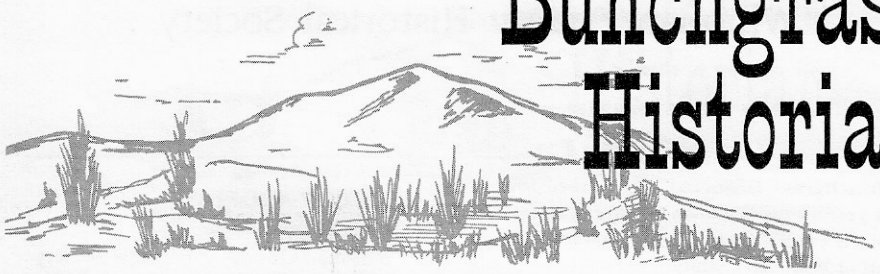


Bunchgrass Historian



Whitman County Historical Society
Colfax, Washington

Volume 19
Number 3
1991



- Whitman County Courthouse
- Sarah Wohleter, 1935
- Emma Ickes, 1935

Whitman County Historical Society

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

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COVER

County Government, ca. 1900



From your editor:

The lead article of this issue of *Bunchgrass Historian* is a portion of a forthcoming book on county courthouses in all of the 39 Washington counties. The author, David Chapman of Seattle, is now completing this book, and has offered this portion as a pre-publication extract. Mr. Chapman's Whitman County account looks at the formation of the county, events surrounding the early years of the first county courthouse, and the architectural history of this building and its successor.

This issue also offers a few more of the pioneer interviews taken down in the 1930s by Fred Yoder. We have already published several of these in various issues of *Bunchgrass Historian*. Many more exist even beyond the two offered here. One might notice that although the various accounts tell quite unique stories, they seem to follow a somewhat repetitive pattern. The reason for this is not so much that everybody's story was the same as that everyone was responding to a standard set of questions, almost a questionnaire. This list still exists; it is presented here as an appendix.

Whitman County: Lynchers and Lawmen

**by
David Chapman**

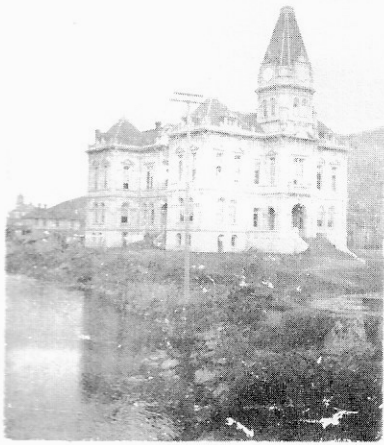
About a hundred years ago an angry mob surrounded the Whitman County jail, dragged out two prisoners, and lynched them. This in itself would hardly be noteworthy, since executions of this sort were all too common at the time. What made the act so remarkable was that the mob did not take their victims to some secluded spot to hang them. Instead, the two men were marched up to the second floor of the county courthouse where they were hanged from the upstairs window. The purple-faced corpses dangled over the entrance to this temple of law until they were cut down some time later.

Only a few decades prior to this vigilante outrage, there was almost nothing in the region but rolling hills covered in bunchgrass. Permanent white settlers did not arrive in the area until 1869, and it was not until November 29, 1871 that Whitman County was carved out of Stevens County. The temporary seat of government was at the little settlement of Belleville at the point where the northern and southern forks of the Palouse River branch out on their separate ways.

One of the three commissioners who were given the task of finding a permanent location for the new county seat was James A. Perkins. He had begun the town of Belleville a few years earlier, and so it was no accident that Perkins was the community's chief advocate.

Perkins, William Lucas, and James Logsdon, the three commissioners, met at a tiny settlement called Plainsville in order to settle on a capital for the infant county. Each man had chosen a different place to serve as seat, and so the debates among them were reportedly lengthy and contentious. But Perkins was not a man to give in, and so he stuck to arguments tenaciously, refusing to give an inch.

Whitman County Court house.



*Post Card Illustration
of Courthouse, 1890s*

Compliments of **W. S. C.** *Restaurant*
and *lodgings*

On the second day of the disputatious exchange, Lucas who had long preferred a western location for the county seat, finally had a belly full. He left in disgust, telling the others he was going to feed his livestock rather than waste time with them. The discussion continued unabated without him, however.

Perkins continued to hammer away at Logsdon, this time one-on-one. The other commissioner championed Plainsville, and he proved to be more adamant in his views than Lucas. But in the end even he could stand no more of it. He marched out of the debate in disgust, angrily declaring that Perkins could “take the county seat and go to blazes.” Thus Belleville became the official choice of the commissioners, and at the next election the county seat was confirmed by the voters.

After nabbing the seat, the little community began to grow at a rapid rate. As Perkins was well aware, possession of the county government was one of the best ways of assuring a town’s permanence and prosperity. People had to come to Belleville in order to transact the necessary legal business, and the other enterprises of the town flourished accordingly. Soon there were dairies, livery stables, saloons, and hotels sprouting up on the town’s thoroughfares. James Perkin’s filibuster began to pay off quicker than even he could have imagined.

Affairs of the marketplace were not the only things to prosper, however. In 1873 the first marriage in the little community was celebrated. In that year Sarah Ewart wed the town's most eligible bachelor in the town's schoolhouse. The groom was James A. Perkins.

One result of this union was a change in the town's name. Perkins had explained to his future bride that he had named the community after his birthplace, Belle Plaine, Illinois. Sarah was not convinced, however. She was certain that her husband had christened the place after a former sweetheart, and she had no intention of living in a town that would constantly remind her of James's early indiscretions.

Perkins might have been a powerful debater, but apparently he realized that no amount of arguing would win his case this time. He accordingly surrendered gracefully. So sometime before his marriage, the town was renamed in honor of Ulysses S. Grant's first vice president, Schuyler Colfax.

With a new name and a new drive, Colfax bolted forward. By 1880 the town had a population of 445, and it was rapidly turning into an established community. A year earlier the town's citizens had chosen to incorporate. Soon there were fifty businesses in Colfax -- Everything from agricultural stores to a pair of restaurants.

Just about the only thing the town lacked at this time was a courthouse. In August of 1882 the commissioners proposed erecting suitable county offices, courtrooms, and jail. The estimated cost of this structure was to be \$30,000, and the money was supposed to be raised by a special courthouse tax. Unfortunately, when the election was held, the measure was defeated by a vote of about two to one. So until a permanent home could be arranged, Colfax's legal dramas had to be played out in rented rooms at City Hall, since that was where court was held.

Whitman County would have to wait until 1890 before it had a courthouse to be proud of. In March of 1889, a notice had been placed in local papers calling for bids on a magnificent new structure, and by May construction had begun. Justice was finally getting a permanent home.

Architect, George W. Babcock, had designed a truly monumental building. The courthouse that rose on the east side of Main Street occupied nearly half a block, and was one of the finest buildings in the state. It took two years for the building to be completed, but by early spring of 1891 the magnificent structure was ready to be occupied by the officers.

The courthouse was designed in the French chateau style with some Classical elements used for decoration. The building's most obvious feature was a huge three-story tower that rose up 105 feet in the center of the structure. This was capped with a steeply pitched tower roof and was adorned with clock faces on all four sides. A decorative, second-story balcony was suspended over the suitably imposing entry.

The Palouse Gazette of July 3, 1891 featured an extensive description of the opulent new building. "From basement to tower," the paper announced grandly, "it is a model of workmanship." From the steel shingles of the roof to the basement jail, it was a jewel of Victorian public architecture -- an object of esteem for all citizens of Whitman County.

The interior of the courthouse was no less sumptuous. The woodwork was of rich California redwood, and the floors and stairways were of Oregon fir. The hand rails and newell posts were all finished in black walnut and white ash. The furniture in every office was of solid antique oak, and plush Belgian carpets covered the floors. "Appropriate paintings" decorated the walls and molded steel ceilings completed the lavish effect. "No other courthouse in the state," concluded *The Gazette*, "can compare with it in magnificence of design or completeness of furnishings." Despite the natural local pride, those words were substantially true.

Four years after its completion, however, that pride was sullied in one of the most dramatic and reprehensible acts in the state's history. According to one historian, the act that was carried out on June 2, 1894 left "a black stain on the history of fair Whitman County."

There had been strange goings on in Colfax that morning. Odd, coded messages had been chalked on city sidewalks all over town. Groups of citizens gathered on corners and spoke in low, ominous tones. As night approached, the streets were uncharacteristically deserted, and a threatening silence settled over the community.

A little before one o'clock in the morning a large group of men gathered in an old brickyard a mile southeast of Colfax. Donning masks and arming themselves heavily, the crowd marched in an orderly, almost military precision straight to the doors of the county jail. They had planned their work carefully, and each person knew what he should do.

The masked leader of the group knocked on the door of the jailer's room. "Who's there?" demanded the officer.

"We've got a prisoner from Palouse, and we want him locked up," came the reply. Thinking that he recognized the Marshall's voice, the turnkey opened the door. But instead of the lawman, he found over a score of guns trained on him. Understandably, the jailer handed over his keys when asked.

Inside his cell, prisoner George F. Parker waited for fate to take its course. He had been on trial for murdering a guest at the Artesian Hotel of Pullman. Parker had been surprised in the middle of a burglary and had shot his victim in an attempt to escape. On the day before, the prosecution attorney had just rested his case, and the defense's turn was to begin the next morning. Because most of the evidence against him was highly circumstantial, the prisoner probably could not have been convicted in court.



Early picture of Courthouse, showing original course of Palouse River.

Ed Hill, was also serving time in the county jail at the time. According to all accounts, Hill “was known over the ranges of the Palouse and Big Bend countries as a rather wild and dissolute man” especially when drunk. He was awaiting trial on an assault and battery charge. This happened when Hill became intoxicated and stabbed a rival in a barroom brawl.

When the vigilante mob burst into the jail that evening both men stood a good chance of acquittal. That is precisely what motivated the next actions. The ringleader of the crowd unlocked the two jail cells and dragged Parker and Hill out. They then pulled the men up the staircase to the courthouse and marched the two through the bailiff’s office to the large double window that looked out over the front steps.

Next, they put nooses over the men’s heads and tightened them. After positioning the two in front of the window, they threw their victims out the opening and watched as the two prisoners kicked and twisted fitfully while life was slowly strangled out of them. When their grisly job had been finished, the mob left the two slowly twirling over the courthouse entrance until they were taken down at 4:00 that morning.

By now everyone for miles around had heard of the lynching, and those with ghoulish curiosity flocked to the courthouse. The *Colfax Commoner* reported that the hanging created great excitement in town and that “hundreds viewed the bodies at the morgue.”

The ropes had been attached to the second story balustrade, and this part of the courthouse carried the marks of the execution for the rest of its existence. Although it was constructed sturdily of wood covered with galvanized iron, the strain from the falling bodies nearly tore it down. The indentations made in the iron on that fatal night could clearly be seen from a distance and served as a constant reminder of the lynching.

The anonymous author of *The Illustrated History of Whitman County* explained that many people had become skeptical of the law's ability to deal with criminals. "So many times," he wrote in 1903, "had the law failed through the stupidity or corruption of juries or the finesse and chicanery of criminal lawyers that the people had lost faith in the courts and had taken the administration of justice into their own hands."

Whitman County's temple of law had been defiled, and Colfax's better citizens must certainly have regarded this travesty as a deep disgrace. Even so, the *Commoner* admitted that the majority of Colfax's inhabitants clearly approved of the action. The *Pullman Graphic* was even more adamant in their support of the lynching. They claimed that the county had become "the Mecca for the murderer." It was not a mob that had attacked the prisoners, one editorial declared, "it was society up in arms against a wrong that frivolous laws would not right."

With opinions like these circulating in the region, it is not difficult to see that the state of county justice was regarded with suspicion by nearly everyone. By the time the nineteenth century ended, even the lawyers had come to survey the bench with a jaundiced eye.

Part of the reason for this legal suspicion centered around Judge William McDonald of the Whitman County Superior Court. This magistrate was a bothersome thorn in the judicial backside since he constantly humiliated members of the bar by his unethical, unseemly, and incompetent actions. Somehow Judge McDonald had gotten himself elected to the post on the Populist ticket. The fact that he had little or no knowledge of law seemed to play no part in his election, but it did make him very nervous when he was deciding a case before lawyers who were much more experienced than he.

For fear of pulling some judicial boner, Judge McDonald even refused such simple duties as signing ex parte orders and non-contested divorce decrees. Local lawmen were often forced to travel to Spokane for many routine legal requirements. When Whitman County lawyers were frequently forced to appeal his decisions at the Supreme Court, they had only to put as a reason, "This is a decision by Judge McDonald-- and there are other grounds." Judicial sympathy to the case was sure to follow.

Although there was no Bar Association in those days, the local lawyers got together informally to clear up the situation. Elections were approaching, and the legal minds decided that Judge McDonald had to go



The Old Courthouse in its later years, photographed during flood of 1948

before he did more harm. Accordingly, they formed a deputation to speak to him and convince the man to vacate his post.

When the group explained to the incompetent adjudicator that he must leave the bench, the judge began to whimper and to make himself as pitiful as possible. He agreed to leave Whitman County if no one wanted him there. He would return to private practice, but would the learned gentlemen please write a favorable letter of reference? He would need that to find another position. If the men would do this one little thing, then he would scoot on out of the county faster than you could say *amicus curiae*.

Rather than face McDonald one more time, the lawyers reluctantly agreed, and they wrote an extravagant letter praising the man's skill and learning. But sometimes judges can be just as subtle and conniving as lawyers, so instead of leaving, Judge McDonald ran for election again. This time he took out an ad in the *Palouse Gazette* with the testimonial letter he had received printed in full. The results of this double-cross were too dismal to contemplate for the lawyers of Whitman County.

Fortunately, one of the men in the legal delegation decided to speak up. He was Stephen J. Chadwick, and he was determined to run against Judge McDonald even if he had been one of the signers of the letter. He explained to the public the reasons for presenting the letter to McDonald, and asked them to vote for him instead. Although many voters were

amused at the judge's foxy cunning, they elected Chadwick to the post. The young man served two terms in Whitman County's Superior Court before he was elected to Washington's Supreme Court in Olympia and eventually became Chief Justice of that august body.

So through the years the old courthouse had seen its share of both treachery and heroism. It had become the town's most visible monument, but by the mid-1950's the old structure was beginning to show its age. The wiring and plumbing were archaic, and it was impossible to heat or cool efficiently. Soon the commissioners of the time began to discuss the possibility of doing away with the historic old building.

In February of 1955 county officials held meetings to hear arguments for and against construction of a new, modern courthouse. Results of those hearings convinced the leaders that there would be little protest to demolishing the old courthouse in favor of an up-to-date structure. As many forward-thinking citizens argued, it was undeniably cheaper to rip down the old structure rather than to repair it. So by early spring, the stage was set for big changes. On March 2, 1955, commissioners awarded a construction contract for a new courthouse to E.R. Haynes of Spokane, and work began.

He began work on a new courthouse designed by Architect, Ernest V. Price. The new structure was both simple and stark: a modern, yellow brick box with aluminum windows and linoleum halls. Its only concession to decoration was an ornamental stone entryway. If nothing else, Price's courthouse was clean, contemporary, and efficient-- as remote from the old building as it was possible to get.

Babcock's old edifice was built in the middle of a pleasant park on the banks of the Palouse River. Since this open area was considered wasted space by modern politicians, they decided to use it for their new courthouse. Gradually, the old temple of justice began to be surrounded by the austere structure of brick and steel. Like an octopus surrounding its helpless prey, the old building found itself slowly encircled by the arms of "progress."

By late 1955, the new building had been completed and the old one became redundant. The rest of the story is all too familiar to preservationists: the historic building was demolished leaving an empty space in the county building's courtyard that was soon converted to a parking lot. Later the Sherrif's office was constructed on the spot.

But not all of Whitman County's colorful past had been demolished; one tiny part of the old courthouse survived past 1955. Ironically, this was the disfigured little balustrade from which Parker and Hill had been hanged in 1894. It collected dust in the vaults of the new structure for many years-- its significance unknown, and its history unremembered. Eventually, the architectural fragment was also discarded.

It was as if the county wanted to erase all memory of the old building, but did not quite have the heart to do it. Whitman County is geared to today not yesterday, and perhaps we should not blame its leaders for wanting to forget the past. Even so, let us hope that their regard for the region's former glories strengthens before even more history is lost.

Sources

Whitman County's early history is recorded faithfully in *An Illustrated History of Whitman County* (Spokane: W.H. Lever, 1901) This also contains an account of the courthouse lynching. James Perkin's early experiences in Colfax and his filibuster to move the county seat to his home town are told in "James A. Perkins and Colfax: The Entrepreneur and His Town" by Tom Fryxell in *The Bunchgrass Historian* (Vol. 11, No. 1). The story of Chadwick and Judge McDonald is recounted in Ralph Bushnell Potts' *Come Now the Lawyers* (author, 1972), though Potts discreetly refers to the crafty but incompetent lawman as "Judge X" in his account. Articles in the *Pullman Graphic*, *Colfax Commoner*, *Palouse Gazette*, and their decendant, *The Colfax Gazette-Commoner*, helped me complement and confirm several other sources.

Through the kindness of Mr. James Repp, Whitman County Auditor, I was able to peruse the official records of the county. There I discovered information that allowed me to piece together the story of the county's two courthouses.

**Stories of Early
Pioneers in Whitman
County, ca. 1935
Collected by
Fred Yoder**

**The Story of
Mrs. Sarah J. Wohleter**

Mrs. Wohleter is now eighty-six years old. Father was born in Ohio. Thomas J. Edison was Mrs. Wohleter's cousin.

Father and mother married in 1849, and in the spring of 1850, father and brothers went to California.

Mrs. Wohleter was born in Fairfield, Iowa on the 28th of May, 1850. She was born a month after father started to California. It was not until a year later that Mrs. Wohleter's father knew that he had had a daughter born to him and his wife.

Mrs. Wohleter can remember the first time she saw her father. She remembers his long black beard. All other men in the community shaved, so she could easily distinguish her father. She did not like his looks.

Father's first home was in Jefferson County, Iowa. Mrs. Wohleter went to Ohio to visit, and played with Edison when he was seven years old. She and Edison as children played along a canyon and Edison would have Mrs. Wohleter go on one side while he went along the other. They would shout to one another to hear echoes.

War broke out in 1861. Father went to war. He was then thirty-five years old.

After the war, the climate in Iowa did not agree with father. There he had pneumonia. So he went to Kansas where he bought a farm near Burlington. Lived there till 1863. The next year he moved to Leavenworth and lived there in 1864. He worked and hauled for the army.

Father wanted to go to California, but mother didn't want father to go. They went by mule team to California. There were four families in the

group till they got to Fort Laramie. Between Fort Laramie and Salt Lake City, the Indians were bad. The government furnished soldiers to guard the wagon train of 150 or 200 wagons. It was hard to travel in such a big train. There was not enough grass for the horses.

Stopped at Suisun and Fairfield in Salino County, California. This was about thirty-five miles north of San Francisco. Next they went to Redwood County. This was a mining county in the Sacramento Valley. Lived in this place several years. Mrs. Wohleter was ten years old when the family crossed the plains. It took more than six months to cross from Kansas to San Francisco. Left Kansas City on the fourth day of April, traveled about twenty miles a day with a four-mule team. To be safe, father bought an extra mule. This mule was a wonderful lead mule. So Mrs. Wohleter had to ride this mule. The mule would lie down to get the fleas off. When she wiggled her ears and kneeled down, Mrs. Wohleter would get off. There were four hundred soldiers that guided the train across the plains. At night the wagons formed a corral, double deep. Soldiers guarded the wagons at night. Mrs. Wohleter and her sister and brothers slept in tents, at night.

Mrs. Wohleter married a Mr. Price when she was sixteen and a half years old and returned to Fort Leavenworth to live. They had two children.

Mrs. Wohleter married Mr Wohleter in 1871. They remained in Kansas four years till grass-hoppers drove them out. Mrs. Wohleter remembers that the family was at a picnic when the grass-hoppers first came. It seemed to cloud up and got so dark that it seemed like a cyclone was coming. Then the grass-hoppers landed in great swarms, descending like a heavy falling rain.

Mr. Wohleter had eighty acres of corn. As they drove past this field of corn on their way to the picnic, Mr. Wohleter remarked that he would get a crop of corn all right. But when the family returned from the picnic at five o'clock in the afternoon and passed the field, the corn stalks had been stripped bare by the grass-hoppers. The grass-hoppers ate everything in the garden except the potatoes. They piled up two feet high in the shade of the house; they ate up the clothes and window curtains. The grass-hoppers came on the fifth day of August and they lasted till the frost came.

Mr. Wohleter was then persuaded to go to California. He went to Santa Cruz and lived there three years. He worked in a saw mill in California.

Next he came to Palouse. Left California the third day of April, 1877, right in the midst of the Indian war in the Northwest. Went from Santa Cruz to San Francisco by stage and over thirty miles of railroad.

When Mr. Wohleter tried to buy a ticket to Washington, he had to wait a week. Came on the John Alexander to Vancouver and then by boat and railroad to Portland.

On the boat from California to Vancouver, Mr. Wohleter met John and Charles Farnsworth. All three of them had families.

When Mr. Wohleter got to San Francisco and started to check his freight to Palouse, there was no Palouse station on the map, but Lewiston was on the map.

At Portland took steamer for the Dalls. This was before there were any locks on the river. At the Dalls had to transfer to another boat. Then the boat could come on to Lewiston.

When got to the Dalls, found it would be necessary for him to wait two weeks to get boat up the river. But Charles Farnsworth was there with teams. He took Mr. Wohleter and family to Walla Walla. The road was only an Indian trail. Had left California the first day of April and landed the third day of May in Palouse.

When came through Walla Walla, it was only a small village or hamlet. There was a small hotel in the village with four or five rooms.

At Walla Walla bought a team and wagon and a stove and a few other articles that were being sold there. When got to Palouse, there were four houses or shacks there. There were only fourteen houses in Spokane at that time. Colfax had only a few houses.

It took over a week to come from Walla Walla to Palouse.

Horses cost \$125 apiece at Palouse, and a new Studebaker wagon, \$150.

The Indians commenced fighting in June when Chief Joseph was forced to go on a reservation.

Mr. Wohleter home staded 160 acres in 1878, five miles from Palouse. The land seemed bare and vacant at the time, but in less than two years, every piece of land was taken.

There was no school at first. Mrs. Wohleter organized the first school in the district. There were sixteen scholars in the district. They hired Elizabeth Webster to teach the school. Mrs. Wohleter had a son nine years old at the time. The people built a small log school house.

Got lumber to build house at Elberton. Some days could get only two or three boards. The people had to take turns in getting their boards.

Raised late wheat at first. Couldn't get grain to sow more. Had a good garden the first year.

Mrs. Wohleter sewed and visited the sick and got things to eat. Sheep and cattle were very plentiful and cheap, but there were no hogs.

Cut wheat at first with a cradle.

Mr. and Mrs. Wohleter lived on their farm thirty years. They bought more land. Mrs. Wohleter now owns over one thousand acres.

Mr. Wohleter died in 1930. Up till the time he died, he wanted to visit his farm every day. Mr. and Mrs. Wohleter moved into Palouse City about twenty-eight years ago.

Next after using cradles to cut the wheat, Mr. Wohleter bought a dump reaper. In about four years, he got a mower. Next, a binder.

Cattle, sheep and hogs were driven to Spokane to be sold.

For lighting, had mostly kerosene lamps and candles. Kerosene cost \$1 a gallon. Mrs. Wohleter thought she was very well off when she got her first kerosene.

Neighbors gathered together for singing, spelling bees, and sewing.

Neighbors got together and built a school house right away after settling down on their farms. This was a log school house. Next they built a lumber school house and in the second year, the school had 46 scholars.

Church services in the community were first held in the school house. Mr. and Mrs Wohleter entertained preachers once a month. Certain times of the year, they had protracted meeting. Sometimes a Methodist preacher would preach, and sometimes a Christian preacher. Later on a church was built at Freese. Sunday School at first met every Sunday in the school house. There was good attendance. There were no other amusements for the people at that time.

There was a doctor in Palouse. Colds, Pneumonia, and typhoid fever were the worst diseases. Women at first were usually attended by midwives at the birth of a child. Mrs. Wohleter was very busy attending mothers. She took pay in food or other things that the people wanted to give her. She rode all over the country on horseback.

Roads at that time were only Indian trails.

When the Indian scare came, the Wohleters went to Colfax.

When first settled in the country, got mail at Farmington. Later got mail at Palouse.

Mrs. Wohleter had four children.

Sold wheat at 18¢ a bushel in the 1890's.

In the old days, nobody had much. All were on a basis of equality. Now people have much more. They live better. In the early days, they used to say no man with ten acres need ever go hungry. There is no country like the Palouse country. People can live well there.

Mrs. Wohleter still looks after her land and estate. She went to California nineteen years every winter till Mr. Wohleter's death. It costs about \$1,000 a year to make this trip.

Mr. and Mrs. Wohleter moved into Palouse City in 1907. At that time, the town had thirteen saloons. There were many stores in the town. Over one hundred men worked in the saw mills. There were two good hotels in the town.

The Story of Mrs. Emma Ickes, Palouse, Washington

Mrs. Ickes was born in 1864 in Johnson County, southern Illinois. Was eleven years old when she came west. Came by railroad to Sacramento, took boat to San Francisco, stayed a week in San Francisco, then took boat to Portland.

On the way out from Illinois, stayed a week in Omaha, Nebraska, and started west on the 25th of April. Took three weeks to get to Eugene, Oregon.

There were five boys and five girls in the family. Father had gone west in 1849. He heard of the prairie land in Washington. A missionary had told father of this prairie land. Others in San Francisco insisted that father should see the Willamette Valley. So he went there first. Father rented a place in the Willamette Valley and went everywhere looking for government land and finally someone told him that there was good government land in the Palouse country in eastern Washington. When Mrs. Ickes' father, I.P. Turnbow, settled near Palouse, there were only four farms between there and Colfax.

Mr. Turnbow, Mrs. Ickes' father, came to Wallula and then to Walla Walla, and there bought a cayuse and rode up to the Palouse country. Father was looking for land that was not covered with timber.

Father came back to Eugene, got family, bought four horses and two new wagons. First, shipped to the Cascade Locks; there took boat around the Cascade Locks, and then came on to the Dalls. Took three weeks to come from the Dalls to Palouse City, and it rained every day except three days while on the way.

Father bought a pre-emption right of 160 acres, built a log cabin, 16 by 18. Had a rock fire-place. Part of the sides of the cabin were built of an old wagon.

Family landed on the farm November 5, 1875. The next day a snow 9" deep fell.

There was another cabin on the place, 8 by 10, and a brother of Mrs. Ickes and his wife lived in this cabin.

After the snow came and melted away, there was lovely weather until Christmas. During this time, father and boys built another log house, 18 by 20.

Beds in the house were frames nailed to walls.

When they came through Walla Walla, it was a very small burg, about two hundred people. It was an important center of trading. They were raising fruit all around the city.

After the family got settled down, they got in a supply of wood and prepared for the winter. Farmers already living between Colfax and Palouse had plenty of potatoes and cattle that year. These could be purchased for food supply.

After the house was built, father built a barn. Then he bought cattle.

The only fruit that the family had the first winter was a few dried prunes and apples. Two sacks of these were all the fruit that the family had the first winter.

Father was looking for land to leave to his children. He himself had pioneered in Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas and Illinois. Father wanted a piece of prairie land for each one of his boys. He did not want his boys to have to clear off timber.

The family came west by itself. There was not another family acquaintance with them.

The only other persons known to the family were father's brother and his wife, whose way father paid out for their company.

The next year the frost almost prevented the family from getting a mess of green beans. Frost seemed to come early in those days.

The farm taken up already had thirty acres of sod broken. It also had both stock and wheat on it.

When wheat was harvested, father had children to ride horses over the straw and tramped it out. He got forty bushels of wheat the first year. He sowed this in the spring.

Father and daughter broke thirty-five more acres. Mrs. Ickes helped to drive the teams.

Father built a fence around the land broken up and started raising grain.

Father immediately set out orchard. For the first ten years the apples were frost-bitten almost every fall.

When the Turnbow family arrived in the Palouse country, all the north hillsides close to the farm had huckleberries. Mother had a few stone jars. She canned sarvis berries, gooseberries, and wild huckleberries.

The country was settled fast after the Turnbow family came in.

The next summer, mother had a fine garden and raised almost all the garden products that the family had been accustomed to growing in Illinois.

There were a lot of sheepmen about Palouse when the Turnbow family arrived. They found five dead sheep on the place that had eaten too much wheat. The wool was pulled off of these sheep to be used by the family. Father bought a spinning wheel in Walla Walla.

In 1879 father and brother-in-law built a new house. They drove logs down the Palouse river for seven miles to be sawed.

Father soon had about twenty-five head of live stock on the farm. He lived until 1884. Mother lived on the farm until 1925.

Hauled wheat to Colfax and got from 18¢ to 35¢ a bushel for the wheat. Colfax was the trading center at that time. Palouse was growing but did not begin to grow rapidly until the railroad was built in 1885-6.

At first, there was only a grist mill at Palouse. There was a foot log across the river for pedestrians. Otherwise the river was forded with horses. Mrs. Ickes' brother thought at first that a railroad could never come to Palouse. It was thought that the country was too hilly.

Within three years, both church and Sunday School were organized in the community. A Sunday School was started at a place near Lincoln's flour mill and Chase's saw mill. Sunday School was held in the school house. The school house was in to Eden Valley district about two miles from the Turnbow home.

School at first was a subscription school. There was no public school in the district for three years.

It took mail three weeks to get from Illinois to the Palouse country.

When the Indian scare came in 1877, a sort of fort was built by the people of the community. They dig a pit from which to fire. All the mothers and children came to the place while the men were building the fort.

Old Chief Saltees of the Couer d'Alenes came down and told the settlers that if they would bring down the women and children to his place, the Indian warriors would go help lick the Nez Perces.

The Indians used to camp near Palouse; sometimes as many as five hundred would gather for races.

During the Indian scare, most of the families went to Colfax and stayed there for three days and nights. Diptheria broke out while the people were in Colfax. The people camped along the Palouse river, in Colfax. They had assembled from all over the Palouse country.

During the first three years, the school term lasted about three months. The pupils studied geography, reading writing, arithmetic, and spelling.

The most important meetings for the people were Sunday School and church. In a few years the community had a minister. In the winter the people had singings and prayer services. A singing school was held at which they had twenty-eight scholars.

A church was built at Eden Valley in 1882. It was a church of the Disciples of Christ. Reverend C.J. Wright was the minister. The Eden Valley church was the second church built in Whitman County. Reverend Wright went about all over Whitman County and organized churches. People drove for miles and came in teams, wagons, hacks and buggies to attend

the church meetings at Eden Valley. The church organization was kept up at Eden Valley until 1920.

A camp meeting was held somewhere near Lincoln's Mill. This camp meeting was held from 1880 until in the early nineties. Camp meetings were also held at Farmington, Pine City, and Kennedy Ford. The people went to these camp meetings and tented. The meetings usually lasted over two Sundays. It nearly always rained at camp meeting time.

There were no doctors available at first. Many children died from diptheria. Old Dr. Fitch was the first doctor in the community. Mrs. Ickes' mother was a mid-wife and attended over one hundred mothers at the birth of a child. She never charged anything for this service. Mother made her own medicines. She was the doctor for the neighborhood.

Mrs. Ickes' mother taught all her children thrift and economy. Mother had spun and woven cloth in Illinois that she brought along to the Palouse country. Clothing was so scarce in the first few years that the family did not wear underwear.

For three or four years after settling, Mrs. Ickes' father went to Walla Walla to buy goods and machinery. He bought a harvesting machine in 1877. He had sixty acres of wheat to cut that year. Next he bought a binder and an old horse-back thresher. The first farmers used cradles to cut their wheat. The wheat was frosted much of the time, and the flour made from the wheat was very sticky.

Flails were used at first to beat out the wheat.

Mrs. Ickes married G.P. Ickes in 1880. They lived on Turnbow flat and raised six children. Mr. Ickes' health broke in 1923 and they went to Eugene and their son attended the University. They lived at Eugene until 1925 when Mr. Ickes passed away.

Son finished at Eugene in 1926. Mrs. Ickes came back to Palouse in 1927, and has lived here since. One son is superintendent of schools at Fall City, Oregon. Another is electrician for the Eastern Oregon Light and Power Company. Three oldest children finished their education at the State College of Washington. One son is a farmer now in Montana. A daughter is Mrs. W.J. Robinson. Another son is a farmer and another owns and operates a store at Thornton.

Mrs. Ickes' husband had 320 acres of land when he died. He also owned half a timber section in Oregon and a lovely home in Eugene.

Mr. Ickes had to mortgage the farm in 1893, but he was able to pay it off in three years. The place was mortgaged for \$1,000 for five years.

It took \$1,000 a year to keep the three children in school at the State College of Washington.

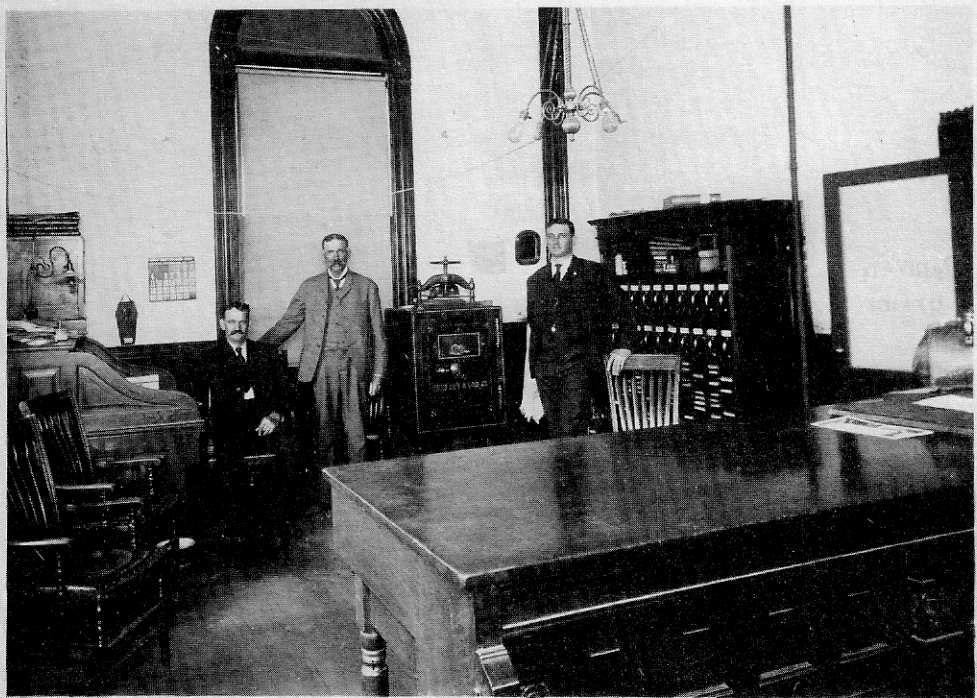
Mrs. Ickes said that she has always tried to keep up with her children.

**OUTLINE OF INTERVIEW
WITH EARLY PIONEERS**

- I. Coming
 - 1. Where from
 - 2. When
 - 3. Why
 - 4. Experiences of journey
- II. Early Farming Experiences
 - 1. Getting the land
 - 2. Tools and machinery
 - 3. Cultivating and harvesting
 - 4. Marketing
 - 5. Buying supplies
 - 6. Credit
- III. Home
 - 1. First home
 - 2. Home facilities
 - 3. Women's work
 - 4. Children
- IV. Neighbors
 - 1. How close
 - 2. Visitation
 - 3. Exchange of work
 - 4. Neighborhood meetings
- V. Recreation
 - 1. Home
 - 2. Neighbors
 - 3. Town centers
 - 4. For young and old
- VI. Schools
 - 1. First schools
 - 2. Teachers
 - 3. Subjects taught
 - 4. Other uses of schoolhouse
- VII. Churches
 - 1. First churches
 - 2. Preaches
 - 3. Camp-meeting
 - 4. Church attendance
- VIII. Communication
 - 1. Roads and trails
 - 2. Travel
 - 3. Railroads
 - 4. Mail and P.O.s
- IX. Health
 - 1. Sickness
 - 2. Doctors
 - 3. Hospitals
 - 4. Medicine



Courthouse during Flood of 1910



Interior of Courthouse, Sheriff's Office