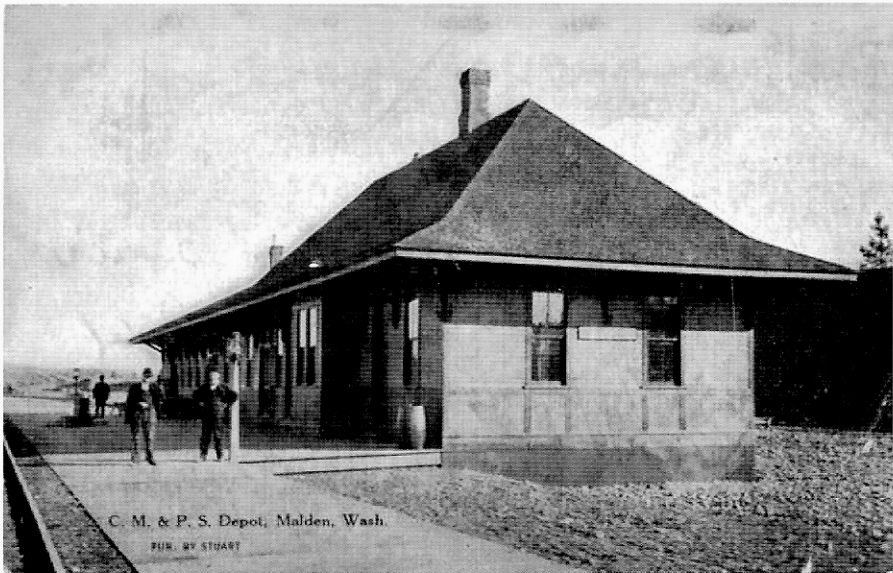


# Bunchgrass Historian

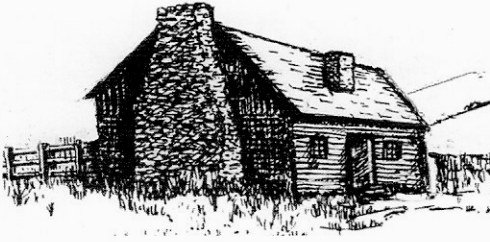


Whitman County Historical Society  
Colfax, Washington

Volume 47  
Number 1  
2021



- **Anderson Cox: “Father” of Whitman County**
    - **Rattlesnake Raider**
  - **Malden Flourished with the Early Railroad**
    - **Life in the Palouse Country in 1877**
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# 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. 1-40) \$2.50*

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*The C.M. & P.S. Depot in Malden*  
*This postcard was produced between 1909 and 1912 when the railway was briefly known as the Chicago, Milwaukee and Puget Sound Railway.*

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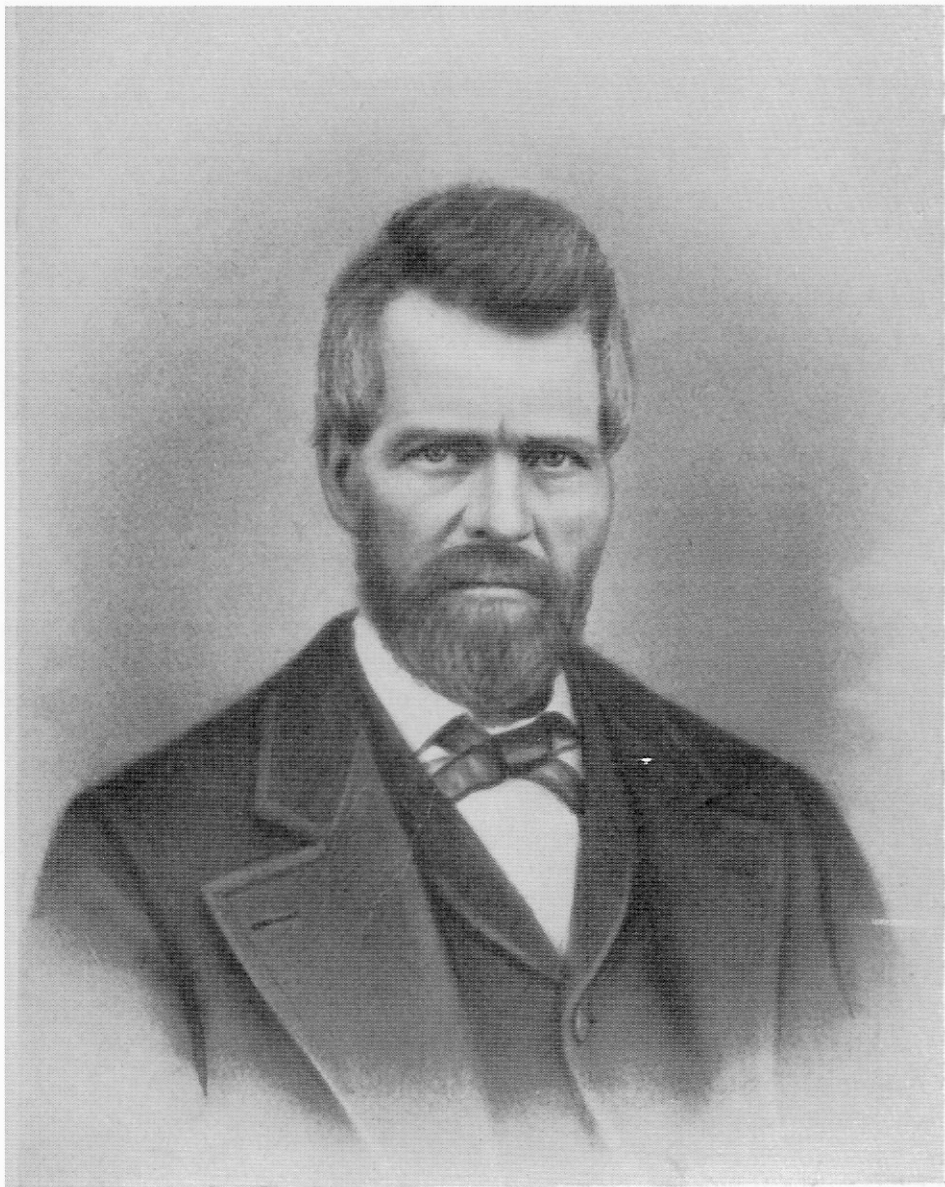
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## FROM THE EDITOR

This year marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of Whitman County. Anderson Cox sponsored the bill which passed November 29, 1871, to establish a new county out of the original 1863 Stevens County. At the beginning Whitman County had about 200 people and included what is now Whitman, Franklin, and Adams Counties. In 1883 the current boundary of Whitman County was established as told by Robert King in the 2014 article in the *Bunchgrass Historian* (Vol. 40, No. 3) “The ‘Ainsworth Problem’ and the Subdivision of Whitman County in 1883.” But this new story, also by Robert King, looks back twelve years earlier to the 1871 origin of Whitman County in commemoration of its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



*Malden Community Church*



HON. ANDERSON COX.

# Anderson Cox (1812-1872), “Father” of Whitman County

By Robert King

Not long after Whitman County was formed from Stevens County in November of 1871, Anderson Cox (1812-1872) was being called the “Father” of the county due to his important role in its establishment. This article recalls Cox’s life including his career in politics and business ventures that place him as one of the most important people in the early history of Whitman County, Washington.

Anderson Cox was born on his parents’ farm near Dayton in Montgomery County, Ohio, on March 22, 1812. His parents, Jonathan and Johanna “Hannah” Cox, had moved to southwestern Ohio when the area was sparsely settled. By the mid-1830s, the Cox family had moved into Warren County in west-central Indiana, near the Illinois border. There, Anderson’s father died in 1834. On August 7, 1836, Anderson, at age 24, married Julia Ann Walter (1818-1891) in Warren County. During the first years of their marriage, Anderson Cox and his wife Julia farmed in Warren County. Their first child, son Lewis Cox, was born on their farm on May 9, 1837. Their next child, Joanna (Cox) Cannon, was also born in Warren County on December 7, 1838. But their third child, Phillip Walter Cox (1842-1918), was born not long after the family settled in Iowa Territory. After a few years, the family continued westward by covered wagon.

In 1845, they left Iowa by ox cart, arriving later that year in Oregon Territory.<sup>1</sup> Sometime after ending their long overland journey at Salem, Anderson and Julia Cox settled about 20 miles south at the small settlement of Albany, Oregon, and resumed farming. Their early arrival at Albany, prior to 1850, allowed Anderson and his wife to claim 640.41 acres of federal land in what is now the eastern part of the city of Albany. They received it without cost as an Oregon Donation Land Act claim on October 16, 1858.<sup>2</sup> Such claims were limited to the earliest Oregon settlers, and in time it would become very valuable land for farming and later for subdivision as the town grew.

By the time that they formally received this land, Anderson was already engaged in local politics. As early as 1853, Anderson Cox was chosen as a local delegate at Albany to represent citizens of the Upper Willamette Valley. The purpose was to help make decisions regarding the “opening of a new emigrant road from the Forks of the Willamette River to Fort Boise, or some other point on the emigrant trail from the States into the valleys of Oregon.”<sup>3</sup> Two years later, Anderson Cox served on the Democratic Central Committee in Linn County, Oregon. On April 3, 1855, he was one of five Democrats to elect delegates to the Democratic Territorial Convention to be held in Salem on April 11, 1855 “for the purpose of nominating a candidate for the office of Delegate to Congress” in the upcoming June election.<sup>4</sup>

Cox would remain engaged in local Linn County politics in the later 1850s. At one point he served in the Oregon legislature from Linn County,<sup>5</sup> though by 1860, he had lost favor of certain local Democrats for some of his views.<sup>6</sup>

On August 24, 1860, Anderson Cox and his family were listed in the federal census as residents of the town of Albany, Oregon, with his occupation listed as “Gentleman,” apparently due to his serving in the legislature. He was also listed with real estate worth \$1500 and personal estate worth \$12,000 (equal to over \$375,000 today). Listed in the Cox household were eight of Anderson’s and Julia’s ten children. The oldest child still at home was their son, Philip, age 19, listed as a stockman. It was this son who brought Anderson Cox and his family to Waitsburg, Washington Territory. In 1859, “Phil,” at the age of 17, reportedly “heard of a rich country to the north and east, near a Fort called Walla Walla. In 1859 he and three other young men started to Fort Walla Walla, arriving July 4, 1859. In 1859 Walla Walla consisted of four buildings, two of them saloons. The party headed through Walla Walla to Touchet Creek and at the place where Waitsburg now stands Phil built a cabin. As soon as Phil Cox was established, his father Anderson joined him from Oregon bringing a lot of cattle. They got along nicely until the winter of 1861–62 when Anderson lost all of his 300 head of cattle... This hard winter was what made this country a grain growing country.”<sup>7</sup>

Thus, by the early 1860s, Anderson Cox had permanently relocated his family from Oregon to the promising Waitsburg area, where he began acquiring land. Subsequently, he continued his interest there in both politics and business. Soon after arriving, Anderson Cox established a sawmill on Coppei Creek, a tributary of the Touchet River, which joins it just west of Waitsburg. Anderson’s oldest son, Lewis Cox, “bought in with his father in his sawmill on the Coppei near Waitsburg, and also took a homestead near that city. He made the lumber and erected the first sawmill ever bult in that vicinity.”<sup>8</sup>

By the mid-1860s, Anderson Cox applied for a 160-acre homestead under the recently passed 1862 Homestead Act. The land included the southern part of Waitsburg. Soon Anderson Cox and his family were living on his homestead at Waitsburg. Subsequently, Anderson Cox was listed by the 1870 federal census of Waitsburg, Washington Territory, as a resident of the town. Recorded on July 27, 1870, it reported his occupation as “farmer,” with real estate worth \$2500 and personal estate also worth \$2500. Living with him and his wife Julia were four of their unmarried children, Malissa, Almira, Butler, and Ira Cox.

It was the during the decade of the 1860s that Anderson Cox, then in his 50s, became a central force in the creation of Whitman County. He became involved with politics in Walla Walla County and was elected to the Washington Territorial legislature. His prominence led to his appointment as the first Receiver in the U.S. Land Office in Walla Walla, soon after it was established in the early 1870s. This would have been a political appointment and a relatively lucrative post. Also,

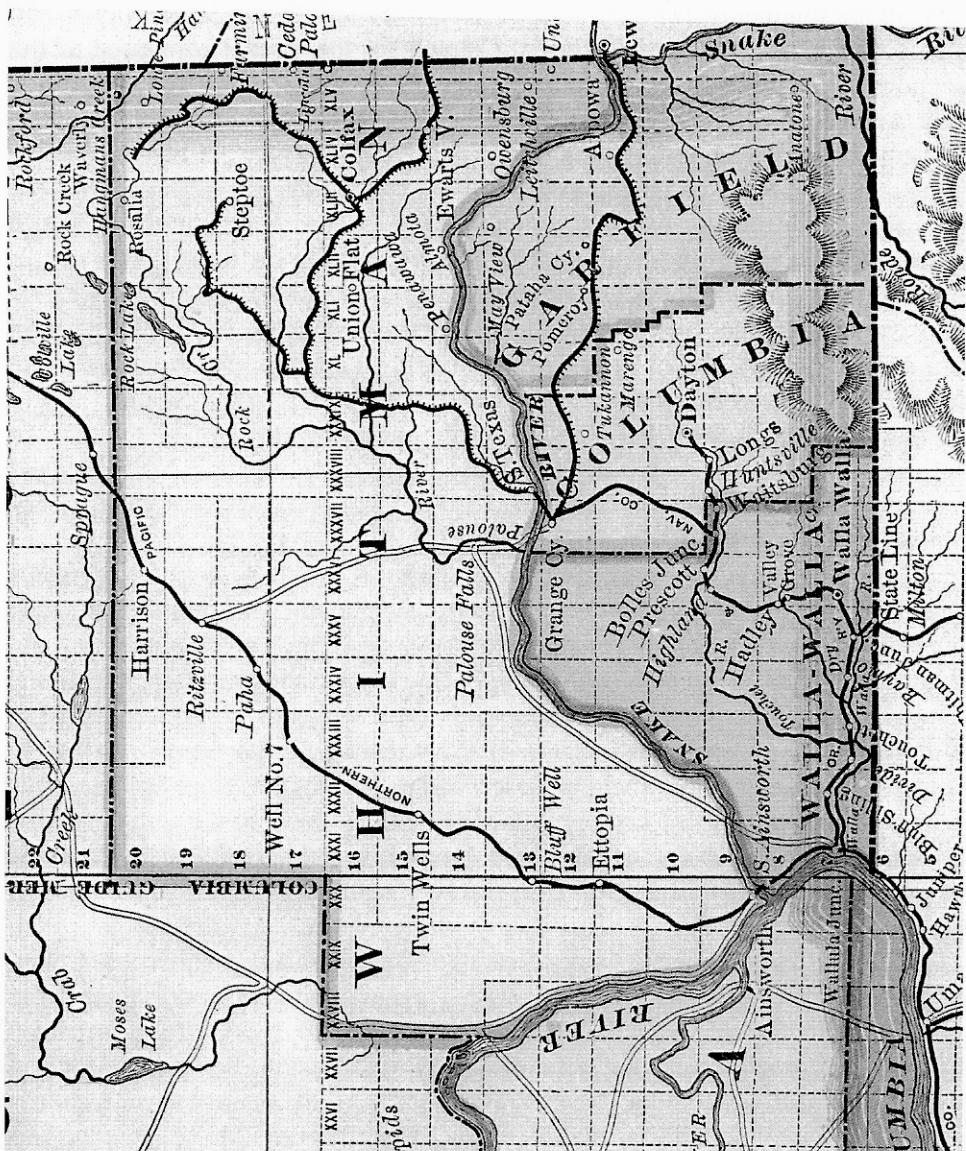
during this time, Anderson Cox “helped to survey the territorial road from Walla Walla to Colfax, secured the location of another territorial road from Walla Walla to Colfax and in many other ways contributed inestimably to the progress of the Inland Empire.”<sup>9</sup>

In the summer of 1863, Anderson Cox unsuccessfully ran for election as the member of the Washington Territorial Council for the district composed of the counties of Skamania, Klikitat, Walla Walla and Spokane.<sup>10</sup> However, two years later, Anderson Cox won election and became a member of the Council representing Stevens, Walla Walla, and Yakima Counties.<sup>11</sup> By late 1868, Cox had become so influential that some wanted him to become Territorial Governor.<sup>12</sup> Though that did not happen, it was indicative of Cox’s impotence in territorial politics that would become significant for the creation of Whitman County in the early 1870s.

Probably due to the success of his sawmill at Waitsburg and his growing familiarity with the land and rivers of southeastern Washington Territory, Anderson Cox became interested in the possibility of establishing sawmills elsewhere in the region. This was when settlement was beginning to occur in the area that would become Whitman County, but it would require the involvement of other people to help make his plans work. Clearly Cox himself was quite busy with his family and business activities in the Waitsburg area as well as his engagement in territorial politics.

An opportunity arose for Cox, when James A. Perkins, son of Anderson’s friend and neighbor Joel Perkins, another early settler in the Waitsburg area, became interested in Cox’s ideas to expand sawmilling east of the Walla Walla Valley and Waitsburg. James, a young unmarried man, initially left the Waitsburg area in the 1860s and settled a few miles to the east. Yet the area proved less conducive to farming, with a shorter growing season. Consequently, “after several frustrating seasons of trying to cope with the adverse weather, Perkins was more than receptive to the idea of relocation. The opportunity came in the form of a business venture organized by Anderson Cox of Waitsburg. Cox was searching for settlers interested in constructing a sawmill with his financial backing, at the junction of the forks of the Palouse River.”<sup>13</sup>

Due to Cox’s influence, James Perkins settled at what would become Colfax as its first permanent resident. Along with Thomas Smith, who soon returned to Waitsburg, Perkins arrived in the Colfax Valley on July 10, 1870.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Anderson Cox played a crucial role in the settlement story of Colfax, the first pioneer town in what would become Whitman County. Thereafter, Cox maintained an active interest in the new community for the rest of his life, promoting it to become the seat of a new county. As for the sawmill that Cox had envisioned, another early settler at Colfax, Hezekiah S. Hollingsworth, joined with Cox and Perkins, with the three credited in 1871 as building a small sawmill: “at the place where the forks of the Palouse [River] come together. The mill established by Hollingsworth and his as-



Rand McNally map of Washington (detail) from the early 1880s



sociates was the first in the area and the partners, hopeful that they would make a quick fortune, laid out a town, then named it after the Vice President of the United States, Schuyler Colfax.”<sup>15</sup>

The small sawmill at Colfax was the first business venture other than farming in the Colfax area, but soon it was joined by another enterprise also promoted by Cox. Aware of an increasing number of settlers arriving in the area to take up the rich farmlands, Cox suggested that the sawmill be supplemented by a flour mill. In her history of Colfax Flour Mills, June Crithfield concluded that “the idea for a flour mill for Colfax was first generated in 1871 by Anderson Cox, first postmaster, legislator, and surveyor.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, in recognition of his continuing interest in the new settlement of Colfax that he promoted, Cox received an official appointment as Colfax’s first postmaster on March 15, 1872.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, back in the Waitsburg area, Anderson Cox by the summer or fall of 1871, proved up on his homestead claim, having lived on the land at least five years. Other requirements he met were having built a habitable dwelling and successfully farming a part of his claim. Those actions were needed to receive a homestead under the 1862 Homestead Act, with the patent for the tract dated June 30, 1872. Cox was also in the process of receiving formal title from the federal government for more land at Waitsburg. He had bought a 40-acre tract near his homestead on November 1, 1871 for \$1.25 acre and had applied for another 80-acre tract of federal land near Waitsburg, with the patent for that land arriving on August 1, 1872. But the deed for that latter tract, like that for his homestead land, arrived after Cox had died unexpectedly on March 28, 1872. His homestead and other land went to his wife, in accordance with federal law.

According to Gilbert’s 1882 *Historic Sketches of Walla Walla, Whitman, Columbia, and Garfield Counties, Washington Territory and Umatilla County, Oregon*,<sup>18</sup> just before his death, Cox was very active in promoting the bill that passed the Washington Territorial legislature in 1871-72 resulting in the creation of Whitman County. The bill subdivided Stevens County in eastern Washington Territory in recognition that settlement was rapidly occurring in the southern part of the massive country governed from Colville in “distant” northeastern Washington. The increasing number of settlers in the southern part of the county desired having a seat of government located closer than over 100 miles north at Colville. Accordingly, the legislature was sympathetic, and the bill was adopted on November 29, 1871.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, the southern part of Stevens County became a new county named for slain missionary Marcus Whitman.

Shortly before his death, Anderson Cox had “secured the location of a territorial road from Walla Walla to Colville, to pass by the forks of the Palouse river. The town of Colfax was laid out that winter [early 1871], and the commissioners appointed by the organic act, declared it to be the county seat. Mr. Cox, the father of Whitman county, died suddenly in March, 1872, while on the road from Colfax

to Waitsburg, having been to the new town on business connected with his proposed mill.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, even the death of Anderson Cox connected him forever to Whitman County, as a person who devoted his final days to securing the new county’s future.

Cox’s obituary, printed in an Olympia, Washington Territorial paper, called him a “distinguished citizen,” noting that: “Anderson Cox, Esq., a gentleman well-known in political circles throughout the Territory” had recently died of “bilious colic.”<sup>21</sup> It reported that he was then serving as the Receiver in the Land Office in Walla Walla though it did not mention his recent appointment as postmaster of Colfax, which had occurred only 13 days before his death.

Following a widely attended funeral, Anderson Cox was laid to rest in the Odd Fellow Cemetery at Waitsburg, Washington. A large stone marks his grave. His widow Julia subsequently died on May 9, 1891, at Waitsburg and was buried near her husband. Also interred there is their oldest son Lewis Cox (1837-1905) and several members of his family. Today, some descendants of the Cox family still reside in southeastern Washington State, with many still proudly remembering their ancestor Anderson Cox and his important role as the “Father” of Whitman County.

1 “Family Histories from Hay, Washington: The Cox Family History 1880-1881,” by Robert Cox & Wanda Carter, *Bunchgrass Historian*, Fall & Winter 1990, Vol. 18, No.3 / 4: 4.

2 Records on this claim as well as on other land that Anderson Cox received from the federal government are found online at <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/>

3 *Weekly Oregon Statesman*, Salem, OR, March 5, 1853, p. 2.

4 *Weekly Oregon Statesman*, Salem, OR, March 13, 1855, p. 3.

5 *Albany Democrat*, Albany, OR, April 5, 1872, p. 3.

6 *The Oregon Democrat*, Albany, OR, March 13, 1860, p. 3.

7 “Family Histories from Hay,” by Cox & Carter, *Bunchgrass*, Vol. 18, No.3 / 4: 4-5.

8 W. H. Lever, *An Illustrated History of Whitman County, State of Washington*, San Francisco:1901, p. 389.

9 Lever, *Illustrated History*, 1901, p. 389.

10 *The Washington Standard*, Olympia, Wash Ter. August 15, 1863, p. 2.

11 *The Washington Standard*, Olympia, Wash. Ter., July 15, 1865, p. 2.

12 *The Washington Standard*, Olympia, Wash. Ter., December 12, 1868, p. 2.

13 Tom Fryxell, “James A Perkins and Colfax: The Entrepreneur and His Town,” *Bunchgrass Historian*, Spring 1983, Vol. II, No. 1: 4.

14 *Ibid*: 5.

15 Fred C. Bohm, “Logging and Lumbering in Whitman County, 1871-1905,” *Bunchgrass Historian*, Summer 1980, Vol. 8, No. 2: 3

16 June Crithfield, “The Colfax Flouring Mills,” *Bunchgrass Historian*, Fall 1977, Vol. 5, No. 3: 3.

17 Bert Webber, *Postmarked Washington*, Ye Galleon Press, Fairfield, Wash., 1987: Vol 1, p. 236.

18 “Whitman County – Extracted from Gilbert’s Historic Sketches” (1882) Chapter XXXIX, *Bunchgrass Historian*, 1991. Vol. 19, No. 2: 7-8.

19 Amy Woodward Fisher, “The Hoopers of Johnson,” *Bunchgrass Historian*, 2011, Vol. 37, No. 3: 7.

20 *Ibid*: 8.

21 *The Washington Standard*, Olympia, Wash. Ter., August 13, 1872, p. 2.



# RATTLESNAKE RAIDER!

By Jerry Jones

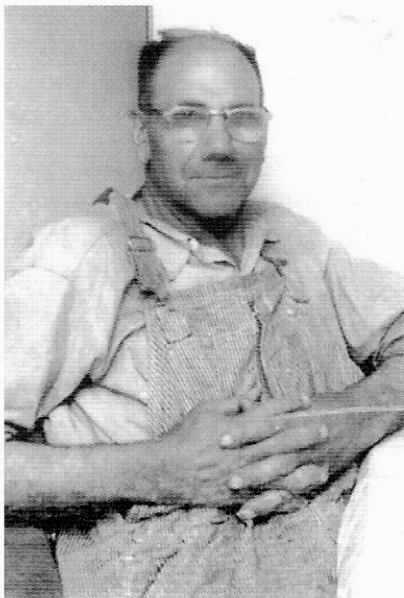
*Editor's Note: This interesting story first appeared in the Colfax Gazette April 30, 1970, and was written by Jerry Jones, who recently completed a long career with the Colfax newspaper. We are pleased to reprint this for our current readership.*

John Henley Sr., a resident of Hay since 1903, still holds respect for rattlesnakes. In the past 40 years of hunting rattlers, he's killed hundreds without being bitten, but he carries a bite kit and he's seen what the fangs of a rattler can do. He still wages war on rattlesnakes and still calls them "dangerous." A person doesn't want to fool around with them."

Henley explained following an afternoon of snake hunting along Alkali Creek southwest of Hay last Thursday. Henley started hunting rattlers over 40 years ago when he found them invading his ranch. The snakes were making themselves at home in the fruit cellar and outbuildings. He saw them as unwanted neighbors for growing a family. "They don't get much past here now," Henley said as his truck bounced along Alkali Creek downstream from the ranch house.

## Hunting starts in March

Snake hunting season in the Hay area runs from about March 15 to about April 14, a period of time when the hunter can be pretty sure of finding the rattlers at home in their favorite dens. As spring approaches, the snakes will crawl out of their dens to take in a little of the morning sun. After about the middle of April the snakes will "go up over the hill" for a summer of hunting. Henley believes they travel two or three miles away from the den before they begin to work their way home late in August. "Before I discovered these dens, I used to kill one or two by going along the fence rows, but now I hunt them at the dens," Henley said. This year, despite Henley's efforts to the contrary, the snake population increased at the dens. "I

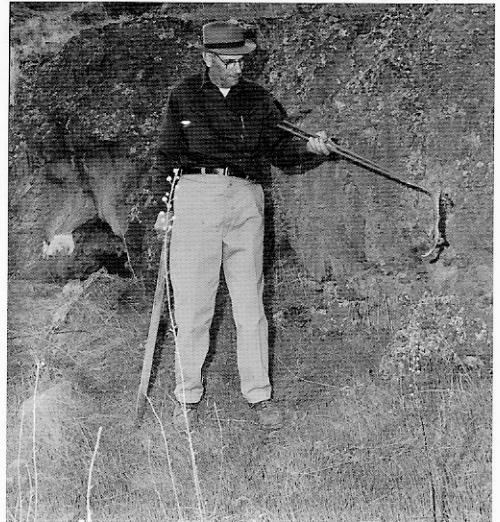


*Courtesy Jeannine Henley Larkin  
John Henley Sr.*

thought I had them all cleaned out, but last year they swarmed in here from somewhere. Great big ones that I knew weren't around here." Reasons for the heavy den population this year have been attributed to the blasting on the Little Goose dam projects along the Snake river. Construction traffic could also be the reason, although Henley isn't sure of the exact cause. Regardless of the reason, the heavy return of the snakes to Alkali Creek dens has made for heavy hunting. Ten trips down the canyon have resulted in 83 rattlers "decorating" a barbed wire fence along the Long Hollow road north of Riparia. Henley usually ends his hunts down the Alkali canyon by cutting the rattles off his victims before hanging them on the fence as a warning to youngsters and persons unfamiliar with the Snake river country.

#### Uses blacksmith tongs

His weapons included a pair of converted blacksmith tongs and a long heavy stick with a wrist loop. The tongs have extensions on the handles, giving Henley over a yard of space between himself and his rattler prey. For close to 10 years he used the tongs as they came from the shop, without the longer handles. Probably his best weapon is experience. The stick and the curved jaws of the blacksmith tongs go probing along rocks and through weeds. "You always want to be where you can't see," Henley explained as his eyes explored a pile of rocks which had produced several victims to date this year. A snake hunter should refrain from stepping on a rock before checking the opposite side, Henley said. "They might have their head sticking out today, but that's all," he commented. The rattlers seldom come out of their dens when the temperature gets below 60 degrees.



#### Fast grab ends rattler

A quick rustle in the dry grass of last winter brought a fast response from Henley's blacksmith tongs. He clamped the jaws of the tongs around the rattler's struggling body and lifted

*Special rattler grabbers do their job*  
*John Henley Sr. uses his special long blacksmith tongs to hold a live rattler snake along Alkali Flat creek downstream from Hay. For 10 years Henley hunted the snakes without adding extensions on the tongs. This snake was the 106th killed by Henley this year.*



*A barbed wire fence marks end of the road for 83 rattlers*

*This fence, located at the junction of Alkali Creek and Long Hollow roads north of Riparia, marks the end of the road for 83 snakes which were "strung up" by John Henley Sr. of Hay. In the past 40 years of hunting snakes, Henley estimates he has averaged over 100 of the reptiles a year. The rattles are removed before the snakes are hung. Newcomers in the area are advised to take heed.*

the next den down the lane.

‘I just pulverized him’

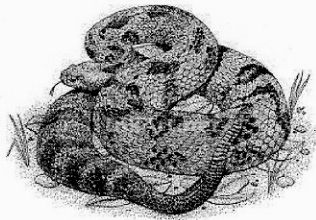
A rattler with a body circumference as large as a man’s upper arm was the largest Henley can remember killing. He spotted the snake after killing seven others at a den which was located where the Little Goose dam fill meets the bank of the Snake river on the Whitman county side. Tracks of a prancing deer—”they kill ‘em too you know” — led him to look near a large rock. The midsection of the snake was in view, but the head and tail were under the rock. “I saw this darn snake. He was bigger than my arm and I thought ‘I better not tie into him with these tongs.’ I started down to the house to get a shotgun. “Then I said ‘I came up here to hunt snakes; I’m going to tie into him.’ Just as soon as I tied into him he started to back out. I just pulverized him as fast as I could with my

him in the air. “I’ve squeezed them pretty hard before, but I’ve never heard a sound out of them,” Henley said. He ended the rattler’s life with two sharp blows from his stick, crushing the rattler’s head against a rock. Later, before hanging the snake on the fence near Riparia, Henley used the tongs again to hold the snake while cutting the rattles off the tail. “I’ve learned when you cut the rattles, you cut a nerve and that can snap his head around,” Henley explained. His collection of rattles from the years of hunting amounts to “a jar full, about 500.” Some of the rattles go to neighbors and friends. A former Hay school teacher installed the rattles in her fiddle. “They used to say it improved the tone,” Henley said as he piloted his pickup camper to

stick. By gosh, I killed him,” Henley replied. After cutting the giant snake open, Henley found a full-grown cottontail rabbit which had served as a recent meal for the rattler. “That blocked him from getting under the rock.” He explained.

#### Snake Bite Kit saves dog

For about the first 30 years of his snake hunting, Henley declined to carry a snake bite kit. After some family pressure, he started taking the kit with him. It proved useful when his dog sustained a strike below his lower lip. The dog’s lip swelled up, but Henley was able to save him by extracting the venom with the kit. “He came out of it,” Henley recalled. Henley also tells of residents in the Hay and Lacrosse area who have been bitten by rattlers. Another rule to avoid the snakes is to “keep your hands away from the ground.” Most bites have resulted from ranchers probing dens with their hands. The most snakes Henley can recall killing in a day were 108 victims he located “when I first found out about these dens.” “We killed 85 before noon. After dinner we went back and killed the rest of them. That was a big day.” Snake hunting will taper off with the warmer weather and exodus from the dens to “wherever they’re going.” During the summer months Henley will keep his eye peeled but activity at the dens will be quiet. In the fall when the snakes return to the dens their reactions are quicker. “If they see you, they won’t give you a chance. They won’t stay out like they do in the spring.” He also spots certain snakes which will be victims of his tongs the next spring. “I see them in the fall when they go in. I’ll keep that in mind and go back in the spring. Probably he’s the first one out.” For this season, the hunting at the dens, which are usually located on a southeast slope, is ended. Henley expects the rattlers to be “going over the hill” in the next few weeks. “Of course, if one comes along, I’ll kill it anytime I see him,” he said, declaring a creed which has developed after 40 years of being “hard at” rattler killing.



# MALDEN FLOURISHED WITH THE EARLY RAILROAD

## The Ups and Downs of a Palouse Town...

*Editors Note: The following article about the town of Malden was obtained from a clipping passed on to us by the Whitman County Genealogical Society. The original (a photocopy) contains no author, no date, and no source. It was written about 1960 and was probably printed in something such as the Spokesman Magazine. We would be grateful if anyone could provide us with more information.*

*The article highlights the major change that had taken place then in Malden. The rough and ready boom town of 1908 to 1925 had ended with a great decline in population, but by 1960 it had developed a new identity as a family town. Now in 2021, Malden has again – suddenly this time – experienced a change in status. The disastrous fire of September 7, 2020, destroyed 80% of the homes in Malden. Once again we will see how Malden re-invents itself and finds a role to play in the Twenty-first century.*

Malden, which lies between Pine City and Rosalia, is located in the extreme central part of Whitman County, which is in turn situated in that part of eastern Washington known as the Palouse Country. Malden today is considerably different than the Malden of early 1900s. Forty years ago you'd find nearly 2,300 people, large hotels, many different businesses, and a fast rising city. Now you find a community of 300 people, a general store, post office, service station, and saloon.

Why this drastic change?

A person traveling from Rosalia, a small farming community, at the turn of the century, to a slightly older but smaller town, Pine City, would have found only a trail and many farmer's gates to open between the two communities. The picture was changed by 1908. It was this year that representatives from the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad (later changed to the Milwaukee Road) stopped in Rosalia to see about securing land for a division point of the proposed railroad.

The arrangements in Rosalia were not suitable, so Pine City was their next stop, but again the officials could not come to any agreement with landowners. In the meantime, three farmers in the Malden area learned about the plan and visualized the possibilities for a townsite. With donations from the three, a new town was in the planning stages. Malden grew quickly. Men were needed for the new jobs and they rapidly were taken. All the administrators and workmen in the division (the division ran from Cle Elum to Avery, a distance of approximately 300 miles) moved to Malden.

These men of authority included a superintendent, the road masters and assistants, and a division engineer with several clerks. The workmen were comprised



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### *Malden dispatchers office*

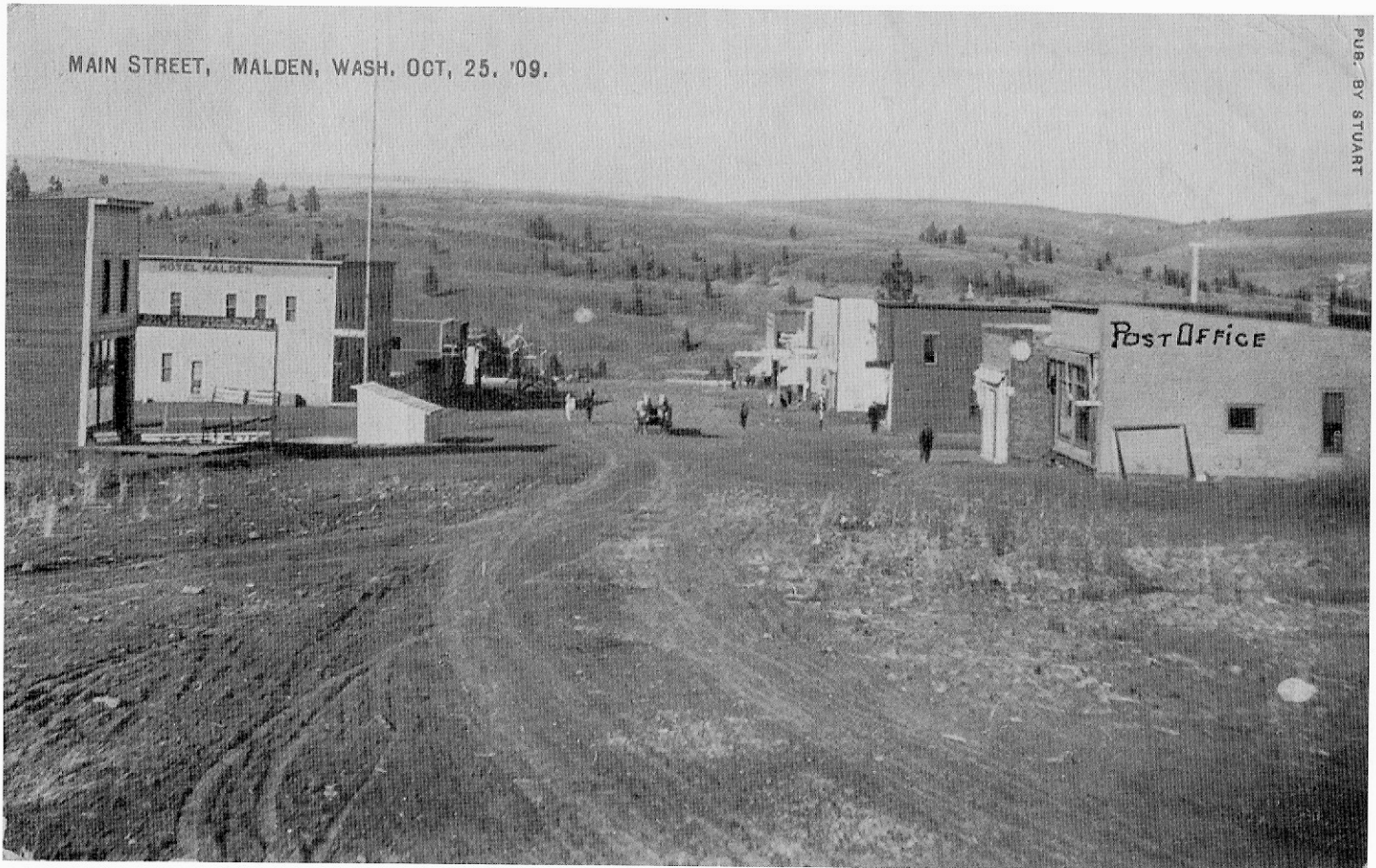
of a section foreman with 10 to 12 men, the rip track men totaling 40, and the roundhouse crew. In the roundhouse were six to eight boilermakers plus helpers, eight to 10 machinists with helpers, men who worked in the storehouse and others on miscellaneous jobs. In all there were nearly 80 men in the roundhouse.

The train crews included men for the three switch engines in the yard: one foreman and two switchmen for each engine and the main trains, which included seven passenger train crews and seven engine crews. The passenger train needed a conductor, two brakemen, plus a baggageman, and each of the regular trains needed several men. A crew of four to five men handled the water, and eight to nine "chain gang" groups with five men on each one, plus the work train men, who took care of all repairs.

Trains now carried more live-stock, and the law required that they be unloaded every 36 hours. A large stockyard near the tracks with handlers cared for this requirement. Prior to 1920 there was a relay office with three to four operators. The train orders were dispatched by three other men. As passenger trains arrived the drays would meet the cars for transporting the baggage uptown. Other horse-drawn vehicles were also used for similar purposes, laborers busily hauled coal, and many independent stores and merchants built and settled in Malden to meet the demand for services and merchandise. This in brief cites the numerous jobs and reveals the need for personnel.

Stores, shops, hotels, comprising the downtown area, included: five hotels, one





Malden Main Street, October 25, 1909  
*Photo Courtesy Whitman County Library Rural Heritage*



*Photo Courtesy Whitman County Library Rural Heritage*

*The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad Roundhouse at Malden*

of which had 30 rooms with bath, and which was supposed to be the best in the area and cost in the vicinity of \$90,000; two furniture stores, two blacksmith shops, three grocery stores, two paint shops, two lumber yards, four saloons, one undertaker, two barbershops, one with five chairs; a bowling hall, a ladies dry goods store, restaurant, tailor shop, telephone building with five operators, a school consisting of 12 grades, churches, two banks, and various other buildings.

The Milwaukee Land Co. secured the land, mainly through donations by the three farmers. The company then had the area surveyed and sold lots to the townspeople. All the administrators for the railroad line built houses in Malden and brought their families. The division point and roundhouse, plus all services for the trains, were located here. Because Rosalia had been the only town in close proximity with a railroad outlet for shipping grain, most of the farmers had been taking their grain to Rosalia, but now Malden could handle the grain, and this meant that people would be coming there to trade. Eastern relatives of administrators moved in and started businesses, built homes and bought land.

Previous to 1920 the roundhouse burned and was rebuilt. This would have been a good time to move the facilities if there was going to be a change, but the railroad stayed and everyone began to look to bigger and better things for the city. Population grew rapidly during this time and it looked like Malden would be one of the largest towns in the area by midcentury.

But technological circumstances drastically changed things. From 1908 to 1918 almost everything was shipped by rail. A stage ran between the towns and some things were brought by wagon but this took time, even for a seven mile trip. It was also hard to transport goods by wagon as the roads were muddy. A trip to Spokane was an all-day affair even by train from Malden. First you had to go by stage, get on one train, and transfer to another with a long wait between trains. What was brought into Malden by the merchants was usually sold soon, because of this isolation.

“Power: If we just had more power.” This is what the men on the Mallet, the steam-driven engine, wanted. They wanted the power for extra tonnage or for speed to get up the grades. The power they got, but at the sacrifice of Malden. The earliest trains pulled about 1,200 to 1,800 tons of goods. This usually amounted to about 40 cars. With these 40 cars they could easily stop, pick up freight and continue without much effort. The increase in power and efficiency of the new engines made possible larger loads and longer trains. With the longer trains it was no longer easy to stop at every siding and pick up freight. Instead they tried to make it farther in shorter times. This they did, and it was this that caused the railroad officials to begin lengthening the distance between terminals. The division points and the roundhouse were no longer needed as often, so they were moved to points farther on.

The townspeople saw the first change in 1918 when the dispatchers were moved. The switch engines and section crews followed. The strength of the big city was beginning to be felt as Spokane absorbed most of Malden’s facilities by 1926.



Malden Train Station May 29, 1911

*Courtesy Washington State Historical Society*

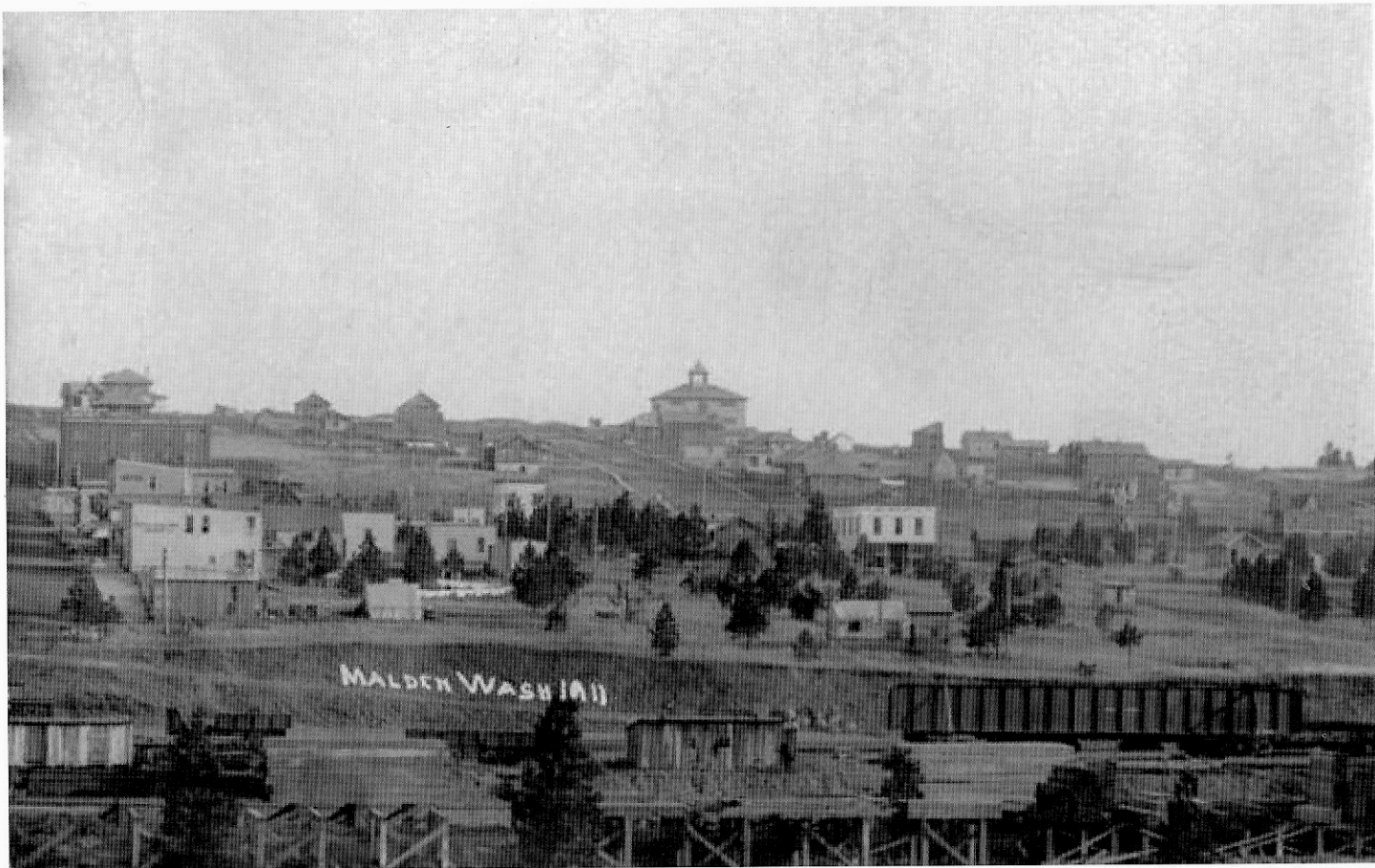
The arrival of the automobile made it possible for people to reach the other nearby towns. Shipment by rail was no longer the only provider of goods. The mechanized car and truck transported people and merchandise, leaving the passenger trains little business. The passenger line was finally removed, and many railroad employees followed.

Three hundred people now reside in Malden constituting approximately 85 families. In these 85 families nearly half are railroad people. Since the majority of the younger generation leaves Malden for better job opportunities after graduating from school, the population remains static or gradually declines. The people living there enjoy their town. The farmers have the companionship of neighbors. Their farms are only a few minutes drive apart. Spokane and Colfax, the county seat, are within an hour's drive. Malden is near lakes for fishing and recreation. The hunting is good. And it is located still in the heart of the rich Palouse farmland.

The "boom" town of 1908 developed a rougher type community due to the number of single men, migrant workers, and family men who still hadn't brought their families there. Because of this Malden was considered by many in the surrounding area to be rough and "wild." For the small town family, Malden is a much better place now to raise children than it was 40 years ago.



*Malden Public School c 1911-1912*



*Photo Courtesy Whitman County Library Rural Heritage*

*Malden panorama looking south at School Hill*

# LIFE IN THE PALOUSE COUNTRY IN 1877

By Mrs. John Gerding

*Helen James was 4½ years old when her family moved to Colfax. Her father, William H. James, had just been appointed the first register of the new US Land Office that had been established in Colfax by President Grant. She was the youngest in her family and thus grew up and was schooled in Colfax as a member of a prominent family. In 1887, her older sister Mary E. James married Ivan Chase, who was editor of the local newspaper. Helen married John Frederick Gerding of Pullman and they raised their family there. After John's death in 1949, Helen moved to her daughter's place in Pennsylvania. Her article here reproduced was published in the Pullman Herald, August 19, 1954. Note that at that time she was identified only by her husband's name, as Mrs. John Gerding. We have kept that style in our title, but in our captions for the photograph of Helen and her sisters, we have included their own names.*

Little is recalled of the journey from Nebraska to Washington Territory in the fall of 1877. I was too young to be greatly interested in the passing scenery encountered during the long trip. My father, W. H. James, had been appointed register of the newly established land office at Colfax and the long tedious journey was made by rail, boat, and stage to the little western town which was to be our home for many years.

One incident of the trip is distinctly remembered, however, that of being occasionally held over the railing of the steamer on which we were passengers from San Francisco to Portland. I was so afraid the young man who did this might drop me into the ocean. The man was E. W. Talbot, who also became a resident of Colfax and eventually married S. Carrie Smith, one of the early school teachers of the town.



*The author, Helen James Gerding is shown here with her two sisters and a friend. These daughters of William H. James are Ida James Doolittle, Mary E. "Mamie" James Chase, and Helen James Gerding.*



*As Helen James recounts in her story of Early Life in Colfax, there were two main areas for ice skating when conditions were right: the wide spots in the south Palouse River that formed the upper lake, that is the Cooper lake, and the lower lake between the bridges of Wall street and Island street. This view is of the lower lake, taken from the east side of the Wall street bridge looking north. The Plymouth Congregational Church at the SW corner of Lake and North streets is seen near the center of the photo. The sheds to its right are the Chinese sheds, and the white two-story house at the far right is Sid Benton's home at the corner of Lake and Island streets. To the left side of the photo, behind the two fir trees, is the home of Leon and Frances Mary (Frankie) Ewart Kuhn (she was the sister of Jennie Perkins).*

*Photo from a glass negative taken December 28, 1894, by A. E. King and used by permission of WSU MASC.*



Our destination was finally reached one day late in October, 1877. The Ewart House, which was owned and managed by Capt. and Mrs. James Ewart, was to be our home for several months and the time we spent at this hospitable hotel will always be remembered with pleasure. The dining room was spotless and good food was always served there, and the cheerful parlor was a meeting place for congenial boarders.

Our house, which was erected in the spring of 1878, was one of the first to be built in the south end of town, the portion of Colfax south of the Palouse river. It was constructed on the homestead my father filed on soon after he arrived in Washington Territory. The building was a small, very primitive affair quickly put together.

The original dwelling consisted of a living room, kitchen, and a small bedroom. The loft above these rooms was always referred to as the "cubby hole" and some members of the family slept in this poorly ventilated place until 1879, when four rooms were added to the original building: a living room (or front room, as we always called it) and a bedroom downstairs and two bedrooms on the upper floor. We had little furniture and the chairs we used had raw-hide seats. We purchased these chairs in Waitsburg where they were made. Our first summer in our little home was a trying one. The weather was extremely warm and we had no shade, other than that made by a few wild cucumber vines, which were grown from seeds brought by my mother from Nebraska. That first summer was particularly difficult because my brother, Frank had fallen from a pine tree which is still standing near the Whitman Hotel. Frank suffered a broken leg near the hip. He was bedfast for a long time and things were not easy in the cramped quarters of the little house.

Our house was a good mile from Town and the only way we could get to the business section was to follow what was known as "the rock path" a narrow trail at the foot of the hill on the western bank of the South Palouse river. We crossed the river on the bridge at Wall street. Eventually a combination wagon and foot bridge was constructed over the river at South Main street, which shortened the distance to town considerably. Under this bridge lights were hung to light the ice during the skating season. Ice skating was a joyous pastime for Colfax residents both young and old. Meals and responsibilities were forgotten by the young people while good skating lasted. School children enjoyed Skating in the morning before school, at noon after a hurried lunch in the schoolhouse and in the evening.

In addition to the lights suspended from the bridge, the ice was lighted by huge fires on the bank of the river. There were many good skaters in Colfax and what wholesome sport it was. There were some very funny and embarrassing situations on the ice. For instance, the time one of the prominent girls lost her bustle, which was a very noticeable model of the "spiral" type. In the eighties to even mention a bustle or a corset except to one of your sex was considered almost indecent. One can imagine the embarrassment of the girl who lost her bustle right out in public.

What a wail went up from the skaters when the time came for the ice to be cut and packed away for use in the summer. The huge blocks, all carefully cut as to size, looked like cubes of glass being dragged up an incline of smooth boards. They were placed in "ice houses," sawdust being used for packing. The ice houses were usually built near the river and were owned by businessmen, although many homes boasted an ice house. It was rather discouraging to those who enjoyed skating to have great holes cut in perfectly good ice.

Sleighting was always great fun. A New Year's day is recalled when nearly a dozen bright shining cutters, drawn by well kept horses, were driven up and down Main street most of the cold sunny day. Each sleigh was occupied by happy carefree young people.

Henry Sidder, proprietor of a Colfax livery stable, owned a beautiful span of jet black horses which were much in demand. In winter they were often seen drawing a cutter with jingling sleigh bells around their glossy bodies and prancing along in a lively manner. There were times, however, when they travelled at a slower gait for they were used to take many pioneers to their last resting places in the Colfax cemetery. They matched so well the somber black of the hearse.

Another horse familiar to all old-timers was the one used by Sippitt Brothers, the pioneer merchants, to deliver goods to their customers. Promptly at 6 o'clock every evening when his day's work was done, he would make his way up Main street towards Sidder's stable, two blocks away from the store, walking leisurely and dragging his wagon behind him. At the barn he was met by kind attendants who unhitched, fed, and watered him. He was a faithful and trustworthy animal and was on "the job" every day, rain or shine, for many years.

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*This view of the skaters, also taken on December 28, 1894, by A. E. King, is from the west side of the Wall street bridge looking north. It again shows the Chinese sheds and the Benton two-story house on Island street and now includes a good view of the Island street bridge. The Courthouse tower can be seen at the top right. Courtesy of WSU MASC.*







*Photo Courtesy Whitman County Library Rural Heritage  
The Hotel Malden and pharmacy, August 1, 1908*



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