


Whitman County Historical Society
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Whitman County Historical Society

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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COVERS

Ration books from World War II



CONTENTS

Memories of Wartime Pullman - Part 2	
By Lenna Harding	5
History and Hysteria: The Whitman County Indian Scare of 1877	
By Kathryn Dooley	14
Publications of Note	21

AUTHORS

Lenna Harding's memoir of life in Pullman during World War II continues in this issue and will conclude in a Part 3 in the next issue of the *Bunchgrass Historian*.

Kathryn Dooley is a History-Education major at Washington State University. She wrote this essay for a history class.

Editor's Note

I was struck by the current availability of the five informative books that are in the Publications of Note. Shore's new book has been long anticipated and is a wonderful addition to works on the County. The others have been out of print and missed. I have enjoyed giving the Kjack book to those arriving in Whitman County and the Bedirian book to those leaving it. The Crithfield and Scheuerman books are masterful accounts by knowledgeable and able authors. Its wonderful to have them all currently available.

Most of these books are self-published and can be ordered from the authors: Marshall Shore in Spokane; June Crithfield in Clarkston; Jeannie Kjack in St. John; George Bedirian in Pullman; and Richard Scheuerman in Endicott. Local bookstores such as BookPeople of Moscow and Main Street Books in Colfax would be able to order the books as well.





HER BLONDE TRESSES SHORN TO AID WAR

When 6-year-old Carolyn Covington had her hair bobbed this week, it was an event of more than unusual interest. In the first place, it was her first haircut since she was two years old; in the second place her long, silky blonde hair was carefully saved, to be used in precision instruments, such as bombsights which require blonde hairs more than 14 inches long, that have never been curled with an iron. Barber Harry Zerr was about to apply the shears as this picture was taken in the Mirror Barber Shop. Mr. and Mrs. N. G. Covington are standing by to console Carolyn if need be. "We have read a number of newspaper articles about the need for special type hair for making precision instruments," Mrs. Covington said, "and we plan to send these in." Human hairs which have not been heated for a curl or permanent wave have an elastic quality needed for instrument work. They become brittle after heating. Carolyn is a first grade student at Edison School and her father is associate professor of physiology and pharmacology at the College.

Pullman Herald, Friday, October 20, 1944, page 1. A clipping of this Pullman Herald photograph and story was received in December 1944 by Sgt. Olson, while stationed in Belgium. Sgt. Olson sent the clipping back to Henry Zerr as a souvenir of how local news did travel to servicemen.

MEMORIES OF WARTIME PULLMAN - Part 2

By Lenna Harding

Since an army travels on its feet, sturdy leather boots were essential. Hence, rationing of shoes for civilians so leather could go to the soldiers. As I recall, we were allotted about two pair a year. Some kinds of shoes made of non-essential materials, such as canvas or rope and even wood, were not rationed.

Fur was requested to line gloves and parkas for arctic wear. People turned in old fur garments for reuse. Our neighbor, Brooks King, raised rabbits in his back yard and would butcher them periodically for meat, and then he would send the pelts off for gloves. He'd bury the entrails in his yard, and Topsy would find, dig up and drag them home. Mama didn't appreciate that. Duck down (for arctic sleeping bags), feathers, and old wool were also in demand. To save wool, new pants for men came without cuffs and women's skirts narrowed and became shorter to just below the knee. Few synthetic fabrics existed then—I think rayon only.

The fabric used in ready-made women's clothing was of very poor quality, often sleazy rayon cut on the bias that drooped and sagged and pulled out at the seams. Finally, we gals took to buying men's McGregor plaid sport shirts and, in winter, flannel work shirts that we would wear tails out over our skirts to school. The fabric in men's clothes was of much better quality. One year, mama bought a wool blanket and made me a coat from it when she could find nothing worth buying ready made. A few years later, she shortened it and turned it wrong side out and relined it for me as a jacket.

Gasoline, heating oil, and tires were also rationed. I remember my grandfather applying for, and receiving, extra heating oil because of my grandmother's severe arthritis. Doctors, law enforcement agencies, farmers and others who had special driving needs got more gas and tires. Our old '37 Ford needed a ring job and was burning motor oil, which was not rationed. The old putt putt got tremendous gas mileage but burned two quarts of oil just going to Spokane. It meant we got to go further than folks with less efficient gas burning cars. To save gas, a 35-mph speed limit was imposed, as it had been determined to be the optimum average speed for the best gas mileage and the least wear and tear on tires. Therefore, it took longer to get anywhere, even longer if you were unfortunate and wound up behind a military convoy. Since most roads were two lanes and it was strictly illegal to cut into a convoy, one could follow impatiently for miles at 20 or so miles per hour. It was almost easier to stop for coffee and let them get way ahead of you. Then you had to hope that a second convoy didn't come along in the meantime. This happened often enough to be very annoying. We found Highway 99 near Fort Lewis was especially bad when we visited there, but we encountered convoys in Eastern Washington too.

IT SHOULD BE GOOD!



Girls in the Home Management house at the State College are shown as they prepare to eat an economy meal, cooked in one pan. It consists of pot roast and vegetables. Home Economics majors live in the "practice cottage" for several weeks during their senior year. Pictured above, reading from the head of the table (left to right) are Martha J Merideth Mellinger, Phyllis Ingram, and Miss Arlea

te College are shown as they prepare to eat an economy meal, cooked in one pan. It consists of pot roast and vegetables. Home Economics majors live in the "practice cottage" for several weeks during their senior year. Pictured above, reading from the head of the table (left to right) are Martha J Merideth Mellinger, Phyllis Ingram, and Miss Arlea n Pattison, director.

Pullman Herald, Friday, April 10, 1942, page 7.

By Jeanne Rounds

"Practice makes perfect" . . . if it's perfect practice. That's the theory behind the Home Management house – better known around Pullman as the "Practice Cottage" – where the Home Economics majors at the State College become "guinea pigs" for five weeks and try out their "book-learning" on each other.

Keeping household accounts, planning and preparing nutritious and attractive meals, and "keeping house" on 30 minutes a day are among the "Cottage" activities. Cooking appetizing meals at low cost is particularly emphasized. Low cost meats – with everything from pot roast to stuffed pork shoulder to meat pie – are served up attractively . . . and economically.

Of course we make sure that each day's meals are adequate for busy college girls. It is very easy to check on how to spend our money. Dr. Henry Sherman says, "at least as much should be spent for milk, cream and cheese as for meat, poultry and fish and at least as much should be spent for fruits and vegetables as for meat, poultry and fish." We also use this simple daily check list to make sure that our diet is well balanced according to up-to-date nutrition standards.

One of the biggest nuisances was the shortage of rubber for elastic. Once one's prewar supply was used up, there was no more to be had for the duration. This applied to ready-made clothing, especially underwear. Women's panties came held up with tiny buttons. A good deep breath or bending over could send one's hands to one's waist to grab them before they fell off. At school, I'd run for the girl's room and hope someone had left safety pins from the Kotex machines behind or that some generous soul had one in her wallet. There was one lady in town who gained quite a reputation for loosing her panties in the most inopportune places, such as church. Hers must have given her no warning since they would plummet to the floor and constrict her ankles. She got very good at walking out of them nonchalantly and kicking them aside as if they belonged to someone else. While we all shared a good laugh at this, we also had the guilty worry that "there but for the grace of God go I."

LIONS LOAD CAR OF SCRAP RUBBER



RUBBER SALVAGE CHAIRMAN MARTIN HOLTER received a strong helping hand from members of the Lions club when he got ready to ship the 50,000 pounds of scrap rubber gathered in this area by Richfield Service stations. To keep the freight car rolling, the Lions, supervised by Charles (Scrappy) Richardson, and assisted by trucks and

drivers from Potlatch Yards, Standard Lumber and the Pullman Junk Company, loaded the entire car on Wednesday and Thursday evening. Sweating workers shown in the picture, left to right, are Bob King, Mike Shea, Ralph Rose, Fred Stentzel, C. E. McQueen, Jerry Halverson, Oswald Gates, Ivan Sayles, Leon Lane, "Scrappy" Richardson, Earl Nelson and Claude Irwin.

Pullman Herald, Friday, July 24, 1942, page 1.

I haven't mentioned yet the subject of stockings. Since silk was no longer available and nylon was developed for parachutes and not stockings, rayon or cotton stockings were all that were available but they were ghastly! They bagged and

Young Gardeners Display Their Wares



Half a dozen young Derby Street gardeners display their Victory gardens to a group of Kiwanians, who sponsored the plowing and preparation of the soil for boys' and girls' garden projects. A second and larger project also was inspected in the McGee Flat district. Young gardeners shown in the picture, all members of the Garden Helpers Club, are Marvin Glover, Richard Wrench, Mary Jean Murphy, Doris Davison,

Connie Murphy who is president of the club, and Charles Brock. In the background (left to right) are Kiwanians Robert Neill, L. K. Jones, R. B. Bachelder, C. F. Anderson, J. N. Emerson, H. A. Bendixen, W. D. Buchanan, J. C. Knott, J. F. Bohler and Fred Rounds. The visitors were enthusiastic over the well kept gardens and the way the youngsters have taken hold to help raise war food.

Pullman Herald, Friday, July 9, 1943, page 1. Photograph promoting Victory Gardens.

twisted, were not sheer or fashionable. To substitute, we painted on stockings with a special liquid product not unlike foundation made for the purpose. Getting it applied evenly was a chore. Even trickier was drawing the darker line up the back of our legs to imitate the seam. Getting it straight was as difficult as keeping the real ones straight. Stockings with seams were deemed to be of higher quality and better fit, so we had to paint seams to be chic. Once applied, you prayed it didn't rain. They were not immune from blotching and running. Cleaning the bathtub after removing same was also a pain. That gunk was very persistent.

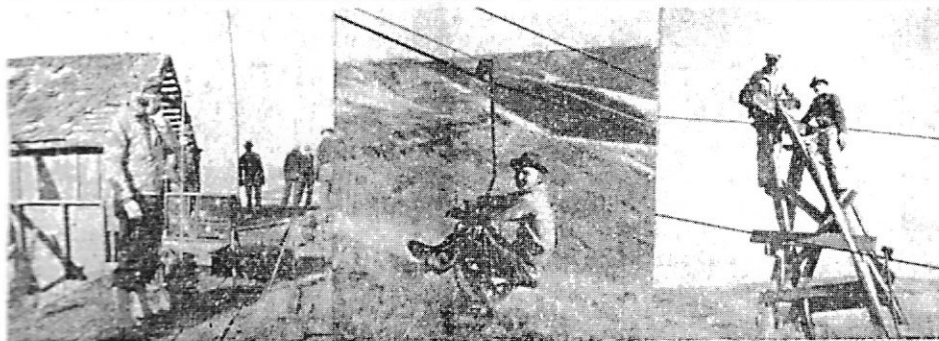
Everyone who could was urged to plant a "victory garden" both to add to the supply of fruits and vegetables but also to reduce the need for transporting them as well. We duly planted the vacant lot we owned adjacent to our house and froze vegetables into a locker we rented in a freezer downtown. As I recall, it was located about where the new city hall is now. Our own fridge had a freezing compartment only large enough to hold a tray of ice cubes and a quart of ice cream. We had to make frequent trips to the locker.

Daddy undertook care of the potato patch and grew one huge Irish Cobbler gem that we tied a ribbon on and photographed. Then we cooked it and ceremoniously carved it like a roast for the three of us. Daddy dug out an unexcavated area of our basement below my bedroom to make a root cellar for root crops and apples. Somehow we managed to coax a decent garden from that hard clay soil, so we ate well and had some things to share—including zucchini squash. Not knowing any better, we made the mistake of letting them get too big. Some of our friends became "over zucchini'd" and hated to see us coming with arms laden. I think victory gardens changed eating habits as gardeners explored seed catalogs for exotic new things to grow. The selection of produce in stores in Pullman was very limited even before the war and we relied heavily on canned vegetables for variety, particularly in winter months.

In about the first serious recycling since the age of the rag and bone men, we were called on to recycle in earnest. Metal of all kinds, rubber, newspaper and fat were the main items. Daddy diligently flattened tin cans. The government wisely enlisted the help of school kids in this effort by organizing scrap drives of all kinds. Our Camp Fire group had a regular "grease route" where we went from house to house collecting cans of fat that had been rendered down and strained into cans.

Catherine Posten, who lived on the part of Harvey road that is now Stadium Way near where the Episcopal Church cornfield is, loaned the use of her own horse and she would ride her father's horse. Two of us would ride her horse double, bareback with me in the rear. We rode all over College Hill, with whoever was in front holding a shopping bag and me in back getting on and off to collect the grease. Then we'd coax the horse over beside a fence or rock wall to serve as a leg up and I'd climb on again for a trip to the next group of houses. That old horse, Blaze, had

HISTORIC TRAMWAY RAZED FOR SCRAP



MEMBERS of the Junior Chamber of Commerce salvage crew which began junking the historic old wheat tramway at Wawawai on Sunday did not lack for breath-taking scenery during their labor. The cables of the tramway drop more than a mile down a jagged canyon to the winding ribbon of the Snake river, thousands of rough and scenic feet below. It used to take a sack of wheat 20 minutes to drop from the top to the canyon floor's receiving warehouse. Upper photo, taken by J. D. Lewis, shows part of the crew and spectators at the top of the tram line. Left to right are Irving

Ritter, Harold Short, Henry Praetorius, Bobby Short, Arthur Ritter, and Mrs. Ritter. Lower pictures, (left) show Sgt. Claude Chambers using the army "walkie-talkie" to communicate with crews down the canyon; (center) Irwin Ritter, boss of the salvage work is riding one of the old buckets; (right) perched atop one of the towers are Chet Wayman and Stewart Mingo. Other members of the salvage crew seen in the background of the "walkie-talkie" picture are Dennis Robertson, Gus Blum, Charlie Vollmer and Axel Melander.

Pullman Herald, Friday, October 30, 1942, page 1. The Interior Grain Tramway, 1901-1939, functioned like a modern ski lift, hauling 130 pound sacks of wheat to the river warehouse. Junior Chamber members harvest 25 tons of scrap for the war effort.

a special gait like a camel for us novice riders (but not for Catherine who was a good rider) and I, seated over its rump, got a real massage. I'd come home stiff and sore, especially on cold winter days since I'd be riding in a dress or skirt. Our Camp Fire leader, Mrs. Veach, would then have to re-melt the grease, strain it and package it properly to be turned in to the butcher shop and from there sent to a munitions factory to make nitro-glycerin for ammunition. I think she did get some reward. If I recall correctly, they gave ration points as an incentive to save grease, so many people chose to turn in their own.

Our schools had scrap drives and we (Edison School—now Adams Mall) would compete with Franklin School to see who could gather in the most scrap. The winning school got a war bond. People scoured their basements, barns, garages and cupboards for any metal or rubber items they could spare. I remember one house where we got two old iron cook stoves. We could arrange for a truck to get the really heavy stuff.

At another place, it took all our nerve to knock on her door because we mistakenly believed the old lady, Mrs. Trapp, was a witch. Turned out she was a sweetheart and had a yard full of junk lying around. We hauled armloads of stuff from her place across from Bohler gym, where Regents Dorm stands, then up Colorado to the schoolyard. We took a number of trips, one of which I remember in particular. She gave us an old buggy chassis attached to two sets of leaf springs. I'm almost certain it was from that same buggy pictured in a recent issue of the Daily News, showing Mr. Trapp driving his mail route. Four of us sixth graders hauled it to Edison School, five to ten feet at a time, with rests in between. We required well over an hour to get it there, and it was six o'clock before I got home for dinner. Mama was starting to worry by the time I arrived exhausted. But oh how satisfying it was when Edison won the scrap drive that year and the war bond. I wonder what they did with that bond since it didn't mature for ten years. By then we had a new Edison School.

One sad fact about the scrap drives was the destruction of a number of our historic landmarks, such as the Wawawi tramway. This facility was used to carry grain sacks from the brow of the Snake River Canyon to waiting steamboats below. There is an article in the *Pullman Herald* telling how a group of Pullmanites—I think from one of the service clubs—went out and dismantled the cables, big wheels, pulley wheels and “seats” for the scrap drive. The article included a picture of one of the fellows riding the tram a short way down the hill. The warehouse and housing for the tram was pretty rickety even then. One has to wonder if it would have lasted long enough to be restored as an historic site—maybe not. Nevertheless, it was a shame to lose it.

The scrap all wound up in Scrapy Richardson's junkyard that stood between where the pea processing plant and Cougar Country is on Grand. Scrapy, our town drunk, was a colorful character. He made a financial killing during the war, but could be a most generous man to people in need. His was a one-man operation, so he

needed help sorting and loading scrap into rail cars. Again, volunteers were recruited to help and, on several occasions, my dad was one who joined others to sort by metal type and get the scrap on its way to the war effort.

Labor shortages had many people doing jobs, both volunteer and paid, outside their normal area of expertise. I remember that Dana Cleveland, the school band teacher, worked after school hours in a local machine shop and that Jack Friel, the WSC basketball coach, sewed sacks on a combine during harvest. It always took him a while each year to harden his hands so they wouldn't crack and bleed from handling that burlap. Later, wartime shortages of sacks began the end of sacking grain on combines and the shift to bulk shipments. Many townspeople helped out on area farms during harvest.

To be continued

Fairer Sex Help With Harvest



HARVEST OPERATIONS this summer have brought plenty of new talent to the fore and given old timers an opportunity to come back and show their wares. However, not even in the days of World War I were there more womenfolk helping with the harvest and the farm work. A recent recruit (left) is Maxine Murray, who is shown in the cab of the wheat truck she is driving on the Murray ranch. When Brother Bill was inducted and sent to Fort Douglas, Maxine volunteered to take his place as a truck driver during her vacation from the College Correspondence office. She'd driven a car, but not truck. However, she's doing a good job of "herding" her truck from the ranch to the Chambers warehouse, some 12 miles away. Although Maxine would rather operate a mimeograph machine, she plans to carry on as long as she's needed as a truck driver. Mrs. C. A. Hood

can be classed as an expert. She's been driving truck for five years during harvest at the C. A. Hood ranch. Daughter Mary Louise, who is a sophomore in secretarial science at the State College, wonders why she hasn't found out about driving trucks before. She gets a big kick out of driving the wheat truck, whether to the chop mill or to the warehouse at Chambers. This is her second year as a truck "skinner" and she much prefers it to washing the family dishes. The Hoods have their harvest about completed. Shown in the picture are, left to right, Ace Broom, Astin, tractor driver; Dan Hood, combine operator; Mrs. C. A. Hood and Mary Louise. Many other women are driving power equipment or helping with the farm chores to relieve the men for harvest operations.

Pullman Herald, Friday, August 21, 1942, page 1. Women help in harvest and farm work to make up for the shortage of men.



THE BATTLEFIELD—This striking general view of the scrap lot north of town was taken by Photographer Hutchison from the top of the Richfield Oil storage tanks. It shows the big scrap drive at its height with wrecking crews in the foreground, trucks lined up waiting to be

unloaded along the road and the loading crew at work on the railroad siding. The scrap lot was a bee hive of activity all day Wednesday as volunteer workers kept the scrap flying to the tune of 175 tons.

Pullman Herald, Friday, November 13, 1942, page 1. Under the headline "Drive Brings In 175 Tons," an article describes how Pullman "sent 175 tons of assorted bullets and bomb fodder for an Armistice Day present to the boys over there."

HISTORY AND HYSTERIA: The Whitman County Indian Scare of 1877

By Kathryn Dooley

For a few weeks during the summer of 1877, Whitman County was thrown into turmoil by reports that Indians – perhaps Chief Joseph’s Nez Perce, perhaps the Coeur d’Alenes, or perhaps some nameless other tribe – were advancing into southeastern Washington with plans to massacre and pillage white settlements along the way. In a matter of days, hundreds of the area’s residents had abandoned their homes and fields and fled to Colfax, Walla Walla, and other population centers in the desperate hope that they might find safety in numbers. Just as quickly, however, the county was restored to its former calm when it became apparent that these reports had no basis in fact. On the most immediate level, the 1877 Indian Scare fed off of a combination of baseless or highly exaggerated rumor and a gross misunderstanding of the local Native Americans and their intentions. Nevertheless, the Scare cannot be attributed solely to the biases of the white pioneers; it was a manifestation of the atmosphere of genuine and, in part, legitimate tension between settlers and natives that characterized the history of the region, and perhaps worsened in the years following the organization of Whitman County.

By 1877, the Palouse had undergone something of a transformation from a pasture for a few scattered livestock farmers to a less intermittently settled area with serious agricultural potential. When Whitman County came into being in 1871 with the first precise resolution of its boundaries, only 176 men cast votes in the elections for county officials, a number representing, according to Kincaid, “almost every man in the county.”¹ Most population estimates for 1872 range from 200 to 300 men, women, and children. Although this number increased steadily over the next few years, the real impetus for growth came in 1876 with the discovery that, contrary to popular belief, the Palouse was suitable for growing wheat. In that year, about ten thousand bushels of wheat were shipped from Whitman County to Portland, proving that the region, previously devoted to cattle and sheep, was also ripe for crop agriculture.² As a result, both settlers and various agricultural implements – plows, threshers, and reapers – began to arrive in droves to exploit the new opportunities for profit that the region offered. Thus, by 1875 the population had increased to an estimated 1,465, and by 1877 it had reached 2,247. Such rapid expansion – a tenfold increase over a five-year span – created further opportunities for friction and outright conflict with the local Native Americans, onto whose land the settlers were steadily encroaching.

It is essential to remember, however, that the population of Whitman County remained quite small in absolute terms, and the accelerated growth of the 1870's by no means implied that the region had become urbanized or truly developed. The Palouse remained a frontier, rural and decentralized, with poor transportation routes and even poorer lines of communication. From Palouse City to the larger Walla Walla, Kincaid notes, was a journey of many miles "across unbroken country."³ To a certain degree, then, life was isolated and uncertain, and the settlers justifiably lived in fear. One woman reported that she would "lock every door, close every blind, perform her work as silently as possible and shiver with fear at every unwonted sound" when left alone in her house, "so real at that time seemed the danger of the tomahawk and the scalping knife."⁴ This sense of acute vulnerability, coupled with the reliance on word of mouth for news, often through single sources, provided an ideal setting for rumor and panic to run rampant.

If the circumstances of living in Whitman County in 1877 made the threat of an Indian attack seem terrifying, then the region's violent history made it more than plausible. Among the innumerable instances of conflict between settlers and Native Americans in eastern Washington, one of the most essential in terms of shaping lasting perceptions was the Whitman Massacre of 1847. According to the account of survivor Mary Saunders, Dr. Marcus Whitman had been attempting to treat a measles epidemic by administering medication to Native American children. He made very little progress in fighting the disease, however – a fact that the settlers attributed to "the ignorance and superstition of [the children's] savage parents," but which the Indians blamed on the doctor himself.⁵ In retaliation, a small band attacked the white mission, slaughtering the men and taking the women and children captive. A conflict born of mutual fear and mistrust, then, bred further fear and mistrust by encouraging the settlers to expect violence from the natives, seemingly without provocation.

Violence between Indians and whites continued to be a regular part of life in Whitman County until the tribes were "pacified" by Colonel Wright in September of 1858. The pacification began after Chief Kamiachian, the leader of a confederation of tribes in eastern Washington, refused to comply with the governor's demand that he surrender additional land to the state. Kamiachian was at first successful, defeating Colonel Steptoe's forces near Rosalia. In a battle against Wright, however, he was wounded and forced to surrender. A lasting but tenuous peace was established between the Native Americans and the pioneers; for the most part, their relationship from that time on was pacific, even friendly, but violence still erupted periodically and tensions ran high. In one incident from about the same time as the Indian Scare, a group of renegades, acting outside of tribal authority, harassed several white children in a schoolyard. The band "maliciously began frightening the small children with their tomahawks, cutting off locks of hair with their knives, pretending to scalp the youngsters."⁶ After a showdown with the schoolteacher,

which seemed to spectators to last an hour, the Indians finally backed down and retreated. Despite the peace that had been in place for almost twenty years, when rumors spread that the local natives were preparing for an attack on the settlers, “the remembrance of the Whitman massacre, and the war between Colonel Steptoe and Chief Kamiachian came so vividly to view that it seemed as if a repetition was at hand.”⁷

Yet if experience made it reasonable for the settlers to take an Indian threat seriously, history contained another lesson as well – that not all Native American individuals or tribes were identical. In fact, it seems to have been almost commonplace that incidents of violence existed alongside examples of aid, kindness, and goodwill from Indians. Just weeks before the Whitman massacre, Mary Saunders recollects encountering a settlement of friendly Indians who offered the pioneers “potatoes, corn and other vegetables which were a great treat, as they were the first vegetables we had since we left civilization.”⁸ Even during the massacre itself, Chief Toloquewet of the Cayuse tribe sought to protect the white women and children, ensuring no harm came to them and urging restraint among his companions. In May of 1858, the skirmish between Colonel Steptoe and the Indians nearly ended in another massacre. The tragedy was averted, according to Randall Johnson, by “a friendly Nez Perce chief who determined which route was unguarded and, during the night, led the column safely out of their entrapment.”⁹ Certainly, the near-hysterical panic of the 1877 Indian Scare drew on deep roots of violence between settlers and the tribes of eastern Washington, and was therefore justified to some extent. But at the same time, experience required at least a cursory attempt to distinguish between different Native Americans before judging their motivations as uniformly hostile.

The rumors and exaggerated reports that sparked the Indian Scare, of course, conspicuously lacked such caution or discriminating consideration. First came reports that Chief Joseph’s Nez Perce, following the beginning of their war against the whites on June 14, 1877, had crossed the Clearwater River and were heading for Colfax, massacring every settler in their path. Contradictory assertions about hostile Coeur d’Alenes, or a confederation of the Coeur d’Alene, Spokane, and Palouse tribes led by Chief Moses, persisted long after it was certain that the Nez Perce had no intention of moving into the Palouse.¹⁰ Without a doubt, these rumors gained currency primarily due to knowledge of the contemporaneous Nez Perce War, despite the fact that these other tribes had no connection with Chief Joseph and had remained generally peaceful and cooperative for two decades.

Regardless of the specifics, the settlers became convinced that Indians of some sort were advancing on the Palouse, leaving a path of dead bodies, burned fields, and destroyed homes in their wake. Estimates of hostile numbers ranged up to eight hundred, but David Bowman points to four hundred as the “most believed”

figure.¹¹ A letter dated July 22, 1877, from Mary Ann Davis, wife of the Cashup Davis who later built a hotel on Steptoe Butte, describes her impression that the Indians “have broke out and are killing settlers, about forty miles from our house... [They] are killing hogs and cattle by the hundreds and driving off all the horses they can find.”¹² Interestingly, Mary had an even greater reason to fear than the typical settler; she was the sole survivor of an earlier Indian massacre, in which her entire family had been murdered. Each of the numerous, and at times contradictory, rumors shared this sense of immediacy, and each produced an identical effect. The settlers were certain that they were in danger and determined to be out of harm’s way when the supposed wave of Indian violence reached the Palouse.

The rumors first arrived on a Sunday afternoon in June of 1877, when a courier from Union Flat interrupted a church camp meeting near the Palouse River with news that hostile Indians were drawing near. The meeting ended abruptly and without formality, as panic spread and people began to flee for Colfax. As Thomas Clair Williams describes in his thesis, “The streets of Colfax became thronged with a terror-stricken mob, rushing about armed with all kinds of weapons.”¹³ Some chose to evacuate, abandoning their homes and fields, taking with them only what they could carry, and fleeing for Dayton, Walla Walla, or Waitsburg. Others decided to gather together in the nearby towns of Colfax, Rosalia, and Palouse City, where they would organize, take up arms, and attempt to defend themselves. In Colfax, a man named David S. Bowman assumed leadership, telling the others, “Gentlemen, the time for action has arrived.” G.W. Sutherland, who recorded the incident in his diary, became one of between forty and fifty volunteer troops from Colfax determined to defend their families.¹⁴ Together they could locate only twenty-two guns, but Governor E.P. Ferry provided enough weaponry and ammunition to accommodate the modest militia. The men formed scouting parties and a night watch rotation, digging protective rifle pits into the hillsides surrounding the town, while women and children gathered in the local schoolhouse for protection. Incidentally, the schoolhouse’s crowded conditions allowed an outbreak of diphtheria to spread, eventually killing several children – a fact which puts the danger posed by the Indians in perspective.¹⁵

In a number of locations, construction began promptly on all manner of stockades, blockhouses, and forts, all for protection from a threat that was purely imaginary. Near Palouse City, a blockhouse measuring 125 feet square was built, with room to house about two hundred people. The city’s residents constructed an additional fort at Four Mile to accommodate the women and children. In Rosalia, a blockhouse was built high on a hill outside of town, with the intention of allowing a view in every direction and providing early warning of the approach of hostile Indians.¹⁶ Finally, near the Idaho border, a man named Mr. Howard offered his property as the site for a stockade designed to defend the people of his neighborhood.¹⁷

Most of these structures, ironically, neared completion after between two and four weeks, just as the Scare was ending with the realization that no real danger existed.

The Native Americans living in Whitman County, who had not been contemplating any attack on the white settlers, were unsure how to interpret such sudden military commotion after a twenty-year stretch of peace. The fact that the settlers had begun arming themselves, establishing patrols, and building forts convinced many Indian leaders that they were preparing to go on the offensive, possibly with the intention of starting another war.¹⁸ This fact, in conjunction with a number of isolated incidents whose significance was much exaggerated, compounded the misunderstanding between the natives and the settlers, and even threatened to escalate it to the point of large-scale violence. On June 23 of that year, for instance, a man named John Ritchie was shot and killed by Indians on his farm. Both Bowman and Sutherland describe the killing of a man named Campbell (or Cammel) near the camp of the Coeur d'Alene Indians. Later, a group of settlers from near Crab Creek, who had left their homes for Walla Walla at the beginning of the Scare but turned back halfway, found a few members of the Columbia River tribe looting the abandoned houses.¹⁹ Clearly, each of these occurrences represented individuals acting without the sanction of their tribes, and would have been perfectly ordinary in times of peace. It was only their timing, and the atmosphere of unreasoning panic, that seemed to endow them with a more sinister significance.

In some cases, no Native Americans were even guilty of wrongdoing, and it was the panic of the settlers alone that led to the events that provoked further fear. G.W. Sutherland's scouting party, during a visit to a stockade near Moscow, recounted seeing "Indians passing along the foothills on a trail between Spokane and Lewiston," which was groundlessly taken as a sign of impending attack. Tabor LaFollette describes an even more appalling and dangerous instance in which settlers mistakenly shot at one another in the dark. They then reported that they were fired upon, and their experience was accepted as corroboration of the rumors of Indian violence.²⁰ Because of the settlers' tendency to overgeneralize with regards to the Native Americans, as well as the intrinsic tension of the situation, these stories were all interpreted as "confirming the general impression that the northern Indians had broken out."²¹

David Bowman expressed the problem succinctly, pointing out that many of the settlers were recent arrivals who had moved to Washington from the east, and who "didn't know a Coeur d'Alene from a Nez Perce."²² But even Bowman himself, counted among the "old pioneers" familiar with the friendliness of the Coeur d'Alenes, admitted that he was quite alarmed to learn of Campbell's murder. Had he known about it at the time, he states, he may have been afraid to go to the Coeur d'Alene camp and meet with Chief Saltese – an event that proved to be instrumental in defusing the volatile Indian Scare. To say that the problem rested entirely with

the ignorance of inexperienced settlers would be an oversimplification; experience could offer a justification for fear as well as for restraint. Nevertheless, the settlers' readiness to reach conclusions that were based on bias and assumption more than fact was dangerous, allowing the panic to continue for as long as it did, and even creating the possibility that it would end in further bloodshed.

Fortunately, due in part to the cautious judgment of a few individuals, the Indian Scare ended not in violence, but in peace, and even a certain degree of mutual understanding. A ten-man expedition led by David Bowman had set out by the second day of the Scare, seeking to either confirm or refute the rumors. The earliest claims were quickly shown to be without basis, as the men made contact with a scout who reported that the Nez Perce were headed for Montana, rather than the Palouse. As mentioned previously, however, additional rumors and new sources of danger sprang up in their place, and the Scare failed to subside merely because its original claims were discredited.

David Bowman and his companion James Tipton decided to travel to meet the chiefs of the Coeur d'Alene, Palouse, and Snake River tribes in an attempt to determine the facts of the situation. In his *Reflections*, Bowman describes finding the Native American camp "in a terrible uproar," presumably in response to the apparently war-like actions of the white settlers.²³ Bowman was invited to sit with the chiefs, and each man had an opportunity to speak in turn. Pontley of the Snake River tribe eloquently assured Bowman that he had no desire for violence, saying, "We had enough war in '55 and '56. You killed all of our horses. Now we have many horses and women and children and you would kill all of them. And you have many women and children and horses and cattle and we would kill them. We are satisfied you gave us this land... and we want to live together and be friends." Afterwards, Chief Saltese of the Coeur d'Alenes spoke, expressing his concern over what "seemed to him like a declaration of war" from the settlers. Bowman explained that the settlers had wrongly, but without any malicious intention, transferred their legitimate fear of the Nez Perces over to the Coeur d'Alenes. They would rather risk overreacting, he stated, than allow themselves to be caught off guard in a massacre.²⁴

It quickly became apparent that neither side had intended the other any harm, and in fact Chief Saltese, whom Bowman praised for his history of "friendship and hospitality" toward the whites, made a great effort to reassure them of his goodwill. First, he sent a group of his Indians to drive the settlers' abandoned livestock out of their fields and prevent further crop destruction. He then offered to protect the settlers, if necessary, from any other hostile tribes that might menace them. Finally, he sent an armed escort to protect Bowman and Tipton on their journey back to Colfax, fearing that if the men were ambushed by Nez Perce, the offense "would be laid on to my Indians."²⁵ As a result, through a combination of

clear thinking and a mutual desire to avoid violent conflict, the misunderstanding, compounded many times by simple carelessness and generalizing assumptions, came to an end without ever developing into a real crisis.

In all, the Indian Scare lasted approximately one month, during which time life in Whitman County was dramatically reorganized around the belief that an attack by Native Americans was imminent. The threat of an impending massacre naturally caused a dip in the influx of settlers into eastern Washington, but only a relatively minor and temporary one; the late fall of 1877 saw another large increase in population, and over the next few years the lure of the homestead would stimulate extremely rapid growth.²⁶ Economically, too, the Scare's consequences were quite limited in scope, with both lumber and grain production suffering only minor setbacks – the first because the men were too preoccupied with “Indian troubles” to chop wood, and the second because many wheat fields were damaged by unattended livestock, in spite of Chief Saltese's efforts.²⁷ Ultimately, the Indian Scare was most significant as one in a long line of conflicts, whether military or primarily psychological, between the pioneers in Washington and the Native American tribes with whom they crossed paths. It represented neither the beginning nor the end of misperception and tension between the two groups.²⁸ Rather, it demonstrated above all the danger that careless assumptions could pose to a peaceable and prosperous understanding between the settlers and the natives, as well as the necessity of a few clear-thinking individuals in preventing a needless catastrophe.

¹ Garret D. Kincaid, *Palouse in the Making* (Palouse Republic: 1934), 7.

² W.H. Lever, *An Illustrated History of Whitman County* (1901), 105.

³ Kincaid, 2.

⁴ Lever, 106.

⁵ Mary Saunders, *The Whitman Massacre* (Fairfield: Ye Galleon Press, 1977), 20.

⁶ Kincaid, 8.

⁷ Tabor LaFollette, *The History of Colfax* (1956), 18.

⁸ Saunders, 16.

⁹Randall A Johnson, *Cashup Davis and his Hotel on Steptoe Butte* (1967), 13.

¹⁰ *The Palouse Story* (History Committee Report, 1962), 9.

¹¹ David S. Bowman, *Reflections* (1975), 24.

¹² Johnson, 11.

¹³ Thomas Clair Williams, “A History of the Settlement, Organization, and Growth of Whitman County, Washington” (B.A. Thesis, Washington State College, 1909), 41.

¹⁴ G.W. Sutherland, “Notes from the Diary of G.W. Sutherland,” *The Big Smoke* (Pend Orielle County Historical Society, 1999), 86.

¹⁵ Edith E. Erickson, *Colfax 100 Plus*, (1981), 45.

¹⁶ Alice V. Campbell, *A Short History of Rosalia*, (Fairfield: Ye Galleon Press, 1970), n.p.

¹⁷ Bowman, 24.

¹⁸ Bowman, 29.

¹⁹ Erickson, 46.

²⁰ LeFollette, 18.

²¹ Lever, 108.

²² Bowman, 29.

²³ Bowman, 26.

²⁴ Bowman, 29.

²⁵ Bowman, 31.

²⁶ Lever, 106.

²⁷ *Palouse Gazette* (Colfax: September 29, 1877), 1-3.

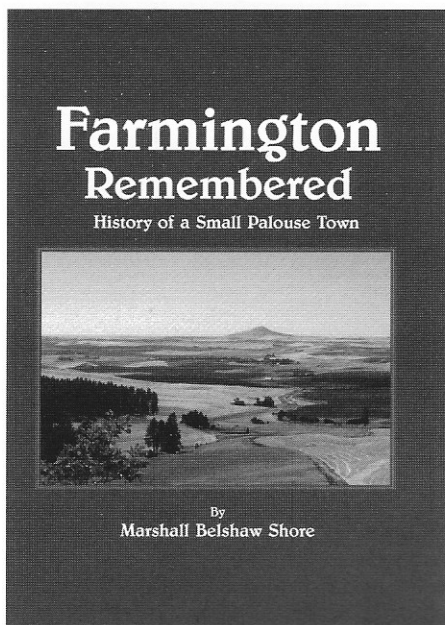
²⁸ For instance, only a few months after the Scare had ended, a report that a Nez Perce had been stealing blankets from a local settler sparked “a strong purpose... in favor of firing upon the Indians and commencing a general killing among them,” as well as comments that they ought to be confined to reservations. *Ibid.*



PUBLICATIONS OF NOTE

Marshall B. Shore.

Farmington Remembered: History of a Small Palouse Town. Tornado Creek Publications, 2004.

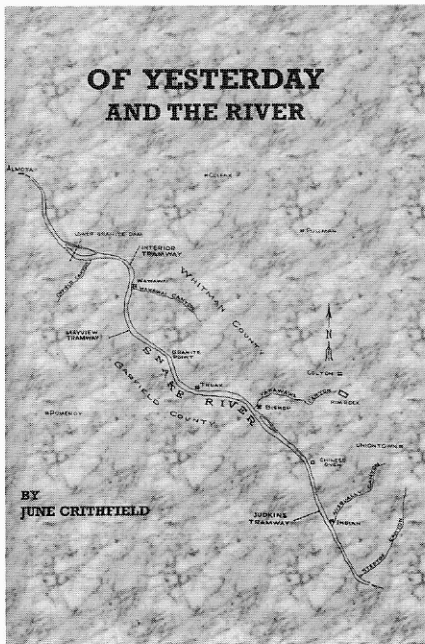


This beautifully illustrated, hard-bound book is a significant addition to the growing collection of books on Whitman County and its towns. Farmington native Marshall Belshaw Shore was inspired to produce this book by his discovery of the Charles Blickenderfer manuscript collection of eighty-nine Farmington family histories. Shore has not only published these - and a few additional family histories - but he has also included essays on all aspects of the community: early history, schools, churches, organizations, buildings, newspapers, Mountain View Cemetery, and much more. The Blickenderfer histories comprise 236 pages of this expansive 544-page book. The book is lavishly illustrated with 220 photographs. The 33-page comprehensive index offers easy access both to names of people and to subjects of interest.

June Crithfield. *Of Yesterday And The River.*

4th edition, Steeley Print, 2003.

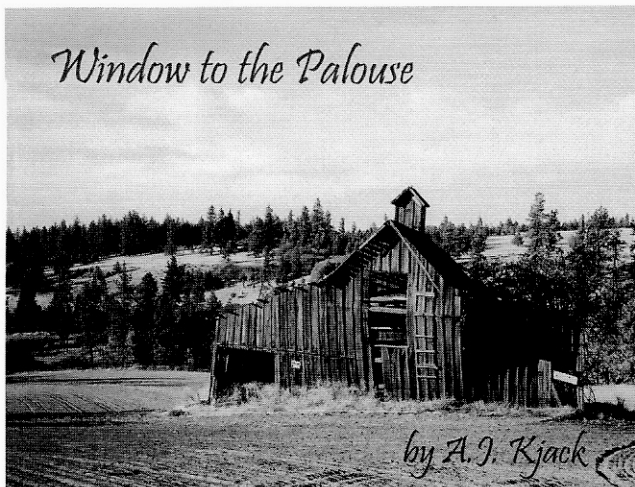
June Crithfield's book on life along the Snake River has proved a treasure trove of information since it first appeared in 1964. The area covered goes from Steptoe Canyon to Log Cabin Island, where Lower Granite Dam now sits. There are numerous photographs of life along the river especially of pre-dam years. This self-published fourth edition contains 124 pages and brings the story of the river and the people living along it up to the present.



Jeanne Kjack. *Window to the Palouse.*

2nd edition, 2004.

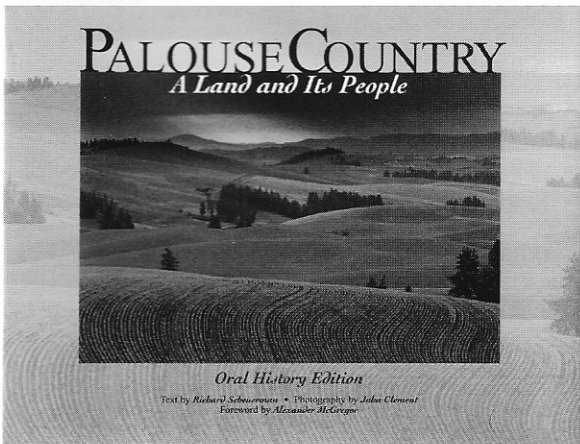
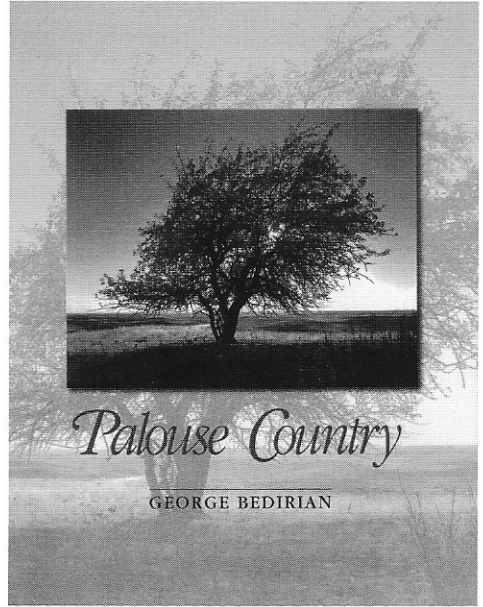
This 170-page book has been a most popular guide to places and events in the Palouse region. This revised edition updates information on local businesses. The book is organized by towns and historic sites, following the various highways through the Palouse. It is filled with photographs, maps and lively text, with great tidbits of history and community lore augmenting the useful information on each place.



George Bedirian. *Palouse Country.*

2nd edition, WSU Press, 2002.

This beautiful essay in photographs has been sorely missed since the original 1987 edition sold out. Now a second edition has been produced. The fantastic black and white photographs of local photographer George Bedirian are still the body of the book. This edition includes a few minor changes and substitutions of photographs, the author's introduction has been updated, and the two-page essay by Terry Lawhead is reproduced. The book hauntingly documents the natural and man-made landscape of the Palouse.



**Richard Scheuerman
and John Clement.
*Palouse Country: A
Land and Its People.***

2nd edition, Color Press,
Walla Walla, 2003.

When this book first appeared in 1994, it was an immediate success. Scheuerman is eloquent and knowledgeable on Palouse history. Clement captures in color the richness of the Palouse landscape. This edition, called the Oral History edition, contains much more than the eight added oral histories; it is filled with numerous historic photographs and the text has been extensively reworked.

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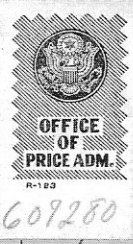
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