

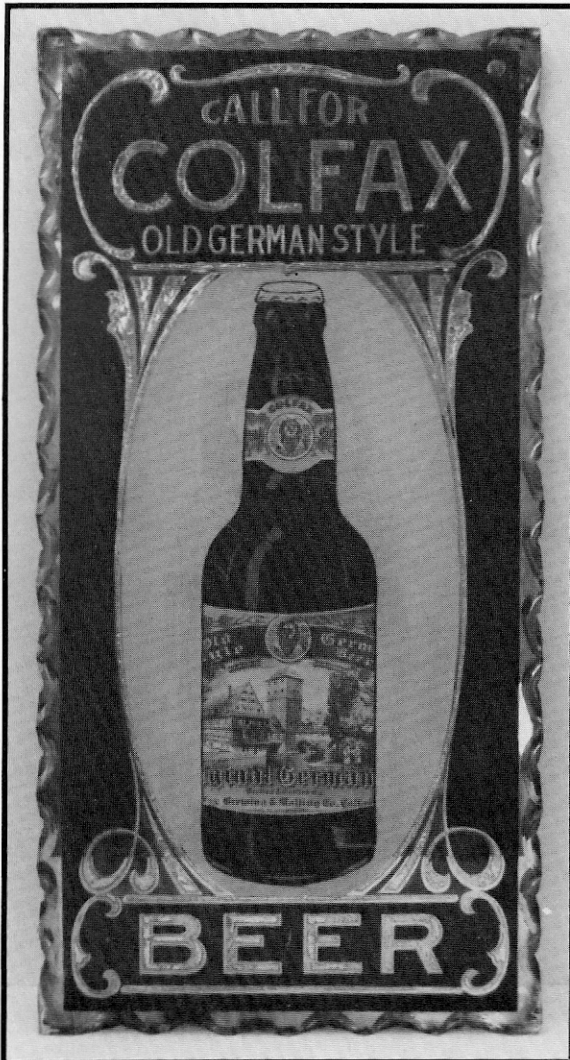
# Bunchgrass Historian

Whitman County Historical Society Quarterly

Volume 13, No. 4

Colfax, Washington

Winter 1985



P  
R  
O  
H  
I  
B  
I  
T  
I  
O  
N

# Table of Contents

"Repent Ye Boozers:" Whitman County and the Liquor Question, 1855-1917 . . . . . 3  
by Jon Nuxoll . . . . . 3  
Publication of Note . . . . . 32

## The Author

**Jon Nuxoll** is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Wes Nuxoll of Colfax and is a 1985 graduate of Gonzaga University. His article is an expanded and revised version of a paper which was named best undergraduate paper at the April, 1985, Phi Alpha Theta (history honorary) Northwest Regional Conference of History Students at the University of Washington.

---

**The Bunchgrass Historian** is published four times a year by the Whitman County Historical Society, Post Office Box 67, Colfax, Washington. Its purpose is to further interest in the rich past of Whitman County. Produced by Colfax Publishing Co.

### PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

Editor . . . . . Lawrence Stark  
Associate Editors . . . . . Suzanne Myklebust  
Fred Bohm  
Editorial Consultant . . . . . William F. Wilbert  
Subscriptions . . . . . Gwenlee Riedel  
Circulation Editor . . . . . Margo Balzarini  
Back Issues . . . . . Susan Bohm

●

### OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

President . . . . . Walter Nelson  
Vice President . . . . . Robert Luedeking  
Secretary . . . . . Vivian Hamm  
Treasurer . . . . . Barbara Jean Collins

### ARTICLES FOR PUBLICATION

Contributors should send copies of their manuscripts to the editor at the following address. All stories dealing with topics related to Whitman County history will be considered for publication.

●

### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

	Contribution Range
—Basic Membership . . . . .	\$7.50-\$12.00
—Contributing or Family Membership . . . . .	\$12.50-\$24.50
—Sustaining Membership . . . . .	\$25-\$49.00
—Sponsor . . . . .	\$50-\$99.00
—Patron . . . . .	\$100 and up
—Life Membership . . . . .	\$500
—Business Membership . . . . .	\$25.00 or more

Membership in the Whitman County Historical Society is tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Lawrence Stark, Editor  
**The Bunchgrass Historian**  
P.O. Box 2371  
Pullman, Washington 99163

### CURRENT AND BACK ISSUES

Current and back issues of **The Bunchgrass Historian** may be obtained by sending a check or money order in the amount of \$2.00 for each issue requested to:

Susan Bohm  
**The Bunchgrass Historian**  
SW 405 State Street  
Pullman, WA 99163

## **“Repent, Ye Boozers!”**

# **Whitman County and the Liquor Question 1855-1917**

by

**Jon Nuxoll**

When the pastor of the Colfax Christian Church addressed a Pullman rally of the Washington State College Prohibition League of Students one Saturday evening in October, 1908, he handily illustrated his case for liquor reform by pointing to nearby, saloon-laden Colfax. According to an observer, the clergyman “pictured Colfax as one of the most immoral towns in the state, and said he could not walk along Main street [sic] without almost being gagged by the sickening conditions existing there.”<sup>1</sup> Colfax beer drinkers might have responded that nine saloons<sup>2</sup> made the county seat all the better a place in which to live, but by 1908, Whitman County was lending an increasingly sympathetic ear to such anti-saloon tidings. At WSC, the minister was preaching to the converted—Pullman had closed its saloons earlier that year—and the days of saloons tolerated elsewhere were numbered. Legislation in 1909 allowed voters directly to decide whether to license saloons in their communities. Saloons which withstood local option closed their doors for good at midnight, December 31, 1915, in compliance with a 1914 statewide ballot measure. The limited drinking the initiative allowed (by means of out of state imports) ended in 1917, when the legislature made Washington bone-dry, three years before the Eighteenth Amendment ushered in the Noble Experiment, nationwide Prohibition.

Prohibition of a sort was already in place in the Palouse Country well before the first homesteader arrived; 1855 territorial legislation outlawed sale of intoxicants to Indians. Law or no law, Palouse Indians most likely were all too familiar with alcohol prior to white settlement. Were they typical of most tribes, Palouses became acquainted with liquor through trade with white explorers or with tribes who had contact with explorers. After the founding of

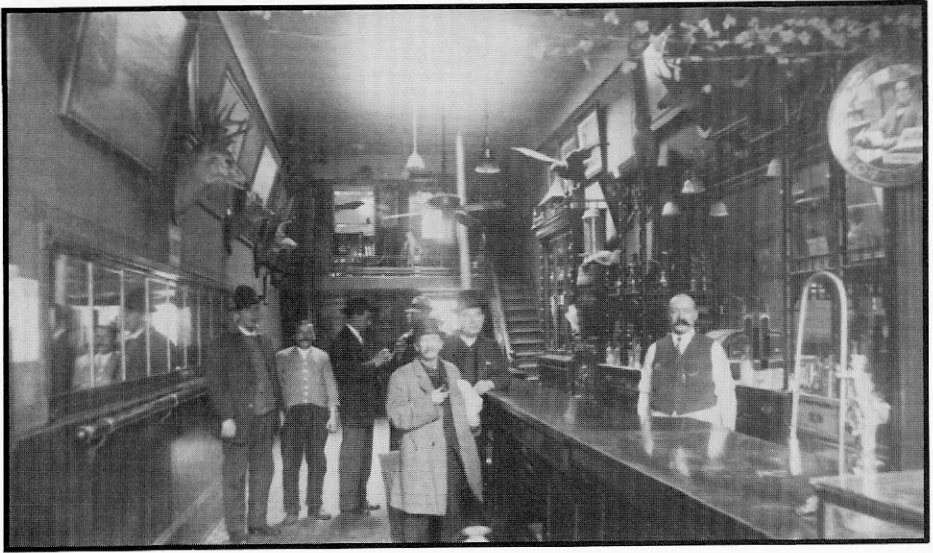
Walla Walla and Lewiston and, eventually, the Palouse towns, Indian accessibility to alcohol doubtlessly grew, intensifying epidemic drunkenness. When pioneers moved into the Farmington and Tekoa areas in later years, the law and the efforts of the Coeur d'Alene Indian Agent did little to keep liquor away from Coeur d'Alene Indians. Whites, more often than not transients or railroad workers, freely sold the native population intoxicants. When local merchants could or would not sell Indians firewater, it remained easily obtainable. A railroad right-of-way agreement permitted Coeur d'Alenes to travel without fare to Spokane. There they found plenty of merchants willing to sell them liquor, which they drank on the train back, detraining drunk in Farmington or Tekoa. The situation moved a settler to write to a Spokane newspaper and plead with merchants to stop exporting inebriation. "When sober, the Coeur d'Alene Indian is a friendly neighbor," he explained, "but when crazed by liquor he is neither safe nor desirable acquaintance."<sup>23</sup>

Universal liquor control first came to (what then was part of) Whitman County in 1879. Territorial legislators, probably mindful of the " 'hell on wheels,' the tent towns of saloons, prostitutes, gamblers, and hooligans" which had accompanied construction of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific some ten years earlier, prohibited sale of liquor within a mile of the Northern Pacific Railroad during construction. County commissioners went beyond the law. They set the annual liquor license fee for 1880 at \$100, but charged an Ainsworth\* applicant \$150 just a few months later and overtly reminded him not to open his saloon within a mile of the Northern Pacific.<sup>4</sup>

The NP passed far west of inhabited parts of the county, but most settlers must have looked with satisfaction upon the law. For pioneers from elsewhere in the United States, the anti-liquor movement was nothing new. Activists had cried out against alcohol for well over a generation and had done so loudly enough to bring prohibition, at least temporarily, to 13 states by the Civil War. An 1878 territorial election on a constitution for a proposed state most accurately measures pioneer attitudes towards intoxicants. A separate ballot measure to incorporate local option in the constitution drew 62 percent support in Whitman County. As statehood did not come for another 11 years, the vote would have had no effect regardless of the territorial outcome. The county's heavy dry vote, though, is significant when compared to the less than 30 percent support given local option across Washington Territory.

---

\*When created in 1871, Whitman County extended west to the Columbia River, including the NP route and the railroad town of Ainsworth. Ainsworth, long vanished from the map, sat just southeast of modern Pasco. Its violence and immorality prompted the *Palouse Gazette* of Colfax to remark in 1883 that "Ainsworth furnishes more inmates for our jail than the rest of the county combined, and we will not be sorry when this troublesome quarter is cut off and formed into a new county" (*Palouse Gazette*, August 31, 1883). The *Gazette* got its wish later that year.



*U and I Saloon, Colfax*

---

The 1878 measure was a modest proposal which would have allowed a community's voters to end liquor sales of less than a gallon. As such, it was anti-saloon rather than anti-drink.<sup>5</sup> Not all of the 253 men who voted for local option in 1878 would have voted to end all manufacture, transport, and sale of liquor had that question been posed. Total prohibition was, however, the goal of the era's temperance activists.

Where prohibitionist sentiment was strong enough, local temperance societies sprang up. Members typically pledged to abstain from alcohol and called for enforcement of existing laws regulating liquor as well as for total prohibition. Sometimes an occasional traveling preacher or temperance orator formed a local organization.<sup>6</sup> The Whitman County Temperance League, established in 1883, was the most vigorous of early grassroots organizations. For a time it contemplated, without result, founding its own newspaper. Aside from a broader geographical focus, there is nothing to substantially distinguish it from any local temperance society, and so the program for an 1884 convention is probably representative of meetings of neighborhood organizations. A speech on "The Opinion of Eminent Physicians" greeted delegates. The following day lecturers read "What Can Woman Do" and "The Danger of the Drink Habit." The convention concluded with a song, "Father Signed the Pledge To-Night."<sup>7</sup>

Here, too, national temperance organizations flourished. The International Order of Good Templars was active in Colfax at an early date. Within six years of the town's founding it was able to stage the temperance drama, *Ten*

*Nights in a Bar Room.* In later years IOGT chapters spread across the county. More active and better remembered than the Good Templars were the ladies of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Its first area chapter appeared in Colfax in 1884. In the next decade, women across the county, sometimes at the prodding of a national organizer, founded locals.<sup>8</sup> Like most temperance societies, the WCTU insisted on prohibition as the only acceptable response to the liquor traffic. It worked to spread its message across society. From 1884 through the 1890's it intermittently sponsored a column, often supplied by the national organization, in both Colfax newspapers. Among youth, it organized a "young people's temperance band, the 'Loyal Legion,' " and complained about spotty compliance with a law requiring that public school students be taught about alcohol. A "Flower Mission" project distributed bouquets in jails and hospitals, tied together with a white ribbon and "scripture verse and selection relative to temperance." The WCTU brought its anti-liquor message even to new arrivals to America. A committee at one convention was dedicated to work among German and Scandinavian immigrants.<sup>9</sup>

The WCTU did more than work for prohibition. It sponsored many a picnic and social event and stood for women's suffrage and equal pay between the sexes. The WCTU also spent its energy on lesser, narrower issues, carrying them to fanatical extremes. The *Palouse Gazette* took note of delegates' obsession with a particular issue at an 1890 regional convention in Colfax. The newspaper mused that the WCTU

would have aided instead of injured its crusade against liquor had it gave heed to the protests of the lonesome minority against the incorporation of the rigid prohibition of tobacco using in its resolutions, and the classing of the weed to be as great and harmful a social evil as is the liquid. As the leader of the minority well said, it bore the imprint of fanaticism. The GAZETTE [sic] does not deny that the use of tobacco is a filthy habit and a social evil, but the assertion that it is as gigantic a one as is intemperance is absurd, to say the least . . . The ladies have allowed their zeal to run away with their judgment.<sup>10</sup>

Territorial dries met with impressive success in the 1880's. The legislature decreed that saloons close Sundays, held saloon owners and saloonkeepers legally liable for injuries and damages resulting from drinks they sold, and required public school students to study the "effects" of alcohol and narcotics. The greatest early victory came in a local option law in 1886. It allowed voters of a town or precinct to petition for an election on the licensing of liquor sales, essentially the same proposal of the inconsequential referendum of 1878. Unlike 1878, dries now had the women's vote, for equal suffrage had come to Washington Territory in 1883.<sup>11</sup>

Businessmen declared that local option would not end drunkenness, but would deprive municipal coffers of license revenues, divide neighbors, lower property values, and threaten general prosperity. Even among liquor foes,

local option met with a lukewarm, if not downright hostile, response. It not only closed the saloon in one town and kept it in the next, but extended legitimacy to manufacture of liquor untouched by the law. Disagreement among dries spawned a Whitman County Temperance Society, the sole voice to wholeheartedly endorse and actively work for local option.\*<sup>12</sup>

Elections took place in 15 of 20 possible units. Even without the support of some prohibitionists who declined to vote, all but one unit (Rosalia) voted out the saloon. Even Colfax, where dries abandoned a campaign in order to concentrate efforts elsewhere, voted dry, though on the strength of rural voters eligible to vote as a part of the Colfax unit.<sup>13</sup> Colfax saloons never closed, however, and Farmington's shut down for just a few days (if at all) owing to legal challenges. Across the county, saloons closed for just a few months, for an 1887 court decision declared the local option law unconstitutional. Courts had dealt the temperance movement a blow earlier that year by declaring women's suffrage unconstitutional. Dries now faced the liquor traffic minus the women's vote and armed only with an 1888 law which would serve as a "crippled local option arrangement" until 1909. It returned to city councils and county commissioners the power to grant or refuse applications for saloon licenses and to set license fees between \$300 and \$1,000 annually.<sup>14</sup>

Prohibitionists brought temperance before the electorate with statehood in 1889, when voters were asked to incorporate total prohibition—not just anti-saloon measures—into the new state constitution. Washingtonians considered incorporating total prohibition—not just anti-saloon proposals—into the new state constitution. Washingtonians did not, by a 3 to 2 ratio, and among the gentlemen of Whitman County, statewide prohibition barely failed.<sup>15</sup>

The Prohibition Party tried to inject abolition of alcohol into local, state, and national politics through the 1890's. Its failure to make much headway stemmed from a dogmatic, single-issue focus on prohibition alone as the sole solution to the liquor problem. It, too, rejected such compromises as local option or high license fees. A proposed 1892 merger between county Prohibitionists and Populists failed because though Populists likewise supported prohibition, they could not submit to Prohibitionists' insistence on "uncompromising hostility" to the liquor traffic. Prohibitionists did run a full slate of candidates for county offices from 1888 to 1894 and again in 1904, but never attracted more than a handful of voters. Their sole success came in 1890, when one C.J. Tant, unopposed, became Whitman County's Prohibitionist sheep commissioner.<sup>16</sup>

\*The noted suffragette Abigail Scott Duniway added another criticism of local option in an address ("Women's Ballot and Local Option") given in Colfax shortly before election day. Though an enemy of the liquor traffic, she criticized local option as proposed in Washington Territory as ineffective and warned that should it be approved, the ineffectiveness of a law which owed its existence to heavy women's support would give opponents of women's suffrage an excuse to revoke the franchise. Her opposition to any liquor control proposal which could not be enforced earned her enemies among former allies in the prohibition movement. In Colfax and other Washington towns in which she spoke, unspecified temperance activists tried to block or minimize her appearance. An extensive paraphrase of her address is in a supplement to the *Palouse Gazette* of June 18, 1886.

More instrumental than the anti-drink propaganda of the Good Templars, WCTU, and Prohibitionists in bringing about popular support for liquor control was the saloon. The saloon accompanied the earliest settlers to the Palouse Country and figured among the first businesses in a town. Texas City (Riparia), population 80, had three saloons in 1882 for riverboat and railroad men. Four saloons sprang up within a year of the 1889 establishment of Tekoa to serve a railroad population of 160. Founders of Elberton and Pullman tried to shield their infant towns from the saloon by refusing to deed land to prospective saloonkeepers. By 1892 a Johnson man could brag that his was the only saloonless town in the Palouse Country, a claim which if not literally true, came close. The absence of a saloon was a source of pride to one town booster, who prominently advertised Johnson as "A Temperance Town."<sup>17</sup>

What made the saloon so objectionable to so many? Often it served as a place where respectable men could gather—the farmer in his overalls, the merchant in his apron—and peacably discuss issues of the day. As such, it had a legitimate place in society, but "for every decent saloon that filled a real social need, there were too many others that increased poverty, crime, and degradation." All too often upstanding citizens saw it as a blight, one they accurately associated with brutality and lawlessness, ranging from sales to minors and on



*U and I Saloon, Colfax*



Sundays to professional gambling, prostitution, and murder. Screens concealed the behavior of some saloons' patrons from passer-by. "Virtuous citizens could imagine the worst, and they were usually correct."<sup>18</sup> They did not have recourse to just their imaginations to know what went on inside. Pedestrians could smell a saloon's stench from the sidewalk, and were they not brave enough to venture past, drunks encountered in the street were ample reminders of its presence.

It added to farmers' worries at harvest. Harvest crews which headed to town to patronize saloons on Saturday nights might well remain until Tuesday or Wednesday. And while in town, those crews could make life unpleasant for town people. During one particularly bad harvest season, the *Palouse Gazette* complained that Colfaxians could expect to be awakened at any hour of the night by "the noise of ill-used instruments and intoxicated voices" of "low-grade banjo-thumpers and piano-destroyers."<sup>19</sup>

During spring logging drives from Idaho forests down to the Colfax sawmills, loggers overwhelmed saloons in Palouse, Elberton, and Colfax. Partly because of their drinking habits, their pay was withheld until the end of the drive in Colfax. An early resident recalled the arrival of lumberjacks in the county seat, who, paychecks in hand had "a great desire to celebrate in a wide



*Palouse Brewery Bottling Plant*

open town where everything went. There was great disorder—lots of drinking, fights with fists and feet, [and] saloons torn up.”<sup>20</sup>

Tekoa, with “seven saloons and seven churches,” became known as the “hell hole of Whitman County”; and Colfax’s Main Street, anchored down by the Catholic Church at one end and by the brewery at the other, was labeled “the longest street between heaven and hell”; but to Palouse falls the distinction of having been the most open town in the county. Palouse was “a wide-open burg—as wide open as even the most ardent advocate of an open town could desire.” An 1884 visitor commented on “the deepest misery of the tavern life” he encountered. An 1892 arrival to the sawmill town counted 12 to 14 saloons, several with gambling and one with a “crude stage show,” as well as several saloon-related deaths in subsequent years. During the summers, Palouse was the base for lumberjacks in the woods and in winter, their home. Its streets were full Saturday nights, giving Palouse claim to being “the best Saturday night town in the country.”<sup>21</sup>

Cutthroat competition intensified saloon excesses by the mid-1890’s. Colfax and Palouse each supported a brewery since about 1880, and Farmington, Pullman, Tekoa, and Uniontown briefly had their own.<sup>22</sup> Railroads and improved storage techniques brought Spokane, Puget Sound, and Midwest breweries into competition. A limited market forced all to work hard for survival. Larger breweries liberally financed prospective saloonkeepers. Creditors’ demands often drove indebted proprietors, many poor credit risks to begin with, to unrestrained competition. Even anti-prohibitionists came to share hard-liners’ contempt for the saloon. When criticized for opening Sundays or allowing gambling, some saloonkeepers occasionally protested that the actions of a few saloons forced all to follow in order to keep their customers. To limit such competition, the Colfax City Council in 1906 set the county seat’s number of saloons at ten, a move supported by saloonkeepers and ministers alike.<sup>23</sup>

Garfield saloons were the first to perish for good. Garfield precinct had had the county’s heaviest dry vote in 1886, and so it was no doubt with considerable regret that townfolk observed the return of the saloon around them. Hoping to keep the saloon out of Garfield, the 1892 town council set the license fee at the maximum \$1,000. Two partners surprised the council in March with the necessary money and after a special meeting of the town fathers, received the license. Eight months later, the stabbing of a respected citizen by a drunk “gang of toughs” in front of the saloon solidified Garfield’s already considerable reservations against the saloon and convinced residents to ban it forever.\*<sup>24</sup>

---

\*The council did not immediately revoke the saloon license. The *Garfield Enterprise* of February 17, 1893, records a robbery at the saloon where the stabbing happened. The October 29, 1893, issue mentions a fight at a second Garfield saloon. Town fathers evidently allowed existing licenses to expire rather than revoke them. Later newspaper accounts make it clear that the

The saloon question tied up Oakesdale municipal politics the longest. Drys had stalled incorporation in 1888, hoping to keep out the saloon by maintaining jurisdiction over local liquor licenses in the hands of then-dry county commissioners. They were briefly successful, but within a year Oakesdale formed a town government. Drys campaigned for local office, but lost by a margin of 2 to 1. By 1896 wets and drys were again squaring off at the ballot box. Drys' demands for enforcement of existing laws against gambling and houses of prostitution plus their anti-saloon stance won them two of the three council positions, but they required a sweep to control the council. Churches and saloons thereafter consistently put up candidates until local option's 1909 return. Wets lost control of the council in 1900 and did not regain it until 1907 elections.<sup>25</sup>

Among unincorporated towns, the saloon question determined whether there would even be municipal politics; that is, whether a town would incorporate and secure autonomy over saloon licensing rather than remain at the mercy of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioners refused to grant licenses from 1888 to 1890. Their action restricted saloons to the only towns then incorporated, Colfax and Palouse City—or, as the *Commoner* of Colfax quipped, county fathers made Colfax and Palouse City “the only towns of Whitman county [sic] where a drink can be had without paying a physician a dollar to write out a prescription.”<sup>26</sup> The Board's success was transitory; numerous towns incorporated in the next year. Farmingtonians hastily petitioned for incorporation in the wake of commissioners' deed. The council's first action was to grant a saloon license—all within minutes of the arrival of the train which brought documents authorizing incorporation.<sup>27</sup>

After 1890, county fathers generally gave any applicant a saloon license unless local circumstances, usually lack of police protection, or strong local opposition convinced them otherwise. St. John was the first town to dry up via the courthouse. A saloon appeared in the town's infancy. According to an 1890 visitor to “Moral St. John,” it soon closed owing to a lack of patronage and was converted to a schoolhouse. In following months St. John evidently gained

murder kept Garfield dry thereafter, but it is not clear why a town so shocked by the incident did not immediately close the saloon. This was by no means the first saloon-related murder in Whitman County, but the subsequent trail did become the biggest criminal case yet tried in the county. The length and publicity of the trial may have put the saloon issue at the forefront of Garfielders' minds for the following months and contributed to their later anti-saloon conviction. Technicalities which forced Garfield to reincorporate for a third time (*Enterprise*, January 6, 1893) may have prevented the council from immediate revocation of the license. It is also possible that the council simply was not aware that it had the authority to revoke the licenses it had previously granted.

Incidentally, this event is noteworthy in the annals of local history for another reason. The trial of the accused murderer was moved to Columbia County, where a jury found him guilty of assault only. He served time in the Whitman County jail, where early on the morning of June 2, 1894, a mob entered the jail and lynched him (and another inmate serving time on an unrelated charge). Both men were hanged through the windows above main entrance to the courthouse. Dents from the ropes from which the two hanged were said to be visible on the window ledges years afterwards.

more saloon patrons; not long after, another saloon opened. County fathers returned the town to dry status in 1891. Residents again hastened to the county seat in 1898 and 1903 to block licenses. Whatever pride Johnsonians derived from living in "A Temperance Town" was shattered after a saloon ended their dry spell in 1895. The saloon remained until 1898, when "Jonathan Johnson and others" came before the Board and successfully argued against any more saloons. Similarly, Guy (Albion) residents persuaded the Board to keep their town a dry one after 1895.<sup>28</sup>

Incorporation, a wet tool under a dry Board of Commissioners, evolved into a dry tool after 1890. The saloon question hastened incorporation in St. John in 1904. Voters heavily supported organization of a town government and elected a dry council. Wets could not even find enough pro-license men to fill out their ticket and had to nominate some dries. Saloons were similarly central to talk of incorporation not long after in Endicott, which, unlike its neighbor, had had saloons almost since its founding. Proponents of incorporation had visions of an orderly Endicott, one without saloons. A schoolgirl, writing in a local essay contest on the question, hoped that autonomy over saloons would rid her town of "drunkenness and dissipation" and preserve a "good moral society." Endicott did incorporate early in 1905,<sup>29</sup> but town councils were wet and denied dries a saloonless Endicott for five more years.

Pullman's three saloons paled compared to those of Colfax and Palouse, but loomed as no less a threat to decency in the eyes of townsfolk. By 1901 anti-saloon strength was great enough to initiate change, which at first amounted to enforcement of existing laws against gambling and 11:00 p.m. weekday and all-day Sunday closure. The council dominated by the Law Enforcement Party limited actual reform to raising the liquor license fee from \$300 to \$700 in 1901 and to \$1,000 a year later. The rival Citizens' Party acknowledged pressure for reform and in 1903 accepted enforcement of existing saloon ordinances. It regained control of the council that year and withstood 1905 and 1906 challenges. Public opinion was growing more hostile to the saloon, though. When one renewed its license in April, 1906, it did so before a petition by 213 Pullmanites asking the council to reject the application. Wets mustered just 160 names, yet the council granted the license. Wet control of the city council, the *Pullman Herald* later charged, stemmed from redrawn city ward boundaries, designed to ensure a wet majority on the council.

The presence of Washington State College hastened reform. A direct association with the State College or simply a belief in the advantages of life in a college town attracted many families to Pullman. The population was one naturally receptive to reform and a positive moral atmosphere, one without liquor. Pullmanites believed it their duty to provide a climate in which the state's youth could study "surrounded by the best social and moral influences." Some of the WSC faculty actively promoted temperance, beginning with no less than the college president, Enoch A. Bryan, long a prohibi-

tionist. State College faculty effected the arrest of one saloonkeeper in 1898 for allowing boys in his establishment and of another for having card playing. Professors Elton Fulmer and H.V. Carpenter ran for city council in 1905, becoming the council's two sole dries for the 1906 term.<sup>30</sup>

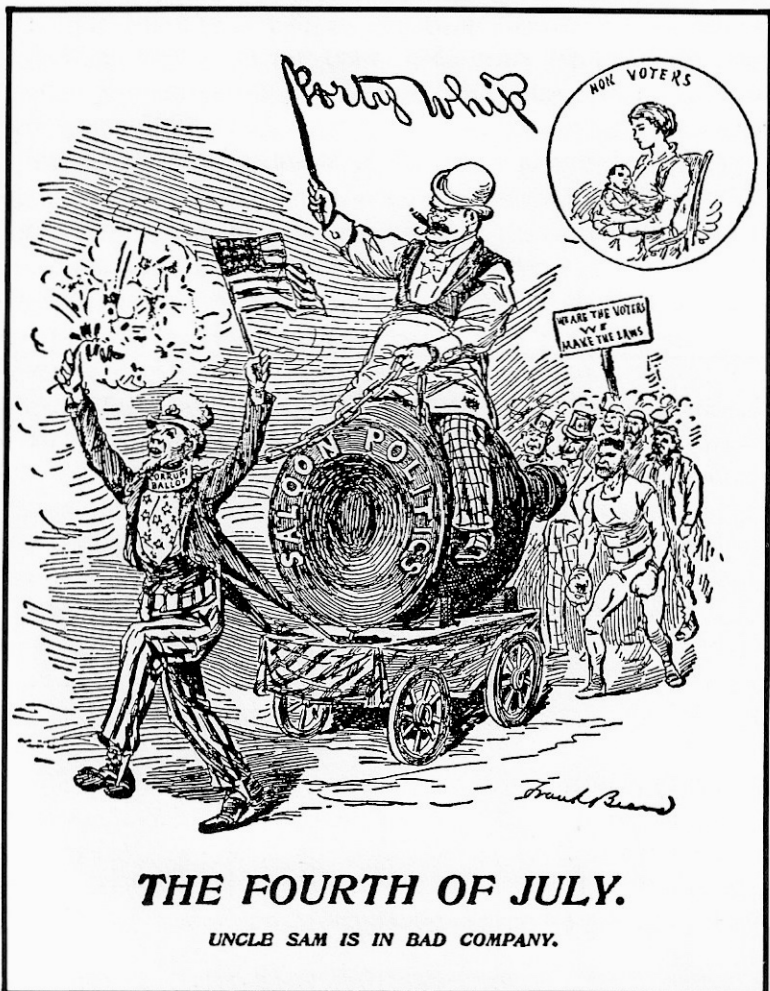
City elections had always drawn great attention because of saloons, but 1907 campaigns dwarfed those of the past. Changing demographics moved city fathers to redraw ward lines to the benefit of the three saloons. Mayor M.C. Gray, himself a member of the (wet) Citizens' Party, resigned rather than sign the ordinance fixing the new boundaries. Courts found the gerrymandering too blatant and overturned the change a month before elections. Activists on both sides of the saloon doors waged an intense campaign, at the conclusion of which Pullman elected a dry council. By March, 1908, the last saloon closed for good.<sup>31</sup>

Wets did score an occasional victory in the face of a growing temperance movement. St. John, dry since 1891, went wet for a year in 1907. Saloons returned to Oakesdale for a year in 1908.<sup>32</sup> Settlers in unincorporated La Crosse had convinced county fathers to reject 1904, 1905, and 1906 saloon license applications, but in April, 1907, commissioners overlooked protests



*Serving tray with Palouse Brewing Co. advertisement*

and allowed two saloons to open in La Crosse. Within six months dries complained that both saloons did business “in a disorderly manner,” had served minors, and that the proprietor of one had rented a rooming house “to parties of questionable character and for improper purposes.” The Board closed one saloon (that with the adjacent “rooming house”). When the license of the remaining one came up for renewal in April, 1908, fathers received petitions for and against the license. The saloonkeeper presented one with the signatures of about 125 men, but a dry petition signed by 101 men and 30 women proved a death warrant for the saloon. Commissioners denied the license,<sup>33</sup> and La Crosse again went dry.



**THE FOURTH OF JULY.**  
**UNCLE SAM IS IN BAD COMPANY.**

*Anti-saloon League Poster*

All of this took place against a backdrop of similar, uneven national and state progress towards liquor control. Whitman County drys owe their eventual success to the Anti-Saloon League. Formed in 1895, the ASL replaced the Prohibition Party as the political voice of most American drys after 1900. The ASL accepted half-measures such as local option and high license fees and held politicians of both parties accountable for their votes on liquor control legislation. In so doing, it became a formidable political force, arguably the most successful pressure group in American political history. The Anti-Saloon League transformed the temperance movement from anti-drink to anti-saloon, a distinction the public could more readily accept. It is more than coincidence that the increase of concern over saloon licensing in county politics after 1900 parallels the growth of the ASL, though here it was less active than county WCTU chapters over the same period. Because of ASL pressure, the saloon became even more the target of temperance forces after 1909; in the spring of that year the legislature brought back local option.<sup>34</sup>

Saloons made the wet cause difficult for any respectable citizen to support. Even in 1886, many of the voices objecting to local option openly agreed with drys' disgust for the saloon, but opposed local option as it would remove license revenues from municipal treasuries, hurt business, hurt property values, and turn drug stores into unlicensed saloons. No one defended the institution of the saloon as it then stood, and many persons frankly acknowledged the need for reform. The extent of liquor interests' defense since lay not in challenging the perception of the saloon as responsible for all social evils nor in questioning the viability of drys' blanket solution to saloon-induced ills. Instead, they perpetuated existing indecencies by whatever means possible. People would have had little trouble believing rumors that saloon sympathizers set fire to a leading St. John dry's business in 1907 and to an Endicott temperance leader's barns in 1909.<sup>35</sup> The leading liquor interests' tactic, though, was crass politics. Breweries generously financed city council candidates sympathetic to the saloon and sometimes inflated voting rolls with men they imported into a town to vote for wet tickets. An incident in Tekoa in 1891 illustrates saloons' power at its most blatant. When considering a crack-down on gambling in saloons, the presence of two saloonkeepers at a town council meeting allegedly "so awed the council that they reversed their former action and granted them the privilege of gambling at the consideration of \$75 per month each." After the meeting, saloonkeepers openly treated three of the five councilmen to a banquet. When Pullman town fathers tried to close saloons Sunday in 1895, saloonkeepers retaliated when they—not the council—ordered the marshal to close other Pullman businesses open Sundays.<sup>36</sup>

A moderate law-enforcement campaign by Sheriff Joe Canutt in his 1899-1900 term lined up county saloonkeepers against him in his 1900 election campaign with Colfax Marshal J.A. "Brooks" Mackay. Both men had faced each other in the 1898 sheriff's race, Mackay reportedly with secret support of saloon men. Twenty arrests of saloonkeepers for violations of the law during

Canutt's two years may have appeared modest to drys, especially when most resulted at the prodding of a newly-formed county Anti-Saloon League. To saloon interests any threat to the saloon was intolerable, and so they as strongly opposed Canutt as they supported Mackay in 1900. Mackay's narrow victory returned freedom to the saloon men; 1901 and 1902 saw just two arrests by the sheriff's office against saloonkeepers. Canutt and Mackay were candidates for sheriff for a third time in 1902. This time Mackay's saloon support was an insurmountable liability, for Canutt again became sheriff.<sup>37</sup>

With Elberton, Farmington, Garfield, Oakesdale, Pullman, St. John, and unincorporated areas dry by local option's 1909 return, Whitman County had already had some experience with abolition of the saloon on a town-by-town basis. Obtaining liquor when Farmington's council was dry had been a simple matter of walking across town and the state line, to a vacant building converted to a saloon.<sup>38</sup> Elsewhere, with only a little greater effort, one could still obtain intoxicants by mail. A person who ordered liquor in quantities beyond the limited amount the law permitted for personal consumption might try to slip it past vigilant drys. A Spokane brewery responded to one innocent inquiry from Oakesdale that "[b]ottled beer is always shipped at owners [sic] risk." Although the letter deals with risk concerning breakage, the closing sentence suggests the buyer's real concern about "risk": "We note your shipping instruction and in future the goods will be billed as soda." A brewery even expressed surprise that another Oakesdaler had not placed an order in some time. So regular had his purchases become in the year after saloons first closed there that the brewery had "quite a lot of bottled beer on hand bottled especially for you, packaged and labeled as per your instructions."<sup>39</sup>

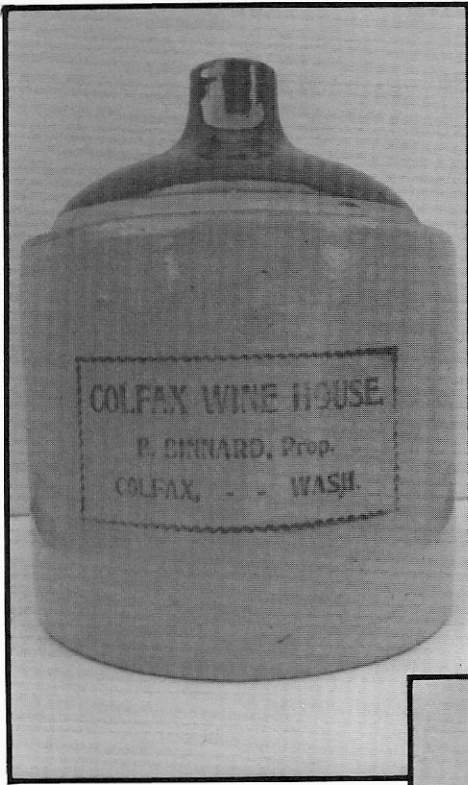
One man faced problems in buying large quantities of beer and returning empty bottles without attracting attention. The brewery's complaints about sporadic returns of empties met with a blunt explanation of the difficulties involved in keeping booze away from dry eyes. "[N]ow My Dear Sir," the customer replies,

this is a Dry town and if the Authorities should find Even 1 Emtye beer Bottle, they would "*Hang Me* [.] " I must be very careful as you can see, so you see I would like very much to have a Carload of Beer Instead of a Barrel at atime, but these Church People are Regular Watchdogs, so let us Do the Best we can.<sup>40</sup>

When saloons would not sell Indians liquor, Indians turned to a high-alcohol lemon extract available from any grocer. Pharmacies, allowed to sell spirits for medical purposes, had long been another way to circumvent liquor laws. Some druggists took advantage of their special status to bring intoxicants into dry towns. One in La Crosse took pains to keep deliveries of beer a secret in requesting "five cases of Gold Top [Beer] packed in boxes instead of barrels and w/o the Gold Top label. on boxes. [sic] Label as liquid in glass."<sup>41</sup>

Aware of such evasions of the law, a few voices warned not to expect much from local option. The *Endicott Index*, no friend of the saloon, blasted local op-





tion as “prohibition that does not prohibit.” A La Crosse editor had more tangible evidence of the new law’s potential shortcomings in his town’s experience without the saloon. The saloon had vanished, but liquor did not, for it is no trouble to ship it in and one saloon firm in the county seat is making a special drive for this business and is only called to mind on account of the alleged “dryness” of the town. Another firm at Endicott have [sic] some regular customers here that have their thirst quenched by use of the “little brown jug.”<sup>42</sup>

Where saloons remained, conditions had not improved in the decade. Railroad construction took place across the county after 1906, and with it, saloons flourished. Hooper, hitherto saloonless, in 1908 had six, with accompanying brothels, during construction of the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railway. Commissioners’ denial of all saloon licenses by the end of 1908 is probably all that kept similar situations out of Lamont, Malden, and the Snake River towns.<sup>43</sup> The number of Palouse saloons dropped to four by 1903. A reform-minded city council took office that year and actually closed the saloons down in July, although within a week saloonkeepers obtained a court ruling allowing them to re-open. A booming logging industry coupled with construction of two railroads in the area not long afterward sustained 13 saloons and three to five houses of prostitution for a population of 1,500. Even the editor of the *Palouse Republic*, looking back in 1910, had to admit that during railroad construction, “with hundreds of laborers making the town their headquarters, it might truthfully be said that Palouse was a wide open burg.”<sup>44</sup>

Saloon excesses were prompting people other than dry activists to think about the benefits of closing saloons. A Colfax doctor, no temperance activist, mused that in a dry county seat,

some of the money now going over the bars will find its way into my pocket, and I will be doing less gratis work. & [sic] be called out at night less to treat cares of drunken men at the saloons.<sup>45</sup>

The saloon question generated tremendous interest and emotion. Traveling ministers would come to a town and divide it against itself over saloons. An evangelist often preached about “running the saloons down and things like that more than he did the Bible.” Revivals did little to control drinking, though; once the preacher left town, drinking began anew.<sup>46</sup> Municipal and local option elections were particularly intense. Drys organized rallies, parades, and union church services. Wets warned voters what the loss of license fees and business a “No License” vote might mean for a community. A representative of the Seattle Brewing and Malting Company forecast doom should Pullman choose a dry council in 1907: “Close the saloons of Pullman and grass will be growing in your streets in less than a year, and your revenue will not defray the expenses of your town government.” Wets and drys alike spent election day hauling voters to the polls. In Pullman in 1902 both factions persuaded residents living as far away as Spokane and Walla Walla to return

for city elections. In Palouse's 1909 local option election, women—wearing “Against License” badges—and their children served free meals throughout the day. At polling places, vigilant dries, sometimes aided by county officials, stood guard to ensure that only legally registered voters cast ballots. A riot nearly ensued when a Pullman dry challenged one man's right to vote in 1906. Where races were close, ringing church bells or firecrackers and sounds of revelry from saloons, depending on how results came out, announced election returns.<sup>47</sup>

Temperance forces prepared early for 1909 local option campaigns. A county Anti-Saloon League reorganized in June. In the next month a Whitman County Civic League formed to coordinate dry efforts so all local option elections would take place the same day, to prevent the possibility of “floaters” voting for saloons in different towns.<sup>48</sup> The saloon, as usual, had few defenders. Instead, the voter was asked to consider the negative impact closing saloons might have on property values and trade. He was more frequently persuaded to vote “For License” because of the impact of license revenues on the treasury. The tax argument was not without merit. In smaller towns, license fees paid well over half of municipal expenses. Out of slightly over \$3,600 in Rosalia's 1905 income, \$3,000 came from liquor licenses. Endicott's 1908 budget counted on \$1,800 from saloons to cover \$2,168 in expenses.<sup>49</sup>

The revenue argument applied to both sides of the question. A survey of 1909 municipal taxes across the county showed that Pullman, the largest saloonless town, levied 25 mills in city taxes, more than wet Colfax (20) and Palouse (17). However, wet Uniontown had the highest rate (30) and dry St. John, the lowest (5). To dries, the cost of maintaining law and order negated any financial benefits from keeping saloons. They further pointed to the burden intoxicants placed on society. The Anti-Saloon League figured that alcohol was responsible for 25 to 30 percent of insane asylum patients. It pointed to liquor as a cause of poverty by detailing the proportion of an average worker's paycheck which went over the bar and toward necessities. The ASL estimated the saloon's cost to Washington taxpayers (in the form of penitentiaries, reformatories, and insane hospitals) at \$370,437.76 for one year and the state's share of license revenues at \$149,000 at best. By ASL reckoning, saloons directly cost the state \$221,437.76.<sup>50</sup>

Local option elections took place everywhere in the county save Uniontown City precinct. There was little question that such dry strongholds as Garfield and Pullman would vote dry, but elsewhere the temperance-minded waged a strong campaign. Saloon haters in Palouse printed “testimonials” of Northwest and county residents praising the positive influence on business and character in dry towns. Businessmen reported fewer bad bills, as workers no longer spent their paychecks on drink. And even if liquor flowed in supposedly dry areas, banning the saloon had made a visible difference. Since 1907 the Garfield police court had heard but nine cases dealing with drunkenness and disorderliness, compared to 615 in Palouse.<sup>51</sup>



---

*Carry Nation, from a New York Newspaper*

---

Rural Whitman County comprised one separate unit, where there was little doubt that local option would pass. The last saloon in unincorporated areas closed in Texas City (Riparia) early in 1909. Farmers, excepting the German-Catholics around Colton and Uniontown, had long been among the most insistent for temperance. The Grange, for instance, had worked against alcohol as long as the WCTU. Secure that there was little threat of the saloon's return to rural areas, local farmers organizations could concentrate on ridding towns of the saloon. One condemned it as "especially being a snare to our boys." Another explained its activism the result of the "lack of sober harvest help in the busy season." Colfax and Palouse voters went to the polls under threats of a farmers' boycott should saloons win.<sup>52</sup>

Colfax and Palouse, however, kept their saloons. Colton and Tekoa remained wet by more substantial majorities. Saloons in the four towns and Uniontown were the sole ones to escape voters' condemnation in 1909. Out of 124 votes cast in Garfield, just 4 were "For License." In St. John, the margin was nearly as impressive: 3 wet to 49 dry. Five out of every six rural voters were dry. Only three precincts (Bald Butte, Colton country, and Uniontown country) in the whole rural unit returned wet majorities.<sup>53</sup> Elections of 1909 were far from the final word on liquor control where the vote had been close. Just four votes kept Palouse wet, and a scant two-vote margin closed Rosalia saloons. Wets in Colfax were but a little more secure, with a 29 vote majority out of 629 ballots. Dry efforts to reverse 1909 decisions received a boost in May, 1910, when the famed prohibitionist Carry A. Nation came to Palouse and Colfax during a visit to the Inland Empire.

On May 6, 1910, Mrs. Nation arrived in Palouse, escorted by a delegation of women from, appropriately enough, Garfield. Crowds milled about town all day hoping to catch a glimpse of her. Anyone expecting to see the prohibitionist in action with one of her celebrated saloon “hatchetations” left disappointed for, as the *Republic* dejectedly noted, “Mrs. Nation did nothing of an exciting nature while in Palouse.” Her day in town consisted of a brief visit to the C.B. Eslick Saloon, condemnations of the use of tobacco, and two speeches. In an afternoon address at the First Christian Church, she criticized immorality in women’s fashions. Her two-hour evening lecture at Powers’ Opera House was a blast at the saloon and at voters who did not sufficiently educate themselves on liquor issues. The next day Mrs. Nation made a briefer call on the county seat. After a speech at the Baptist Church, she was taken to the Hotel Colfax for lunch. Upon learning of a bar in the building—she later declared having smelled it upon entering the hotel—she refused to eat there and lunched in a Japanese restaurant across the street before returning to Spokane.<sup>54</sup>

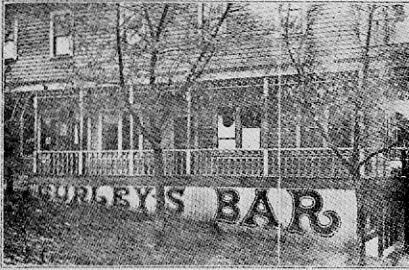
Carry Nation’s visit notwithstanding, liquor reform slowed after 1909. Drys significantly gained in 1910 when Palouse, after a quiet but earnest campaign, voted dry. The beginnings of an economic decline, with a resulting shift in demographics, is probably as responsible as dry rhetoric for the anti-saloon victory. Endicott remained content without saloons; wets failed to reverse the 1909 decision. Wets could otherwise take comfort from 1910 results. After a year without saloons, Rosalia brought them back by the same two-vote margin which had closed them in 1909. In Colfax, the “For License” majority was three times what it was in 1909. The number of wet towns actually increased by two with the incorporation of the railroad boom towns of Malden in late 1909 and Lamont in 1910.<sup>55</sup>

It did not take long for critics to find fault with the local option law. Radical drys objected to the law’s allowance for imports of limited quantities of intoxicants into dry areas for personal consumption. President Bryan of WSC was sufficiently concerned to ask Governor Marion E. Hay if the law might be interpreted to negate mail orders. The more common objection to the law, one both wets and prohibitionists had shared for years, was that the proximity of wet towns to dry ones blunted local option’s effectiveness. Pullmanites were especially critical of the intemperate county seat, as the *Colfax Commoner* 1914 remarks on some unruliness in Pullman indicate. “Had these outrages been perpetrated in Colfax, where there are saloons, or had saloon men participated in them,” huffed the *Commoner*,

the town of Pullman and the state college [sic] faculty would have gone into spasms of “righteous indignation” and demanded that the saloons of Colfax be closed and the town would have been branded as a “pest hole of vice.” Pullman poses as “the Athens of Washington,” and has always assumed a “holier than thou” air.<sup>56</sup>

# "WHERE THERE'S DRINK THERE'S DANGER"

"The Slaughter House"



The Four Graves



City Marshal Dickinson



Ernest Gardner



Patrick Collins



Deputy Sheriff Estep

Within one week, in this well-regulated saloon in Tekoa, Washington, two officers of the law were murdered, one man committed suicide, and one man was clubbed to death in a gambling game.

"Whoever votes FOR LICENSE becomes a partner in the liquor traffic and all its consequences."—*Wm. McKinley*.

*Anti-saloon poster, Tekoa*

Business was good for saloonkeepers in remaining wet towns. After Palouse went dry, one man financed a new car by hauling men at a dollar a head to Colfax on Saturday night. The prospect of local option did not deter the opening of a Tekoa brewery in June, 1909. A Farmington ex-saloonkeeper considered opening a saloon in Tekoa and painted a rosy picture of his prospects:

Now jentlemen [sic] here is another proposition [.sic] The Farmington boys have been pesting at me to open a saloon at Tekoa . . . While Tekoa has five saloons I believe there is room for another one as there is such a large surrounding [area]. It has the newly settled reservation [,] Latah, Oakesdale and Farmington [nearby,] making it the best saloon town in the North West. [A]nd I believe I can do as well there as I can here for I am bound to get some of the Tekoa trade and more than my share of the out side circle as I am well acquainted with all the country and dont [sic] believe I have an enemy except a few pin heads in Farmington that is so bitterly against saloons.<sup>57</sup>

Washington women regained the vote late in 1910 and first exercised it against saloons in 1912. By now, however, women's suffrage and anti-saloon movements were no longer as closely linked as in the past. Women contributed to lopsided dry votes in 1912 attempts to restore Farmington and Palouse saloons, but Colfax and Tekoa remained wet, albeit by slightly smaller majorities. Albion voted for the first time as an independent unit, but the election

was merely a ratification of the town council's no-license stance since incorporation in 1910. Saloons had closed in Albion 15 years before that. Drys' best hopes were probably in Rosalia, but a miscalculation in the number of signatures needed on petitions kept saloons off the 1912 ballot.<sup>58</sup>

Saloons faced their greatest threat in 1914. A new initiative and referendum law allowed voters to petition for ballot measures, and so in 1914 the fate of saloons statewide came before the electorate. The Whitman County Civic League, coordinator of 1909 local option efforts, orchestrated the campaign for Initiative Number 3, circulating petitions and registering voters. Drys organized the usual flurry of speakers and brought them to schoolhouses, grange halls, and even the streets of Colfax. WSC students attended Albion and Endicott temperance meetings, church choirs sang in temperance cantatas, and preachers told congregations "Why I Shall Vote the Dry Ticket." Wets rehearsed their familiar concerns about loss of license revenues and harm to business Number 3 would bring. Drys, on the other hand, could point to visible reasons a voter should cast a ballot against saloons. Even with its imperfections, local option had made a genuine difference in dry towns. Whitman County's seven wet towns, with less than 40 percent of the population, had witnessed seven out of every ten arrests the sheriff's office had made in 1913 and 1914.<sup>59</sup>

Anti-saloon efforts culminated in a rally in Colfax the night before the election, with numerous speakers and a torchlight parade led by a Pullman band scheduled. The next day, Number 3 (and an eight-hour workday proposal) brought out nearly a thousand more voters than had the presidential election of 1912. Statewide, it passed with 52 percent of the vote. The measure predictably failed in German-Catholic Colton and Uniontown, but county drys otherwise had reason to be jubilant. Whitman County's anti-saloon majority was more than a thousand votes beyond what drys had predicted. Even the wet holdouts of Colfax and Rosalia and the railroad towns of Lamont, Malden, and Tekoa contributed substantial dry majorities. In fact, with 68 percent support for Number 3, Whitman County had the second-highest dry vote in the state.<sup>60</sup>

What accounts for substantial dry support, especially where voters had rejected local option? Part of the answer lies in the ineffectiveness of local option, which simply distanced a town from the saloon. A Colfax man who voted dry in 1909 explained his 1912 wet vote as consistent with his support for prohibition. As local option stood in 1912, a wet vote was simply a pragmatic one, for

boys are not as apt to drink when saloons are open as when booze is in town under cover. It seems wiser to keep a rattlesnake in a box where he can be watched, than to let him hide and bite unawares.<sup>61</sup>

Not everyone who voted in 1914 to close saloons statewide would have done so in 1909. Part of the disparity between support for local option and for Number 3 reflects the growth of the anti-saloon movement in the intervening years. There is also an element of class identity in the returns of 1914. By

1914, to be anti-saloon was to be a part of the middle class. What is more important here, too, was the popular image of the fight against alcohol as a struggle between agrarian and urban values, a picture temperance leaders very much kept in the public mind.

The temperance movement, especially before 1900, had portrayed itself as a defender of American values threatened by a flood of foreign immigrants. County dries never overtly linked their cause with nativist fears of immigration, yet the paradox between anti-foreigner undertones of the national movement and many foreign-born settlers' contribution to anti-saloon support is striking. Both the La Crosse Norwegians and the Germans from Russia came from cultures with well-developed anti-liquor sentiment. The arrival of many of them coincided with the escalation of the anti-saloon movement after 1900 and enhanced its strength.<sup>62</sup>

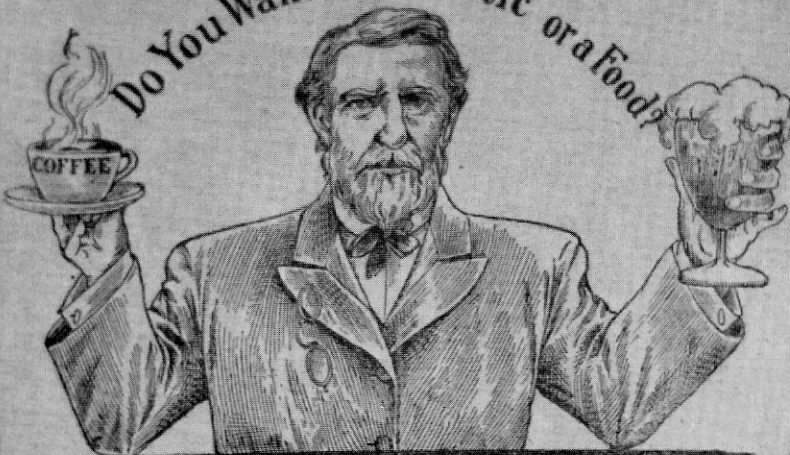
The German-Catholics of Colton and Uniontown, by contrast, are an obvious exception to the county's dry support. Here, alcohol lacked the negative connotations it had elsewhere. Parents had no qualms about sending a child to the saloon to bring home a bucket of beer. Among those who did not drink, there was indifference as to whether a neighbor did. The saloon indecencies which brought about demands for reform elsewhere were muted here, if present at all. Certainly, Colton and Uniontown never acquired the reputation of a Colfax, Palouse, or Tekoa. An early resident characterized Uniontown as more akin to a Garfield or St. John, in that he clearly remembers little, if any, public drunkenness.<sup>63</sup>

Initiative Number 3 closed remaining Washington saloons at midnight, December 31, 1915. Saloons did a good business their last day from suitcase-toting customers, stocking up for the impending drought. The law also prohibited manufacture of intoxicants within the state, forcing the county's last brewery, the Colfax Brewing and Malting Company, to dump its remaining beer. Before scores of witnesses, the last 14,000 gallons of Colfax Beer went into the Palouse River.<sup>64</sup> Closing saloons made a decided difference in just the first month. A Colfaxian noted in his diary near the end of January that "[t]own is dull. The question is: Is the dullness due to the fact that the saloons are gone, or to the bad weather, or to both?" Tekoa court records indicate a more definite answer. In January, 1915, 14 cases, all but one liquor-related, came before the police court; January, 1916, saw none.<sup>65</sup> Even so, closing saloons had mixed initial results. Pullman's mayor found it necessary to vow to end drunkenness early in 1917, and his Colfax counterpart suggested stricter regulation of sales of intoxicants by drug stores. Several locals made good money by smuggling in liquor from Canada and Montana.<sup>66</sup>

The measure was specifically anti-saloon and not anti-drink, and hence allowed an individual to obtain a permit every twenty days to import two quarts of spirits or 12 quarts of beer. In mid-1917 this, too, ended. The legislature, pressured by radical dries, abandoned the permit system. Congress superseded the state action not long thereafter by forbidding interstate



Do You Want a Narcotic or a Food?



If You Want the Latter Use

# “Palouse Empire” Near Beer

Non-intoxicating. A Temperance Drink

Contains less than two per cent alcohol. Manufactured especially for family use, from choicest malt and imported hops.

---

## Palouse Brewing Co.

Phone 301 Palouse, Washington

shipments of intoxicants, regardless of whether or not a state had a permit system. During liquor's final legal days, applicants for permits jammed the county auditor's office. The auditor reported issuing 250 permits on one day. Two days later, 220 were issued just by 11:00 a.m.<sup>67</sup>

With bone-dry legislation, the Noble Experiment came to Washington three years before the Eighteenth Amendment and Volstead Act took effect. And all the bootlegging and rum-running to come notwithstanding, it was an experiment with which most county residents would remain satisfied. When asked in 1932 whether to repeal state prohibition laws, Whitman County still voted dry, 61 to 39 percent, a seven percent drop in dry support and the biggest dry vote in the state.\*<sup>68</sup>

Today the word "Prohibition" conjures up images of a failed crusade of short-sighted, narrow-minded persons who forced their views on an unwilling population. It is condemned as a quick-fix to a complex problem, a quick-fix that created other problems by taking liquor out of the saloon and bringing it into the home. These are valid criticisms of Prohibition, yet does Prohibition and do the prohibitionists merit the scorn with which they are remembered? Evaluations of Prohibition rest on knowledge of its eventual failure as well as modern theories about alcohol and its abuse.

It is necessary to look at pre-Prohibition America more closely to understand the broad support for liquor control. Central to that was the saloon. While some saloons were respectable places, too many were the source of genuine problems scarcely acknowledged by liquor interests. Admittedly, fanatics such as Carry Nation were instrumental in bringing about Prohibition. While the Carry Nations might be fairly criticized for their overreaction to the liquor problem, critics should not ignore the gravity of that problem. Stories of barroom shootings or of families whose paycheck had gone over the bar are not just lore from the days of the Wild West.

Prohibition was perfectly consistent with the Progressive Era in that its supporters intended it to better society. A perceived incongruity between Prohibition and Progressivism from the fact that Prohibition, unlike other Progressive reforms, turned out to be an unsatisfactory, imperfect response to societal ills. The advocate of Prohibition cannot be faulted for failure to recognize this. A modern observer might point to the mixed success of local option as a harbinger of Prohibition's failure. To a citizen of the 1910's, however, forbidding any manufacture, transport, or sale of intoxicants ap-

---

\*Incidentally, Whitman County today remains dry by law in unincorporated areas, the only such county in Washington. Two close local option elections, in 1950 and 1958, kept taverns out of rural areas.

peared as one of a number of plausible responses to local option's weaknesses. Prohibition, by banning all intoxicants, reasonably appeared to eliminate the loopholes in local option. What is important is that it was a concerted effort to bring about positive change. In the end it did not, but that can be said only with the benefit of hindsight. Historical perspective insists that pre-Prohibition reformers not be judged by such a post-repeal mindset, a mindset itself shaped by the record of Prohibition.

---



## APPENDIX

### THE SALOON QUESTION SUBMITTED TO THE PEOPLE

Town	Local Option Elections		1914 Statewide Initiatives		Remarks	
	Year	Dry	Wet	Dry		Wet
Albion	1912	75	42	92	27	Dry since 1895; incorporated 1910, dry.
Colfax	1909	300	329	710	438	
	1910	264	351			
	1912	568	641			
Colton	1909	13	59	13	71	
Elberton	1909	36	13	91	21	Dry to 1893(?), dry 1899 (?), 1904, 1907(?)-09.
Endicott	1909	62	40	96	35	
	1910	57	38			
Farmington	1909	60	40	116	50	Dry 1906, 1908-09.
	1912	132	42			
Garfield	1909	120	4	317	49	Dry since 1893.
Lamont	---	---	---	52	43	Incorporated 1910, wet.
Malden	---	---	---	171	107	Incorporated 1909, wet.
Oakesdale	1909	132	23	274	71	Dry 1901-07, 1909.
Palouse	1909	163	167	280	216	
	1910	170	160			
	1912	333	283			
	1914	283	233			
Pullman	1909	224	50	826	194	Dry since 1908.
Rosalia	1909	83	81	156	123	
	1910	88	90			
St. John	1909	49	3	144	17	Dry 1891(?) - 1906, 1908-09.
Tekoa	1909	96	154	301	218	
	1912	280	310			
Uniontown	---	---	---	24	103	
Rural pcts.	1909	1,516	334	3,990	1,797	Dry since 1909.
<b>County Total</b>	---	---	---	<b>7,653</b>	<b>3,580</b>	

**SOURCES:** *Spokesman-Review*, December 1, 1909, p. 1; Colfax City Council *Journal of Proceedings* (council minutes), vol. 6, November 14, 1910, p. 353; vol. 7, November 11, 1912, p. 201, Colfax City Hall; *Colfax Gazette*, November 9, 1910; November 8, 1912; November 15, 1912; November 20, 1914; *Endicott Index*, November 11, 1910; *Palouse Republic*, December 3, 1909; November 8, 1912; November 6, 1914; *The Palouse Story*, p. 72; *Tekoa Blade*, November 10, 1932 [sic]; Town of Albion, Records, 1895-1969, "Local Option Election Poll Book and Tally Sheet, 1912," WSU-MASC. Where vote counts differ among the sources, the tally with the smaller number of ballots cast is listed on the assumption that some votes were later challenged and ballots disqualified.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>*Spokesman-Review* (Spokane), October 25, 1908, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>R. L. Polk and Company's *Directory of Whitman County, Washington, 1908-9* (Seattle: R. L. Polk & Co., 1908), p. 282.

<sup>3</sup>Norman H. Clark, *The Dry Years: Prohibition and Social Change in Washington* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), pp. 3-27; *Spokane Review*, March 20, 1892, p. 8. Numerous newspaper references for liquor among Coeur d'Alene Indians.

<sup>4</sup>Clark, p. 32; *Commissioner's Journal* (minutes, Whitman County Board of Commissioners, Whitman County Courthouse, Colfax), vol. A, May 6, 1880, p. 332; vol. A, August 9, 1880, p. 350.

<sup>5</sup>Clark, p. 31; *Palouse Gazette* (Colfax), November 15, 1878. Whitman County's vote was 253 to 154.

<sup>6</sup>*Palouse Gazette*, 1877-86.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, November 23, 1883; December 21, 1883; February 1, 1884; June 6, 1884. Among the charter members was Sarah Perkins, wife of Colfax founder James A. Perkins.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, April 4, 1879; April 18, 1884; April 30, 1886. WCTU chapters existed in Colton, Elberton, Farmington, Garfield, Guy (Albion), Johnson, Palouse, Pine City, Pullman, Rosalia, and Uniontown, each of which sent a delegate to at least one WCTU local convention between 1884 and 1893.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, September 8, 1887; May 2, 1890; *Colfax Gazette*, November 10, 1893.

<sup>10</sup>*Palouse Gazette*, May 2, 1890.

<sup>11</sup>Clark, pp. 34-36.

<sup>12</sup>*Palouse Gazette*, March 26, 1886; May 14, 1886; June 25, 1886; *Commoner* (Colfax), June 18, 1886.

After the elections, an unspecified group of county prohibitionists announced that it would work to enforce the local option law and would oppose attempts to repeal it. *Gazette*, August 13, 1886.

<sup>13</sup>*Palouse Gazette*, June 25, 1886; July 2, 1886. The *Gazette* erroneously said Palouse City voted wet. Several other sources make it clear that Palouse City went dry. No election took place in Clinton, Colton, Penawawa, Texas Ferry, and Uniontown precincts. Of these, Clinton and Penawawa were saloonless.

<sup>14</sup>*Commoner* (Colfax), July 9, 1886; July 23, 1886; *Palouse Gazette*, July 9, 1886; December 21, 1886; Clark, pp. 37-38, 40.

<sup>15</sup>Clark, pp. 43-44, 48; *An Illustrated History of Whitman County, State of Washington* (n.p.: W. H. Lever, 1901), p. 136. The county vote was 1,822 dry to 1,878 wet.

<sup>16</sup>*History of Whitman County*, pp. 135, 137-39, 142-46; *Colfax Gazette*, November 4, 1904. Among the Prohibitionists was Johnson founder Jonathan Johnson, candidate to the legislature in 1894 and 1902. *Gazette*, July 25, 1902.

<sup>17</sup>Jerry Jones, "Riparia's Past of Rails, Riverboats," *Colfax Gazette*, April 6, 1967; Dale Leo Martin, Jr., "Tekoa and Malden: A History of Two Railroad Towns in Eastern Washington (master's thesis, Department of History, Washington State University, 1984), p. 57; *History of Whitman County*, p. 200; Lula Downen, *Covered Wagon Days in the Palouse Country* (Fairfield, Wash.: Ye Galleon Press, 1977) (reprint of 1937 *Pullman Herald* booklet), p. 20; *Spokane Review*, March 20, 1892, p. 8; *Palouse Gazette*, April 15, 1892. Among the smaller towns, there is evidence of saloons in Almota, Belmont, Chambers, Pine City, Thornton, and Winona at an early date. Johnson, too, would get a saloon in a few more years.

<sup>18</sup>Clark, pp. 56, 60.

<sup>19</sup>Interview with Frank Fish and Agnes (Fish) McClung by Margot Knight, Oakesdale, June 20, 1978, Whitman County Historical Society Oral History Collection (hereinafter cited as WCHS-OHC); Charles Wyman, *The Wyman's in Colfax* (photocopied manuscript, 1977), p. 23; interview with Harry Allen Gumm by Margot Knight, Farmington, May 31, 1978, WCHS-OHC; *Palouse Gazette*, September 30, 1892; Barbara Scheideman, "Centennial Edition," *Colfax Gazette*, July 13, 1972, pp. 8-9.

<sup>20</sup>J. B. West, "Lumberjacks Flim-Flam Elberton Saloonkeeper and End Up in Jail" (citing "Memories of the Palouse," *Palouse Republic*, September 5, 1974), *Bunchgrass Historian*, summer 1980, p. 11; Wyman, p. 122.

<sup>21</sup>Community Development Study, History Committee, "*The Tekoa Story: From Bunch Grass to Grain* (mimeographed manuscript, 1962), pp. 185, 314; Martin, pp. 57, 67; Scheideman, p. 10; Community Development Program, *Palouse Town and Country Study*, 5 vols. (mimeographed manuscript, 1962), vol. 4: *The Palouse Story*, p. 85, quoting unnamed source; Ernest Ingersoll, "Wheat Fields of the Columbia" (reprinted from *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, June/November 1884), *Bunchgrass Historian*, fall 1984, p. 18; Garret D. Kincaid, *Palouse in the Making* (n.p.: n.p., after 1947) (reprinted from a series of articles in the *Palouse Republic* in 1934), p. 43; interview with James Arla Parker by Margot Knight, Palouse, January 5, 1978, WCHS-OHC; interview with Chester Magnetti by Richard Hamm, Palouse, May 12, 1984, WCHS-OHC; *Polk's Directory, 1908-9*, p. 282.

<sup>22</sup>Edith E. Erickson, *Colfax: 100 Plus* ([Rosalia: *Citizen-Journal*, 1981), pp. 254-56; Kincaid, p. 22; *Spokane Falls Review*, October 17, 1888, p. 3; *Palouse Gazette*, July 9, 1886; *Commoner*, April 6, 1888. Uniontown also had the county's only distillery (*Palouse Gazette*, January 25, 1889). A dispatch from Wawawai in the February 13, 1885, *Palouse Gazette* reports plans for construction of a brewery on Union Flat during the coming year. There is, however, no evidence that it was ever built.

- <sup>23</sup>George V. Smith, "History of Spokane Brewing and Malting Company, Spokane, Washington, 1887-1916" (master's thesis, Department of History, Washington State University, 1967), pp. 34-37, 48-50; Clark, p. 58; *Palouse Gazette*, May 15, 1891; *Colfax Gazette*, March 2, 1906; March 9, 1906; March 23, 1906.
- <sup>24</sup>*Garfield Enterprise*, March 11, 1892; March 18, 1892; November 11, 1892. Why the council even considered granting the license is something of a mystery. The *Enterprise* of December 11, 1891, in reporting town council elections predicted that Garfield was in for "a long dry spell."
- <sup>25</sup>*Spokane Falls Review*, April 2, 1889, p. 1; *Spokesman-Review*, December 3, 1896, p. 6; *Oakesdale Sun*, December 7, 1900; *Weekly Commoner* (Colfax), December 6, 1907.
- <sup>26</sup>*Commissioner's Journal*, vol. B, April 3, 1888, p. 467; *Commoner*, April 6, 1888.
- <sup>27</sup>*Palouse Gazette*, April 13, 1888; April 20, 1888; August 3, 1888; *Commoner*, April 13, 1888. Part of the haste to incorporate in 1888 may have stemmed from a new incorporation law of February, 1888.
- <sup>28</sup>*Palouse Gazette*, April 4, 1890; June 26, 1891; *Commissioner's Journal*, vol. D, August 26, 1891, p. 141; vol. I, April 6, 1898, p. 311; vol. L, February 3, 1903, p. 523; vol. G, December 4, 1894, p. 102; vol. H, December 4, 1895, p. 6; vol. H, December 11, 1896, p. 367; vol. I, April 6, 1898, p. 311; Dee Harrison, "Albion, 1881-1981," *Bunchgrass Historian*, fall 1981, p. 5. The existence of the Johnson saloon is further substantiated by the *Colfax Gazette* of January 1, 1897, and January 21, 1898.
- <sup>29</sup>*Spokesman-Review*, January 28, 1904; *Colfax Gazette*, January 15, 1904; February 12, 1904; *Endicott Index*, September 2, 1904; October 28, 1904; February 3, 1905; February 17, 1905.
- <sup>30</sup>Roger C. W. Bjerk, "A History of Pullman, Washington, 1876-1910" (master's thesis, Department of History, Washington State University, 1965), pp. 104-10; *Pullman Herald*, September 21, 1907. President Bryan spoke in Oakesdale prior to municipal elections in 1897 (*Spokesman-Review*, December 6, 1897, p. 3) and at a Colfax WCTU convention in 1915 (*Colfax Gazette*, September 24, 1915).
- <sup>31</sup>Bjerk, pp. 108-09; *Pullman Herald*, September 28, 1907; November 2, 1907.
- <sup>32</sup>*Rosalie Citizen*, December 7, 1906; *Colfax Gazette*, December 6, 1907.
- <sup>33</sup>*Commissioner's Journal*, vol. N, December 8, 1904, p. 93; vol. N, April 5, 1905, p. 239; vol. N, March 6, 1906, p. 593; vol. O, April 2, 1907, p. 411; vol. O, April 3, 1907, p. 413; vol. O, October 7, 1907, p. 593; vol. O, October 16, 1907, pp. 630-31; vol. P, April 9, 1908, p. 186.
- <sup>34</sup>For the history of the 1909 local option bill and the ASL's role in it, see Clark, pp. 82-91.
- <sup>35</sup>*Colfax Gazette*, December 13, 1907; *Pullman Herald*, October 29, 1909.
- <sup>36</sup>New York Brewery (Spokane) letter to C. J. Colin (Oakesdale), October 7, 1901 and November 20, 1902, New York Brewery, Spokane, Washington, Papers, 1887-1904 (hereinafter cited as NYB and NYB Papers), Washington State University, Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (hereinafter cited as WSU-MASC); Spokane Brewing and Malting Company (Spokane) to Sid Stroup (Pullman), November 7, 1905, Spokane Brewing and Malting Company, Spokane, Washington, Records, 1891-1932 (hereinafter cited as SB&M and SB&M Papers), WSU-MASC; SB&M to H.V. Edwards (Oakesdale), November 13, 1905, SB&M Papers; C.B. Eslick and S. Haverland (Palouse) to SB&M, November 3, 1910, SB&M Papers; *Palouse Gazette*, October 2, 1891; *Colfax Gazette*, August 30, 1895.
- <sup>37</sup>*Palouse Republic*, October 19, 1900; November 2, 1900; October 31, 1902; *Weekly Commoner*, October 31, 1902; *Colfax Gazette*, October 26, 1900; November 16, 1900; October 3, 1902; October 24, 1902; November 14, 1902.
- <sup>38</sup>Interview with Carl (Bud) Hill by Richard Hamm, Farmington, October 10, 1981, WCHS-OHC; interview with Harry Allen Gumm by Margot Knight, Farmington, May 18, 1978, WCHS-OHC.
- <sup>39</sup>NYB to J. H. Dwyer (Oakesdale), October 21, 1902; NYB to F. Lewis (Oakesdale), December 11, 1902, both letters, NYB Papers.
- <sup>40</sup>J. P. Rummel Home Restaurant (Oakesdale) to SB&M, October 16, 1909, SB&M Papers. Spelling and underlining original.
- <sup>41</sup>Dr. Greene's Pharmacy (LaCrosse) to SB&M, March 3, 1905, SB&M Papers; *Colfax Gazette*, June 5, 1896.
- <sup>42</sup>*Endicott Index*, July 16, 1909. Long quote is the *Index* quoting *LaCrosse Herald*, no date given.
- <sup>43</sup>Alexander Campbell McGregor, *Counting Sheep From Open Range to Agribusiness on the Columbia Plateau* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), p. 201. In Hooper, most, if not all, of these were across the Palouse River, in Adams County. Lamont was also on the SP&S, Malden on the transcontinental Chicago, Milwaukee and Puget Sound, and the Snake River towns on the Camas Prairie Railroad. Commissioners denied license applications along the Milwaukee Road in a proposed town of Rock Lake in 1907 and in Malden in 1908. (*Commissioner's Journal*, vol. O, p. 303, January 8, 1907; vol. P, p. 438, November 17, 1908.) For the Board's no-license policy after mid-1908, see the *Spokesman-Review*, November 20, 1908, p. 6.
- <sup>44</sup>*Colfax Gazette*, July 31, 1903; August 21, 1903; *Polk, 1908-9*, p. 282; *The Palouse Story*, p. 45; Evelyn Rodewald, "Palouse: Boom and Bust? 1900-1920," *Bunchgrass Historian*, summer 1982, pp. 23-26; *Palouse Republic*, November 18, 1910.

<sup>45</sup>Robert J. Skaife diary, longhand ed., November 29, 1909, R. J. Skaife Papers, 1861-1939 (hereinafter cited as Skaife Papers), WSU-MASC.

<sup>46</sup>Fish, June 6, 1978; Gumm, May 1978.

<sup>47</sup>*Spokesman-Review*, December 3, 1896, p. 6; December 9, 1896, p. 6; December 3, 1902, p. 1; December 6, 1905, p. 1; December 7, 1905, p. 5; December 1, 1909, p. 16; *Palouse Republic*, December 3, 1909; November 11, 1910; Bjerk, p. 108; *Weekly Commoner*, December 7, 1906; Skaife diary, November 4, 1912, Skaife Papers; Gordon Reinhold Lindeen, "Settlement and Development of Endicott, Washington, to 1930" (master's thesis, Department of History, Washington State University, 1960), p. 132; *Colton News-Letter*, December 3, 1909.

<sup>48</sup>*Spokesman-Review*, July 24, 1909, p. 5; *Colfax Gazette*, June 18, 1909. Active in both groups for several years was state senator R. C. McCroskey of Garfield.

<sup>49</sup>*Endicott Index*, January 14, 1909; *Rosalia Citizen*, January 12, 1906.

<sup>50</sup> *Spokesman-Review*, January 1, 1911, p. 10; Ernest Hurst Cherrington, ed. and comp., *The Anti-Saloon League Year Book, 1911* (Westerville, Ohio: American Issue Publishing Co., 1911), pp. 86-145, 172-75, 197.

<sup>51</sup>*Palouse Republic*, November 26, 1909.

<sup>52</sup>Clark, numerous references to Grange; *Spokesman-Review*, December 1, 1909, p. 1; *Palouse Republic*, November 12, 1909; November 26, 1909; *Garfield Enterprise*, November 12, 1909; *Endicott Index*, December 3, 1909; *Pullman Herald*, October 29, 1909; November 5, 1909.

<sup>53</sup>*Colfax Gazette*, December 3, 1909; *Spokesman-Review*, December 1, 1909, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup>*Palouse Republic*, May 13, 1910; *Spokesman-Review*, May 8, 1910, p. 5.

<sup>55</sup>*Spokesman-Review*, November 10, 1910, p. 9; *Commissioner's Journal*, vol. Q, pp. 201-02, December 8, 1909. The *Colfax Gazette* of October 22, 1909, cited reports that local option did not influence Malden's incorporation.

<sup>56</sup>Enoch A. Bryan to Marion E. Hay, February 24, 1910, Marion E. Hay Papers, 1909-1914, Manuscript Collection, Eastern Washington State Historical Society; *Colfax Commoner*, May 8, 1914. Bryan underscored his point by enclosing with his letter two flyers from mail-order liquor houses.

<sup>57</sup>Interview with J. B. West by the author, Palouse, September 1, 1984; P. R. Culp (Farmington) to SB&M, November 6, 1912, SB&M Papers.

<sup>58</sup>P. R. Culp (Farmington) to SB&M, November 6, 1912, SB&M Papers; *Colfax Gazette*, September 20, 1912; *Colfax Commoner*, November 8, 1912; *Citizen-Journal* (Rosalia), October 4, 1912; *Spokesman-Review*, November 6, 1912, p. 11; Harrison, p. 6.

<sup>59</sup>Clark, pp. 108-27; *Colfax Commoner*, October 30, 1914; *Colfax Gazette*, March 6, 1914; March 20, 1914; October 16, 1914; October 23, 1914; October 23, 1914; *Pullman Herald*, October 30, 1914; *Spokesman-Review*, November 2, 1914, p. 8; November 3, 1914, p. 10.

<sup>60</sup>Clark, p. 116; *Spokesman-Review*, November 1, 1914, p. A14; *Palouse Republic*, November 6, 1914; *Colfax Commoner*, November 6, 1914; November 13, 1914; *Colfax Gazette*, November 20, 1914.

<sup>61</sup>Skaife diary, November 4, 1912; December 4, 1912, Skaife Papers.

<sup>62</sup>The greatest concentrations of the Germans from Russia were in Colfax (where their numbers were comparatively diluted), Endicott, St. John, Farmington, and areas around those towns. Richard D. Scheurman and Clifford E. Trafzer, *The Volga Germans: Pioneers of the Northwest* (Moscow, Idaho: University Press of Idaho, 1980), pp. 143, 175. For a sketch of anti-liquor efforts in Russia, see J. N. Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavour: Russian History, 1812-1971* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 173, 215. LaCrosse's Norwegians had a heritage more strongly anti-liquor. An outline of Norwegian temperance movements appears in T. K. Derry, *A History of Modern Norway, 1814-1972* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 37, 156, 177, 291, 301, 304. LaCrosse precinct voted dry, 50 to 23, in 1909 and 173 to 88 in 1914 (*Colfax Gazette*, December 3, 1903; November 20, 1914).

<sup>63</sup>Interview with Henry J. Niehenke by the author, Colfax, June 30, 1984; interview with Harold Greif, S. J., by the author, Spokane, June 19, 1985.

<sup>64</sup>Skaife diary, December 31, 1915; Skaife Papers; *Colfax Gazette*, February 25, 1916. Palouse and Tekoa breweries made no more beer after 1912.

<sup>65</sup>Skaife diary, January 27, 1916, Skaife Papers; *Colfax Gazette*, February 11, 1916.

<sup>66</sup>Gumm, June 6, 1978; *Colfax Gazette*, January 12, 1917; February 9, 1917.

<sup>67</sup>Clark, pp. 130, 138-39; *Colfax Gazette*, June 1, 1917.

<sup>68</sup>Clark, pp. 233-34.

● Publication of Note ●

**Paradise in the Palouse**

by Nancy M. Prevost

*Ye Galleon Press, Fairfield, WA (1985) Softbound—\$4.95, 35 pp.*

Nancy M. Prevost was born in Pullman, raised on a farm in Lincoln County, attended W.S.U., and graduated from Eastern Washington University in 1973. She earned her M.A. in English from Eastern in 1982 and now makes her home in Spokane.

This slim volume published by Ye Galleon Press gives a brief overview of the Palouse Prarie and its settlement. Ms. Prevost begins with a description of the country using excerpts from newspaper articles written home by early visitors and settlers to this area. Many of the reports were quite exaggerated when it came to extolling the virtues of the Palouse. However, the realities were harsh at times on man and livestock alike. The author continues with chapters on the first homes built by the settlers, farming methods, and trade and marketing for the products grown in the Palouse.

Ms. Prevost has included a nicely organized bibliography index for those interested in related books, etc; about the history of the Palouse region.

Although not presenting an extensive history of any of the subjects, she does give a nice vignette of each area. The book would be a nice gift for someone not familiar with the area or for a visitor for a quick review of the Palouse Prairie.

—SBM

