneer Cemetery. One of a handful of pioneer cemeteries of Pullman, its history has perplexed residents for decades. Nearly all of what is known about the land itself is speculation – it is even uncertain if it is the earliest burial site of Euro-Americans in town. The people interred within its fencing – and those graves unmarked outside the fence – likewise give no clues as to why the land was chosen or by whom. The names marking the headstones often imply a difficult time in a wild west town, but they pose more questions than they answer. The site is in a constant state of disarray, with weeds and lilac bushes growing wild in the middle of the plots, and nearly all the stones have been stolen, broken, or removed by the city. Yet this small graveyard has an air of charm. The past can be elusive, but at the end of the day the cemetery is a place of peace and the wild land is a reminder of what it was like when its inhabitants were living.

One ambiguity of Farr's history is who chose the location, as well as why and when. The graveyard is situated atop a hill between Fountain Street and Sunnyside Park. It is possible it is an acre smaller than its original size, and it now boasts a fence containing roughly 1,000 square feet with marked graves. There are no Farr family members at the cemetery, presenting the question of its namesake. Bolin Farr (also spelled Bowlin), the area's first pioneer, possibly donated a section of his land. Some speculate the land was donated expressly for a cemetery, while others theorize the land was sectioned off to Dr. Henry J. Webb who then donated the land. A map shows that Farr owned the land in 1881 and the first burial was possibly 1882, making the former the more likely reason why the site carries his name.

Based on two essays written during the 1970s by Washington State University students, it is probable that Farr was the first cemetery in the fledgling town. Within 15 years, four cemeteries were created. As mentioned, it is unclear when the cemetery was officially established, but the first interment was as early as 1882. As Merilee Jordan's 1973 essay explains, regardless of who donated the land, "it appears that it was a free piece of land, and all one had to do was find an area they wanted, and dig the grave." By 1889 the Independent Order of Odd Fellow's (IOOF) Cemetery was created, and in 1893 both the Ancient Order of United Workmen (AOUW) and the Fairmont Cemeteries opened. Jordan's assessment is strengthened by the fact that even after the other cemeteries opened, one had to be a member

of the IOOF or AOUW to be buried in those locations, so it is plausible that poorer residents or newcomers chose the site for its convenience. The last known burial occurred in 1904. One can infer that as community members joined fraternal organizations, they chose the other cemeteries as their final resting places. There is also a story that horse bones were once found at the site. Community members then assumed that if horse bones were buried, American Indians must be buried nearby, and white settlers did not want to be interred near Indian graves. These theories and stories are just that; the real reason, or reasons, why Farr Cemetery was only utilized for two or three decades may never be known.



Looking at the residents buried at the cemetery provides clues and raises additional questions as to its origins. As Mitzi Rossillon wrote in her 1978 essay, the status of people buried in a cemetery gives us a glimpse into what Pullman was like in the late nineteenth century. Farr's known burials further complicates its history, and strengthens Jordan's position that it was open to anyone. Prominent members of early Pullman, notably Henry J. Webb, the town's first doctor, Sarah Jane Boone Farnsworth, a niece of Daniel Boone, and Isaac G. Newton, a lawyer, are buried here. However, many "common" folk such as carpenters, teamsters, and housewives also occupy the cemetery. Of the 33 known buried, 11 were children, about half of which died before their first birthdays. For a frontier town that experienced smallpox, typhoid, and flu epidemics, this is hardly surprising. A plat map shows 81 plots in 1891, but some records speculate there could have been as many as 150 graves. Because the land was free when the cemetery opened, no records were kept. It is known that some remains were moved to other city cemeteries, but how many is unclear. So how many people were buried at the Old Pioneer Cemetery and from what social circles did they come? Like the uncertainty surrounding the land itself,



these questions do not have conclusive answers.

Today the small plot of land no doubt has distinct differences from how it looked more than a century ago. For starters, its unmanicured appearance and fence makes it look smaller than it is. The unorganized nature of the remaining headstones also leaves one unsure of how many graves they may or may not be walking on. Many people who were

buried at Farr could not afford to have stone grave markers. Some opted for wood that did not stand the test of time, while others had none. But in the 1960s and 1970s, the city dealt with continuous vandalism of the remaining markers. People would break and steal the headstones. Fragments lined personal gardens or were used as doorstops in WSU dormitories. In 1977, John Ballweg, then the Director of Parks and Recreation, made the decision to remove the stones to curtail further damage to the hallowed grounds. Any stones that were unreadable or broken and strewn about were collected. The city still has these bits and pieces in their possession. Efforts were made to restore the grounds, but the community did not come up with funds to clean up the area. In the 1980s, enough donations were gathered to fence in about 1,000 square feet, the assumed original boundaries of the cemetery. The intent was to leave the area in a natural state. A Moscow firm was chosen to fabricate and install the fence. Today around 10 to 15 headstones with bases remain, some of which have since broken.

Farr's unclear past and its unkempt appearance at first glance can seem like a disservice to the pioneers and founders of Pullman. Attempts in the 1970s to collect the history from subsequent generations and salvage the wreckage young vandals were causing provided some answers, but ultimately came up short. The essays written relied on newspapers and city records, but also on the memories of an aging generation. They filled in some gaps, but more gaps were lost to time. Little is known about who exactly is there, details of their lives, and why they chose this spot as their final resting place. The fence gives the cemetery a much-deserved marker, and although no plaques exist, the fence itself suggests people do care about preserving its history. Today lilac bushes have overgrown much of the area inside the fence, but strolling by or stopping inside the fence, one still can sense that the land reflects the prairie as it was over 100 years ago.

THE GI BILL AT WSC: AN UNDERSTANDING THROUGH ORAL HISTORIES

Claire Thornton

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the GI Bill, offered returning World War II veterans paid post-secondary education opportunities. Millions of veterans took advantage of these benefits, including my own grandfather, a truck driver-turned-combat medic who began his journey to becoming a medical doctor on the GI Bill at the University of Washington. In 2014, I began my first foray into writing historical research papers, with a project called "The GI's of Washington State College." Using sources found in the university archives, I was able to piece together quantitative data (like enrollment numbers) and qualitative data (archived oral history transcripts) to present an extensive depiction of WSC in the post-World War II era as it faced the challenges of the enrollment boom.

However, with my personal connection to the GI Bill, I wanted to bring to life the stories of veterans who attended WSC at this time and write about the impact this piece of legislation had on individual lives. With a solid understanding of this time period, I was able to develop informed interview questions for a small sample of five individuals who lived in Pullman during this time. Thus, this project focuses on the perspectives of five individuals who were a part of the post-World War II era at WSC. Two perspectives are from veterans themselves and two are from their wives. An additional perspective is offered by a native Pullman resident and daughter of a WSC faculty member from that time.

My sample included the following, in order of interview date: Dave Berglin, an Army dispatcher/driver in the European Theater and WSC alum (mechanical engineering, class of 1954); Lenna Harding, Pullman resident and daughter of WSC history professor, Dr. Herman Deutsch; Virginia Boettcher, Pullman resident, WSC alum (education, class of 1947) and widow of Bob Boettcher, a B-25 pilot who flew missions in Europe and WSC alum (agricultural engineering, class of 1949); Eloise "Ellie" Frank, Pullman resident and widow of Floyd Frank, a Marine Corps aviator and WSC alum (veterinary medicine, class of 1951); Orin Swanson, a naval base signalman and WSC alum (also veterinary medicine, class of 1951).

Living Situations

One of the defining characteristics of this period at WSC was the overcrowding it created, and the consequent rush to accommodate the enrollment boom. WSC was a small college of only around four thousand students and the

modest town of Pullman had limited housing available as it was, even prior to the influx of students. When enrollment suddenly increased by between two and three thousand students—many of whom brought spouses and children with them—this created an enormous problem. Lenna Harding, daughter of Dr. Herman Deutsch, a history professor at WSC during this time, remembers the scramble to find housing:

My folks had just excavated a daylight basement and put in an exterior door to that basement...students began stopping by and asking if by any chance we had a basement room for rent, did we have extra room—which we did not—but there were students living in basement rooms with dirt floors.¹

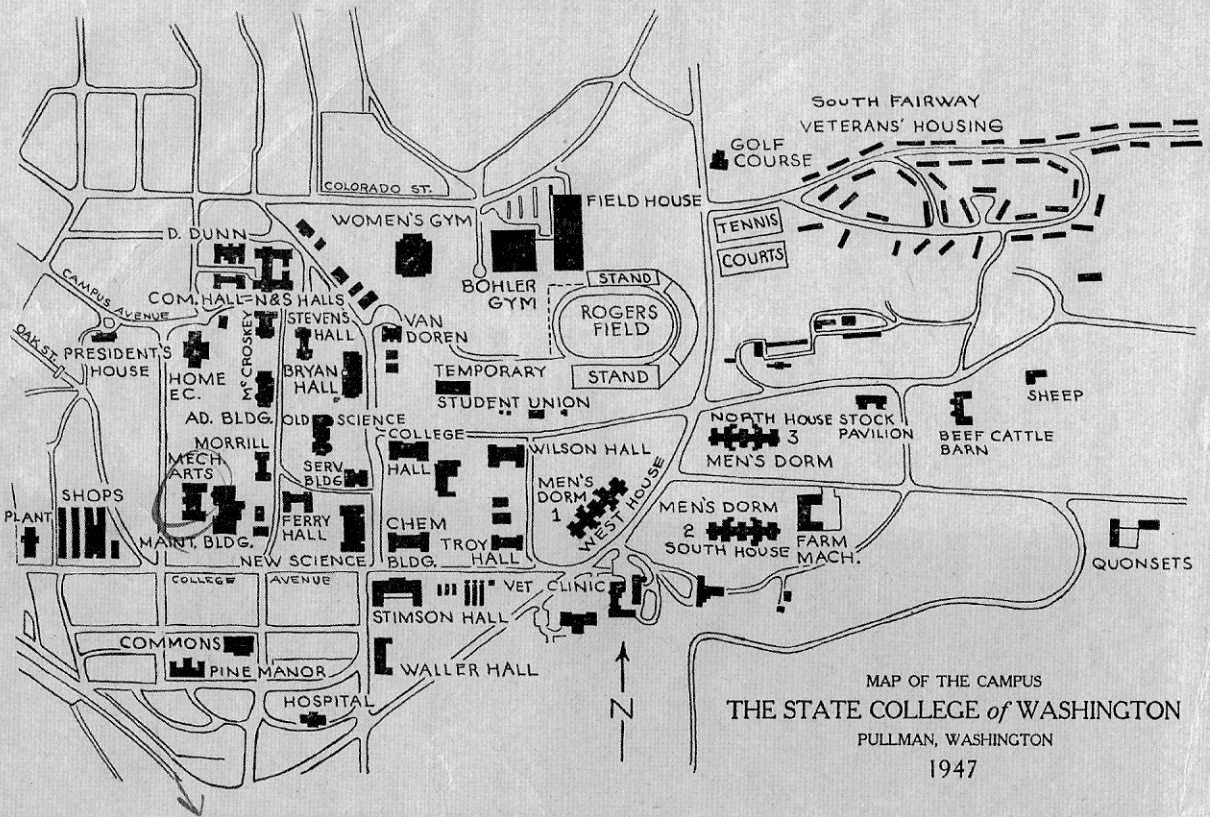
Lenna also recalled that prefab buildings (from Farragut Naval base in Idaho and Hanford site in Washington) were brought in for married students who didn't have children, located near where Beasley Coliseum stands today. New faculty and married students with children were housed at what was called North Fairway. They lived in 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom clapboard houses donated by the Federal Housing Public Housing Authority. Lenna remembered the condition of these units:

Those were terrible things even then, I remember a friend of mine having to cook and heat with a oil stove and the places were cold in the winter and hot in the summer because of this oil stove... they were pretty primitive.

More temporary housing was brought in from Oregon that had been used for migrant worker housing. These buildings became dormitories for unmarried men, called East House and West House. Another similar temporary housing-turned-dormitory, South House, was designed for 365 residents, but ultimately (out of necessity) housed up to 514 men at one time.² A survey of South House residents conducted by the university revealed other conditions students encountered, including thin walls and inadequate lighting. When the temporary housing and its notoriously shabby conditions came up in my conversation with Eloise Frank, she offered a few words in its defense:

It's okay, it was heaven for those poor old guys and their families that didn't have a place to live, that they could afford—not nice, no. Drafty, not well insulated or anything else—BUT—it was home. They were home, they were with their families. No one complained, you just made the most of it. No one *expected* much more, because they were all children of the Depression. They weren't used to having *anything*. So at least they had their own home.³

Perhaps the worst aspect of living in South House and other nearby temporary housing, as denoted by the survey and confirmed by Virginia Boettcher, was



MAP OF THE CAMPUS
 THE STATE COLLEGE of WASHINGTON
 PULLMAN, WASHINGTON
 1947

MOSCON

the mud surrounding it.

Below the stadium...they moved in war time housing from Vancouver, big dormitories and they were rattletrap things! We called that Mud Hollow because it was *mud* down there. It was terrible... lots of the GIs lived there.⁴

Comparison between archived and current campus maps shows that South House was located on the southern side of Farm Way, now called Grimes Way, just down the hill from present-day Glenn Terrell Mall and Wilson Road. As ramshackle as these buildings may have been, they remained a sort of symbol of this transformative period in the minds of those who were there, as Virginia showed.

When I think of the GI Bill and veterans coming back, I think of Mud Hollow, and they're moving in all this temporary housing, and how the school changed completely when they all came back....it blossomed.

Veterans did not find more spacious living situations at fraternities either. Orin Swanson, president of Lambda Chi his junior year, remembered the overcrowding well.

Our [fraternity] house was built for two people per room, and because of demand, we ended up with one extra in every room, [we] had to squeeze in another desk and so on.⁵

As far as available housing for married students went, North Fairway only offered 54 units (and intended for families with children), so many couples had to turn to other options. When Bob and Virginia got married in 1947, she had just graduated from WSC but he was still going to school.

We had a terrible time finding any place to live in Pullman because it was one of those times when there was no housing and all these fellows came back from the service and there was no place for anybody to live. Anyway, his parents loaned us \$900 for this old broken down house trailer and we redid it and scrubbed it. It needed Lysol and everything to make it inhabitable [laughter]. Anyway, we lived down on what is now the [city] playfield. We got flooded, we got two feet of mud in the trailer and that was terrible. I don't know why we stayed married, we didn't know any better I guess!

The flooding left the trailer court uninhabitable until the damage from the flood could be dealt with, leaving residents homeless for about a week, Virginia explained.

We couldn't live there, it was full of water and so the Red Cross came and they signed up places on campus where we could stay, and the Comptons [the WSC president and his wife] offered that we could stay up in their upstairs bedroom. Nobody would go



Courtesy WSU MASC

North House - pre-fabricated units placed in Mud Hollow, approximately where French Administration building now stands.

there, because they were afraid I guess. Well, I knew the Comptons because I'd been working with them, volunteering, and so I said, "Well, I can go there," and it was a great place, very comfortable. And I remember Bob's boots, he had leather boots, and they got wet and he set them on the heat register up in the bedroom they had assigned us and Mrs. Compton came in and she just had a fit and I thought oh dear, he's ruined the heat register or something—No, she was so upset because he was going to ruin his leather boots because it shouldn't be on that heat register, drying out and it would ruin them! ... We lived there probably three or four days, and then another couple we knew well that were married...they had a spare bed, so we moved in with them. That was more comfortable, we didn't have to behave all the time.

Despite the nerve-wracking, uneasy feeling of living under the same roof as the university president and his notoriously strict, fussy wife, the Comptons' willingness to open their home to students in need is impressive and admirable. As Virginia's story shows, even the particular Mrs. Compton proved to be a kind, welcoming host. The Comptons' generosity and hospitality is representative of the general community that welcomed these students, a theme repeatedly addressed throughout this paper.

Virginia continued on in her description of the details of the trailer court living experience.

I can't believe how we lived, because that trailer was very comfortable but it didn't have a bathroom! So we were very careful to move in next door to what they called the wash house, because that's where the bathrooms were, and that's where you went to

take showers. So being next door was wonderful.

While trailer court living was far from luxurious, Virginia conceded that many of her neighbors had it much worse.

When I think back about it, we were one of the few couples that lived there that didn't have children, and I don't know how they managed.

Floyd and Eloise Frank lived in an apartment in downtown Pullman after they married. While apartment living sounded more appealing than most other options available, it was not without its potential drawbacks—mainly, persnickety landlords, as Eloise explained.

Landlords had complete say in those days about what you did, but Floyd and I lucked into this nice apartment with these wonderful landlords, they were the only ones who would let us have a party at end of semester in our apartment...and one morning after our party, Floyd said to Mrs. Klosner, "I hope we didn't keep you awake last night" and she said, "I *love* to hear people having a good time." Now how nice that would be when most of them were just plain ornery! They were just lovely people.

Her recollection of the kindness and graciousness of these landlords nearly 70 years later speaks to the impact of community members and their support of veterans. This kind of community support would certainly contribute to the overall positive experience of veterans and their families at WSC, as evident in these interviews.

From Eloise's perspective, the initial overflow from the new GI Bill students was not necessarily an entirely terrible thing. For the first few months, she explained, students were housed in Bohler Gym while temporary housing arrangements were still being completed. There were offices in the upstairs of Bohler, including the printing office which she would frequent while working for the Poultry Science Department. "I'd take things over and walk through and here were the guys in [there] with the towel wrapped around them, headed for the shower!" she said, laughing. Her son-in-law Roger remarked, "Not a bad time to be a twenty-year old girl, huh?" to which she replied with great enthusiasm, "Oh it was a *wonderful* time! I could just look and look!"



Courtesy WSU-MASC

Playing records

While conditions were not ideal, it appears that there was an element of novelty present in the ordeal, making it bearable and certainly memorable

Financial Matters

Veterans relied heavily upon their monthly subsistence payments for living expenses. Today, government agencies are often criticized as being largely inefficient and incompetent, particularly the VA (Department of Veterans Affairs). One might expect that in the late '40s, when the department was managing millions of veterans without the help of computers, veterans might have run into similar difficulties. Yet the VA was remarkably reliable, as Orin Swanson noted.

They were very prompt. The system was well-managed. It always amazed me that they could keep everything so straight because there were a lot of students, but I think we always got our checks regularly. As I recall, they had somebody in the office who just took care of the GI, the veteran part. It took care of a good share of the expenses, of the necessary expenses, like room, board, and tuition... as I recall, they even upped our—our tuition was higher for vet school, and they accommodated that. It was a very fair process.

While a greatly appreciated form of assistance, subsistence payments alone were rarely enough to fully support veterans, particularly for those who had wives and children. For this reason, on top of heavy course loads, veterans would frequently take on extra jobs, including Orin himself.

I worked all the time... part of the time the first year or two for the housing areas, setting up some of the temporary housing and moving furniture and that kind of stuff. Then I worked for Standard Lumber which was a lumber yard there and they also built houses during the first year or so. Then they also sold coal, so I worked for them putting up sheetrock in the new houses being built, and I hauled coal for a while... just various things like that to get some extra money.

Therefore, even as veterans were heavily involved in their academic pursuits, they did not shy away from blue collar work. Floyd Frank also took a job, working evenings at Cordova Theater in downtown Pullman as a projectionist.

Veterans' wives also played a key role in providing financial support. Orin noted that his wife worked to help support him, especially when his GI Bill benefits ran out six months before graduating from veterinary school. Eloise worked full-time as a secretary for the Department of Poultry Science. Virginia also had a full-time job at the college library after graduating in 1947, while her husband worked "nearly full-time, [while going to] school full-time" until he graduated two years later. Even with combined incomes, she explained that monthly stipends



Courtesy WSU MASC

An evening out for four couples

were greatly appreciated: “The GI Bill, that was a big help to us.”

Veterans with families had an even bigger burden to bear. None of the individuals I interviewed had children while going to school, but Eloise recalled the extraordinary efforts of one veteran’s wife in supporting her husband through school.

We had several in my husband’s veterinary class that had their family already. He had one classmate that, he went to veterinary school in the daytime and she—they had three kids—she nursed at night when he was home with the kids and she took care of the kids in the daytime while he went to school. They had it about as tough as anyone....How did they do it? I always admired them.

Despite the overall satisfaction most veterans had with the VA, Virginia gave one account demonstrating the severe repercussions veterans, depending heavily on their stipends, suffered when mix-ups did occur.

In talking about the support to go to school...[there was] a couple that lived across the street from us in the trailer court, and their GI payment didn’t come until after December, and they were very dependent on that. They ran out of food and so [through] November and December, they ate most of their meals with us because they simply didn’t have the wherewithal to feed themselves.



Courtesy WSU MASC

Two couples playing Bridge, 1947-48

And then, when their check finally came, it was retroactive, so then they did have money, so then they fed *us* for a while!

This story not only speaks to the dependency veterans had on their stipends and the problems created by bureaucratic errors, but also to the importance of community, neighbors, and friends to these veterans. Virginia spoke of this incident with no trace of irritation at the strain it undoubtedly put on her and Bob to feed this couple, but rather with appreciation at their later reciprocation. In fact, the amusement in her voice indicated it was in fact something of a bonding experience that drew the couples closer together. This type of scenario probably was not entirely uncommon—whether due to VA errors or not—in that friends and neighbors frequently helped each other out when times got tough, and that favors were paid back one way or another.

The theme of neighbors and community is one repeated throughout the recollections of those I interviewed. Even with the GI Bill covering tuition and the monthly subsistence payments, Orin still found a resourceful way to cover his living expenses one year, making a valuable friend along the way.

Our fraternity house had an excellent cook, so we all loved her. She was kind of like a house mother combined. Her name was Pearl Pitts. I spent one year as head house boy to help with some of the expenses the year before I got married [the year after he served as president of the house], so that gave me free rent. I got

along fine with Pearl. So after we got married, she'd always have some leftovers, like creamed turkey or something like that. She'd give me a big gallon jar of creamed turkey that I could take home and we'd eat on that for a whole week.

Simple memories like this speak volumes about the effect thoughtful community members had on WSC students. Seven decades later—after a full family life and a busy veterinary practice—Orin could still remember a cook's full name and recall in vivid detail her simple yet meaningful acts of kindness.

Classes

The GI Bill in many respects could have been a disaster. The government invested millions of dollars on veterans, expecting them to transition smoothly and successfully from soldiers into students. Not only had veterans been out of school for several years, they had spent the past few years far from civilian (much less academic) life. They could have been rowdy, insubordinate, withdrawn, or simply there for the free ride. It is also important to remember that many had just underwent several years of traumatic combat experiences, capable of provoking PTSD. Indeed, professors did encounter a cohort of students unlike any they had ever taught, but not for any of the aforementioned possible reasons. Lenna Harding reflected on her father's experience teaching veterans:

They were serious students—and...[professors] regarded them as a pleasure to teach because of that. They were so grateful to have the opportunity and they realized how important it was.

This is a statement corroborated by every other interview I conducted. Each individual used words such as “serious,” “older,” and “mature” to describe veterans. Virginia stated that “they were there to get an education,” and Eloise echoed her thoughts. “These kids had had four years of hell *and they wanted an education.*” Interestingly, Eloise made this statement immediately after discussing the Bohler Gym “make-do” arrangements.⁶ Her words reveal the two things about the veterans as students. Not only were they conditioned to tolerate (often much worse) discomfort by their military experiences, they were also so intent on getting an education. Everything else paled in comparison. This too aligned with the findings of my previous work.⁷



Courtesy WSU MASC

As a cohort unlike any previous group of students, veterans did bring changes to

Evening fun



Courtesy WSU MASC

A men's social group

the academic environment, and professors had to respond. When asked about veterans adjusting to the student life, Eloise laughed and explained that it was “the professors [that] had to adjust to the fact that these were mature men, not 18-year-olds. I think the ones that had a pleasant personality...adjusted fine, appreciated the guys...some accepted it, some helped it, and some resented it, ‘What are those guys doing here, messin’ up our life?’” Dave Berglin, a mechanical engineering student who graduated with a 3.3 GPA, only recalled his professors in positive light, saying that they would “bend over backwards” to help students.⁸

Dr. Herman Deutsch, “a well-known, and a very good professor” was well aware of the differences in veterans as students, as his daughter Lenna explained.⁹

My dad said the difference in the students—he had the older students after the war and the students before the war—he said one of the biggest things he noticed was the difference in excuses they gave for missing class. One is that “my wife is having a baby, I had to take her to the hospital” or “the baby was crying all night” and so on, that was after the war. Before it was “I was hungover... I got drunk and was hungover.”

While veterans were serious about getting their education, they were not



Courtesy WSU MASC

Some things never change!

quite as easily impressed as the standard freshman—it required a bit more to earn their respect. In line with the previously mentioned remark that professors had to adjust, Eloise remembered how her husband’s class responded to one of the veterinary school professors.

Dr. Ott [was] younger than the vet students he was teaching, and they really raked him over the coals, but actually they ended up really liking him...yes, he came through like a champion and didn’t hold it against them...There was this one student in their class that no one could stand, and he cozied up to Ott, and Ott liked it. Ott would be lecturing in class and he’d pull out a cigarette and this guy would run up and light it for him...well you know how that went over! [laughter]...He wound up being a really good friend... he came through like a *champ*. They didn’t back down, but he did.

The veterinary school class of 1951 was a particularly unique group. The class consisted solely of veterans, a conscious decision by the school and exclusive to that year’s class. There were females in both the preceding and following classes, Orin explained, but this class was restricted to (male) veterans. Orin was in this class, as was Eloise’s husband, Floyd. Orin explained the dynamics and success of the class:

They were all from various parts of the service. One of our classmates was a P-38 fighter pilot, and there were several that were officers. I was one of the youngest in the class. There was some that were in their 30s already or mid-30s. That was where we lost two or three of our older fellows that started with us...

Two dropped out partway through and went on to med school. I think we only had one that flunked out. His dad had been a veterinarian so he decided he'd follow that path and really he wasn't that interested. All but one made it all the way through doing something very worthwhile and I'm sure the one that dropped out found something to do because he was not dumb.

Orin also remarked on the high academic and moral standards his class maintained throughout their time at WSC, and their correlation with the age and experiences of the group.

I know everyone in our veterinary class was very serious about studying. We had an honor system. You didn't ask somebody "what's the

answer to this," and theoretically if someone was cheating, they'd be reported....nobody cheated....We honored the honor system. But again I think that's partly age. Most in my class were older. There was I think only one or two that were younger than I was and the other ranged up to about 35 or so. By the time you get in your twenties and thirties, you're getting more serious about life.

It is worth noting that not all veterans were exemplary students, as Orin also explained.

Some of the veterans had trouble. In fact, like with our house, we had pledges that had to make their grades. We lost two or three just because they didn't make their grades at the end of the year.

Eloise mentioned that Floyd's good friend and coworker, Frank, attended WSC for a few years, but "didn't do so well." This is likely due either to disinterest or disengagement with the coursework (rather than a lack of intelligence or apathy) as he was a well-respected electrician and technician around Pullman, where he lived until his death in 2007.

Orin also commented that there was a "segment" there at WSC "probably just because they got their way paid and it was something to do after they got out of the service. Didn't have to find a job. And since it was free, why not? But most



Courtesy WSU MASC

1948 Turkey Trot - a 3 mile race among campus groups. Pine Manor team won on Nov. 20, 1948.



Courtesy WSU MASC

The Pine Manor winning team of the annual Turkey Trot - posed with the turkey prize

of them were there to get an education.” For some veterans, it simply took getting married to improve their grades, as was the case with Virginia’s husband, Bob. “He did much better after we got married, because he was away from the other students and he wasn’t partying all the time,” she explained with a chuckle.

Nevertheless, the legacy veterans left behind as Cougar alumni was of an overwhelmingly positive nature, and one that professors reflected fondly on, as numerous sources in my previous work also indicated.¹⁰ As Virginia saw it, “[The veterans] were accustomed to working hard, whatever they did.”

1 Lenna Harding, interview by author, Pullman, February 11, 2016.

2 Thornton, “The GI’s of Washington State College,” 6-7.

3 Eloise Frank, interview by author, Pullman, February 19, 2016.

4 Virginia Boettcher, interview by author, Pullman, February 18, 2016.

5 Orin Swanson, phone interview by author, February 20, 2016.

6 “Make-do” is a term used by Eloise (Frank, interview).

7 Thornton, “The GI’s of Washington State,” 9.

8 Dave Berglin, interview by author, Walla Walla, February 6, 2016.

9 Quote about Dr. Deutsch from Virginia. (Boettcher, interview).

10 Thornton, “The GI’s of Washington State College,” 9-11.

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David Mitchell with the Carley Car