

Bunchgrass Historian

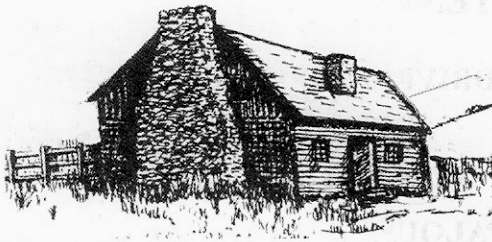


Whitman County Historical Society
Colfax, Washington

Volume 41
Number 3
2015



- PULLMAN'S DRIVE- IN RESTAURANTS
 - SACKED WHEAT FROM THE PALOUSE
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Whitman County Historical Society Colfax, Washington

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

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Current Issues \$4.00
Back Issues (Vol. 1-35) \$2.50

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COVER

Burgerville, in a 1958 photo, was built on Davis Way, the Colfax Highway, as Pullman's third drive-in restaurant in 1954. The running joke (with variations) was that a motorist might not remember driving thorough Pullman but would recall going through Burgerville. In the 1970s, the beloved establishment closed and its building was used by other businesses (including the Daily Grind) before demolition in late 2008.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Robert King's article in this issue carries on a theme he has developed in past issues of our journal – life in Pullman during the Twentieth Century. His articles have included “Going to the Movies,” “Auto-Camping in Pullman,” and “Pullman’s Motels.” Bob now gives us a delightful account of the drive-in window phenomena that became a standard part of life in Pullman after the first window was established on May 15, 1948.

The Photo Essay began as a photographic display created for the Palouse Empire Fair this past September. It generated such interest among the fair-goers that a version with captions was created for this issue.



Wagon with grain sacks in a 1902 photograph. Edward Moys is in the drivers seat and, from right to left is his fiancé Bertha Douglas, Lydia Moys, Layne Douglas and George Moys.

REMEMBERING PULLMAN'S DRIVE-IN RESTAURANTS 1948 – 2015

By Robert E. King

Just three years after World War II ended, the first drive-in restaurant opened in Pullman, ushering in a new type of dining experience that was sweeping the country. Starting in 1948, Pullman residents and visitors could eat or pick up food and drinks at differently designed establishments, where they could order at a counter or at a window, or through a microphone while seated in their car. By 1954, two more drive-ins had opened in Pullman. These three were Pullman's first generation of drive-in restaurants. Unlike later drive-ins, they were not part of major franchises.

Chuck's Drive-In (later operated as Lew's Drive-In, Joe's Drive-In, and Tiny's Drive-In) (1948-1963)

May 15, 1948, marked the opening of the town's first drive-in, called Chuck's Drive-In, located east of the viaduct bridge on the south side of the Moscow Highway near its junction with Stadium Way. The new business was welcomed with a front-page headline of "New Drive-In Finds Business Brisk" in the May 28, 1948, issue of the *Pullman Herald*. The paper reported that the new single-story structure had been built on partially filled land by Pullman businessman Charles E. "Chuck" Wilkins, who was the owner and manager. (At the time, he also operated Chuck's Surplus Store, located south of the viaduct.) Wilkins already had "hopes to fill in more land on the side of the building in the future."

The Herald article included a photo of the drive-in during its first days of operation. Around a dozen cars were shown parked in two rows in front of the



Chuck's Drive-In, Pullman Herald, May 28, 1948

structure. "The Drive-In features short orders, sandwiches and fountain goods, and has its kitchen in full operation." Unlike today's drive-ins, Chuck's did not have a drive-up window. Customers walked into Chuck's Drive-In and placed an order at a counter with at least some individualized preparation of the food.²

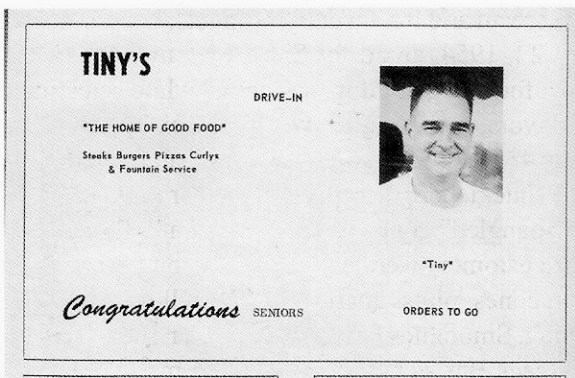
Less than a year after opening Chuck's Drive-In, Wilkins left Pullman for Spokane, where he became the manager for the Spokane Clubhouses. Subsequently, Robert "Bob" Anthony of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, operated Chuck's Drive-In but sold it in the spring of 1952 to Tim Holt, a World War II veteran originally from Los Angeles.³ Following Holt, there were several other owners and managers. The February 4, 1954, issue of the *Pullman Herald* (p. 8) reported "[The] new manager of Chuck's Drive-In is Dorsey E. Lewis who recently succeeded Murray Henry to the post. Mr. Henry, manager since early last fall [1953], resigned in order to give more time to his studies at WSC where he is majoring in hotel management."

The same article reported that Chuck's Drive-In was becoming more of a traditional restaurant. People not only could eat the usual hamburgers-and-fries type food but could also be served breakfast. Further, "a steam table is to be installed in the near future to facilitate the serving of regular meals." At that time, the eatery was open 21 hours per day, from 4:00 am to 1:00 am.

Judging by Pullman phonebooks, Chuck's Drive-In operated until 1957 under its original name. By November 1957, it was called Lew's Drive-In, owned by Orville Lee Lewis (1916-1984). In the fall of 1957 and spring of 1958, Orville Lewis donated money to Pullman High School to help fund the production of the 1958 student annual, the *Kamiakin*. Consequently, Lew's Drive-In was listed as a sponsor of the annual. Like other sponsors, Lewis was allowed to insert a short ad in the back of the yearbook. Besides the drive-in's name and address, his ad stated that Lew's Drive-In offered "freshly baked pizza pie."⁴

In August 1958, Lewis sold the drive-in to Joe Givens of Spokane for \$15,000,⁵ and by November it was known as Joe's Drive-In. A year later it be-

came Tiny's Drive-In for a new owner, Mainar "Tiny" Gabriel (1909-1994). Under all these owners, the drive-in kept the same phone number of LO-73521 (the "LO" standing for "Logan," which was Pullman's phone exchange at the time). In 1961, Gabriel helped support the *Kamiakin*, and "Tiny's" picture accompanied information about the location of the drive-in.



From the 1961 *Kamiakin*

Gabriel had previously operated the 410 Drive-In in Clarkston, Washington, which is still in business today. After running Tiny's Drive-In in Pullman for a few years, Gabriel sold it and bought a popular downtown Pullman restaurant, The Snack Bar. It was located on the east side of the former J.C. Penney store on Main Street and nearly opposite from Pullman's second drive-in, "Smoothies" (see below). Later, Gabriel worked for the City of Pullman Maintenance Department.

The August 10, 1961, issue of the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* reported that Roger and Gwendolyn Grove of Pullman purchased Tiny's Drive-In from Mainar Gabriel. The Groves ran two other Pullman restaurants, the Cougar Cottage on Colorado Street and the A & W Root Beer Drive-In on North Grand. They also held a lease for Dino's Pizza restaurant in Pullman but had subleased it to Les Birch by 1961.⁶

Tiny's Drive-In was last listed in the November 1962 Pullman phone directory. The business evidently closed sometime in 1963. No later drive-ins were listed at that location, and the original drive-in building was later torn down. Today, its former location is between "Tam's Place" restaurant, at 1005 E. Main Street, and the nearby Cenex gas station and market.

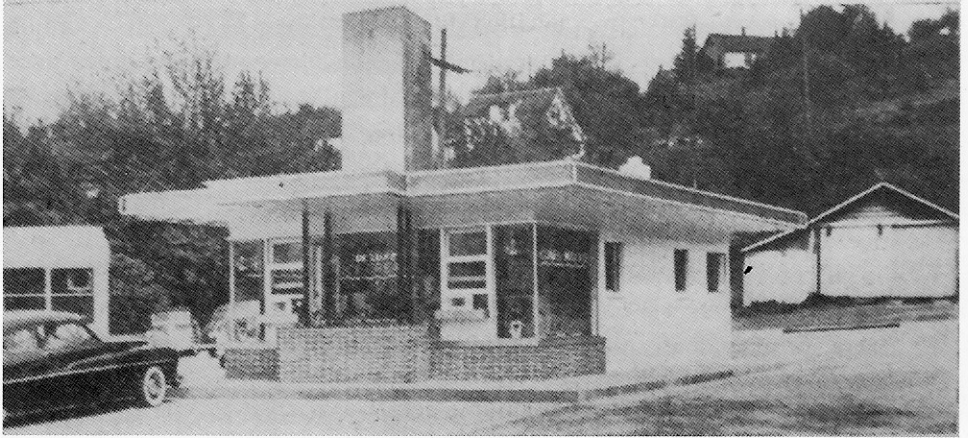
Smoothies Drive-In (also called "Lycan Drive-In") (1950-about 1956)

Meanwhile, the late spring of 1950 had seen the opening of Pullman's second drive-in. It was introduced to *Pullman Herald* newspaper readers in the June 2, 1950 edition (p.1) as "Pullman's new drive-in ice cream store." It was officially named the Lycan Drive-In, but more often it was called Smoothies, which was a trade name for its soft ice cream. It was located in downtown Pullman at 519 Paradise Street, near the intersection of Paradise and Main – a site now part of the Manor Lodge Motel property. Smoothies was built by Julius S. Lycan, a long-time Pullman businessman. Among other jobs he held in Pullman, he had been a bookkeeper for T. C. Martin as early as 1911, and from 1920 to 1942 he had operated a Dodge-Plymouth automobile agency in Pullman.⁷

Like Chuck's Drive-In, Smoothies was also initially a great success. While at first it only served soft and hard ice cream and frozen dairy products, later it offered other food. For example, on April 22, 1954, an ad for Smoothies in the *Pullman Herald* invited people to "pick up a foot long hot dog or Coney" while selecting a "giant thick shake" offered in 18 flavors, including the week's specialty of French vanilla and Bing cherry. For the July 4th week of 1954, Smoothies featured red (peppermint), white (vanilla), and blue (huckleberry) soft ice cream for milkshakes or sodas, or the same served in "star spangled" cones priced at 10 cents, 15 cents, or a jumbo for 25 cents.⁸ Prospective customers were encouraged to buy Smoothie's "home-made ice cream" for sale in cones, pints, quarts, or even gallons.

About a year after its opening, Smoothies Drive-In was given special recognition. Smoothies and the nearby Snack Bar were the first two Pullman restaurants to be awarded a "Public Health 'A' Award," given to "help identify sanitary eating

New Drive-In Ice Cream Store Opened



Smoothies Drive-In, Pullman Herald, June 2, 1950

establishments” in Whitman County. Four other recipients of this award in Whitman County were the Headquarters Tavern in Colfax, Jennart’s Café in LaCrosse, the Hooper Hotel at Hooper, and The Grill in Palouse.⁹

By late 1955, Mr. and Mrs. Al Oakes owned Smoothies, with Mrs. Oakes serving as its manager. Although she had worked at similar places in Wenatchee and elsewhere, she was originally from Whitman County, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lance Batty of Wawawai. A front-page story in the December 29, 1955, *Pullman Herald* reported that Smoothies had recently established a sandwich bar to supplement its ice cream trade and also served French fries and soft drinks, with Sharleen Hilliard and Patty Reed employed as waitresses.

From its start, Smoothies operated somewhat differently than Chuck’s Drive-In. While both had customers park their cars and walk to order their food, at Smoothies customers initially stayed outside of the flat-topped structure, lining up at a window to place an order and then waiting outside for food pick-up when it was ready. However, at least by the time that the sandwich bar was added in the mid-1950s, Smoothies also included some inside seating for customers, with waitresses serving the food.

The details surrounding the demise of Smoothies Drive-In are uncertain, but it appears not to have lasted many years, closing about 1956. The Moscow-Pullman city directory for 1957 does not include a listing for it. Smoothies may have been a victim of increasing competition. By the mid-1950s, Pullman’s third drive-in, Burgerville, had opened and was drawing crowds. It too sold soft ice cream, as did some other Pullman businesses by this time. For a time, Smoothies apparently sat vacant before demolition. By 1963, the nearby Manor Lodge Motel, built in 1959-

1960, owned the former Smoothies location. An addition to the motel completed in 1963 added more units and parking over the old Smoothies site.

Burgerville (1954-1975)

Of all of Pullman’s early drive-ins that no longer exist, “Burgerville” is the one most remembered and loved.¹⁰ It was located at 700 Davis Way (later renumbered as 530 NW Davis Way), which is the road to Colfax and Spokane. Its site was a fairly narrow strip of land owned by Mr. and Mrs. Earl Carson, who retained title to the land throughout the life of the popular drive-in.

Burgerville was started by William W. “Bill” Hazlett (1929-2013), a North Dakota native and long-time resident of Montana, where he lived both before and after being in Pullman.¹¹ Between 1950-1955, Hazlett had developed and owned four “fast food” restaurants, including three Dairy Freeze drive-ins (in Boise and Lewiston, Idaho, and in Kalispell, Montana), as well as Burgerville in Pullman. In mid-January of 1954, he obtained a building permit to construct “a drive-in restaurant and ice cream shop on Lot 410 on Davis Way at an estimated cost of \$3800.”¹² By mid-1954, Burgerville was operating and drawing crowds. One of the features that made Burgerville so special was its drive-up window, which the two earlier Pullman drive-ins did not have.

By the summer of 1955, having drive-up windows had become so popular in Pullman that the post office established a second drive-by mailbox on Main Street near the J.C. Penney Store (now Lilly Bea’s Consignment Shop). This was due to the great success of the first drive-by mailbox located on Paradise Street near the town’s



Burgerville, 1961 Kamiakin

post office (now the Paradise Creek brewery and restaurant).¹³ The convenience and fun of remaining in your vehicle extended to seeing movies in your car in the three drive-in movie businesses located in or near Pullman by the mid-1950s.¹⁴ These, too, had “snack bars,” variously offering burgers, hot dogs, fries, drinks, popcorn, candy and ice cream.

Despite its success, Hazlett did not stay in Pullman. On December 1, 1954, he sold what was described in the *Pullman Herald* (Dec. 9, 1954, p. 1) as a “drive-in lunch room.” The buyers were Maurice and Marjorie Geddes. After operating it for four years, they sold it in July of 1958 to Gordon R. “Jack” McDonald, a native of Polson, Montana.¹⁵ A year before the sale, Maurice Geddes had begun a 20-year career working as a shipping clerk for Washington State College, and the Geddeses had also become the owners of Major’s Apparel Store in downtown Pullman.¹⁶

Roy J. McDonald, Jack McDonald’s brother, learned about the thriving drive-in’s availability and helped Jack finance its purchase, along with another investor from Colfax. Of the three men, Jack McDonald was the only one to operate Burgerville personally, and he did so for over a decade to follow.

Under the new ownership, Burgerville became a legend in its own time. An old running joke was that when a person was asked what he or she remembered about traveling through Pullman, the answer was, “Not much, but I remember Burgerville.” A variation was that the traveler thought that Burgerville was the town’s name. This was because of the drive-in’s prominent location on the highway to Colfax and its large sign, more eye-catching than the city’s sign for Pullman.

Each day, with few exceptions, Jack McDonald was personally at the drive-in, working and directing its operation. At peak hours, he was assisted by up to three employees, who were mostly high school and college students. Jack’s four children (Jack, Bill, Bob, and Candy) also helped at Burgerville. Like other employees they were paid mostly minimum wage, which in the late 1950s was seventy cents per hour, slowly rising to around double that by the mid-1960s. For employees working 40 hours a week, that meant less than \$30 per week, but employees could eat and drink what they wanted (and some consequently added more than a few pounds).

In an interview in early 2015, Jack McDonald and his son Bob both told of the hard work and long hours it took to maintain Burgerville as a highly popular Pullman eating establishment. They described it as “quite a ride” and at times like “working in a cement mixer.” Burgerville was open seven days a week nearly year-round. Most years, it was closed only on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day. Burgerville began serving customers at 9:30 am and closed at 11:00 pm Sunday through Thursday, with closing time extended on Friday and Saturday until 1:00 am. Consequently, Jack was at work nearly all the time when his children were growing up and saw them most when they were working with him at the drive-in.

Bob McDonald told how he started work at Burgerville, with light tasks, at age 5 and graduated later to other work, which eventually included peeling and

chopping 50 pounds of onions at one time on several occasions. Despite doing this chopping outside with a wind blowing, Bob recalled not being able to see straight for some time afterward due to the strength of the onions' fumes. Another routine job that Bob tackled along with his older brothers and sister was peeling enormous amounts of potatoes, which were then cut into French fries with a special cutter. They used up to 1,100 "spuds" per week, so that annually 10-20 tons (or more) of potatoes ended up in the mouths of customers during the drive-in's peak years. Probably a similar volume of hamburgers and drinks were also consumed.

Sometimes the remainders of spilled milkshakes and drinks would be tossed out the car window before customers left, and sometimes those who ate their food on site would toss the paper wrappers and wax-coated cups on the ground. To solve this, Jack McDonald placed four 55-gallon drums with their tops cut off along the Burgerville property and hired two high school boys to clean up the premises before school each day. One was the son of former owner Maurice Geddes. Despite this effort, litter did become a problem. Burgerville litter, including its paper cups marked with the Burgerville name, would sometimes blow off the premises and down over the hill.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the cost for a regular hamburger at Burgerville was 35 cents. Adding another 30 cents for a generous serving of fries and 35 cents for a milkshake made for a filling fast-food meal at a dollar plus tax. If a customer wanted something different, Burgerville offered fish and chips, as well as shrimp meals. A big order of the drive-in's hand-made fries, four large shrimp, and a serving of Cole slaw (handmade by Jack McDonald) cost \$1.75. This was considered "high end" Burgerville food. The fish and shrimp were bought frozen and kept in freezers inside a small building. While not really visible from the road, this structure included a lower floor with storage and a non-public restroom.

In December 1970, an ad in the Pullman phonebook described Burgerville's food as "Something Superior for your Interior," including "Cougar Special" and "Double Cougar" hamburgers, prawns and chips, milkshakes, fish n' chips, shrimp, and other types of "short orders." The drive-in still operated seven days a week, now opening at 10:00 am daily and closing at 11:00 pm on weekdays and 1:00 am on weekends.

On a typical day at Burgerville, the busy periods were around lunch and dinnertime, with four people staffing the drive-in. One took orders by intercom from customers in cars at the four ordering stations. Another (most often Jack McDonald) was the cook. A third person assembled the order, getting drinks and ice cream cones with soft vanilla or chocolate ice cream, and a fourth person dispensed the food through the drive-up window, took payment, and make change (no credit or debit cards at that time). At less busy times, fewer people were used. For the staff inside Burgerville, the building was often hot and smokey, and the business's air

conditioning sometimes did not function properly, especially during hot weather.

Customers would form a line in their cars (bumper to bumper) and would wait their turn to place an order at the closest of the four ordering stations along a back fence on the edge of the property. Eager diners placed their orders via microphones after reading menus posted above the stations. At busy times, the line of cars extended off the Burgerville property and even backed up into downtown Pullman, causing traffic problems. This most often happened on Sunday evenings, when the dorms on campus had no food service. Policemen would sometimes warn and occasionally even ticket cars causing the traffic jam.

So, why was Burgerville so popular? It was more than the novelty of using a drive-up window and ordering through a speaker. Local consensus was that the pleasing taste and freshness of the food, more than anything else, was what made Burgerville a hit. Its hamburger meat was fresh (never frozen) and came from a firm in nearby Colfax. Before being served, the buns were always steamed in a large steamer that held 3-4 packs of buns at once. On a busy day, burgers were flying off the griddle into buns and paper wrappers and then into the hands of eager customers within a minute or two. Jack once timed the whole process and determined that cars could pull up to Burgerville's order stations, place an order, and be at the drive-up window for pick-up within 90 seconds! This was truly "fast food!"

Tasty food and quick service created a loyal following, and some people even outside of Pullman routinely brought their families to Burgerville several times a week. Jack McDonald recalled that Palouse's Bagott family (of Bagott Motors) came frequently, with the Bagott daughters especially fond of Burgerville's swirl soft ice cream cones. Burgerville's location was also helpful for promoting sales. Located on a very busy road, it was also near Pullman High School and thus was available for juniors and seniors to show off their cars while grabbing an alternative meal to the school cafeteria food or an "un-cool" sack lunch reluctantly brought from home.

After owning and operating Burgerville for about a decade, Jack McDonald sold it in the later 1960s to Ed Hochsprung of Colfax for his son Bruce to operate. However, there was an unanticipated delay in Bruce Hochsprung's arrival, and McDonald continued operating his former business for a few months as a favor to the new owner. Finally, Bruce did arrive and Burgerville came under the full management and operation of the Hochsprungs. It remained their business until closing in 1975.

In the late 1960s, Pullman was starting to see a shift in the drive-in business away from eating in cars toward a greater preference for eating indoors. This was a return to the original style of dining in town and also similar to what some of the earlier Pullman drive-ins had begun accommodating when they added inside seating. But creating indoor seating just wouldn't work for Burgerville. There was too little space for an enlarged business. Also, the initial advantage of Burgerville's location had become a problem. The drive-in occupied an area relatively close to the highway, with the road right-of-way extending into the property quite signifi-

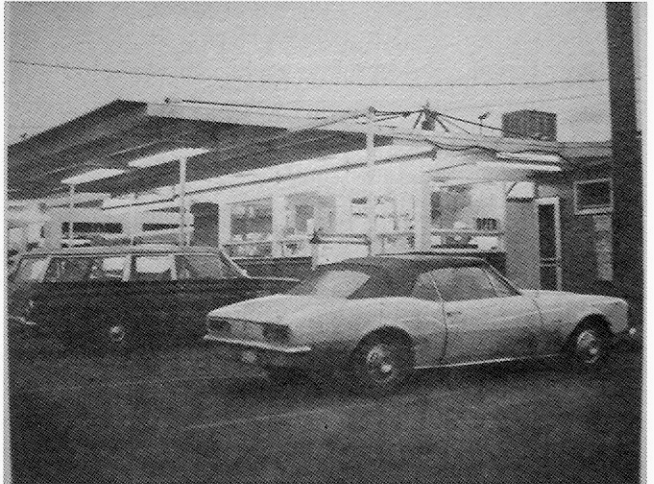
cantly. In the winter, snow was plowed from Davis Way onto the right-of-way, thus onto Burgerville entry and parking area. At times, that necessitated extra plowing to enable cars to have access to the drive-in. And finally, more competition arrived in Pullman in the mid-1970s

After Burgerville closed, the building sat empty for some time. By 1979, it was in use as a distribution center for the *Spokesman-Review* and *Spokane Chronicle* newspapers of Spokane. Later, the building served for a time as a leasing office for a new trailer park on Davis Way. The final occupant of the Burgerville structure was the “Daily Grind,” which opened in the building on June 12, 1995.¹⁷ It sold espresso and other drinks-to-go, once again using the original drive-up window, until it closed on June 1, 2005. After that, the old Burgerville building sat unoccupied for more than three years. Finally, on November 10, 2008, it was unceremoniously demolished. A small picture of its destruction, snapped by former Pullman resident Tim J. Marsh, was printed in the December 5, 2008 issue of the *Moscow-Pullman Daily News* (p. 2A). Today (2015), the site remains vacant. But the memory of Pullman’s Burgerville is still held in great fondness and nostalgia by many local residents of today.

A & W Root Beer Drive-In (1958-1979)

Four years after Burgerville opened with the first drive-up order and pickup system, an A & W Root Beer Drive-In opened in Pullman, the first in the town to be part of a chain. On July 31, 1958, the *Pullman Herald* included a story (p. 6) about the new drive-in’s open house, scheduled for the next day, along with a full-page paid advertisement (Sec. 3, p. 3). The new establishment was owned by Phil Dorner (previously involved in a similar business in Moses Lake) and located on the east side of North Grand Avenue near its intersection with Stadium Way, across from Dissmore’s grocery store, where today’s Nuevo Vallarta Mexican restaurant now occupies the old A & W building.

Pullman’s new A & W was closely patterned after other A & W Root Beer Drive-Ins. This included having a customary A & W sign, with the same design used on its glassware, napkins, and paper straw wrappers. According to the open house



A & W Root Beer, 1971 Kamiakin



announcement, the new drive-in restaurant had parking for 25 cars. They were to be served by five “carhops” — the first of many local Pullman young ladies to work there over the years. The initial five were Lois Mikkelsen, Amata Aronson, Sharon Bradley, Kathy Burgess, and Judi Johnson.

For a short time Phil Dorner managed the drive-in with the help of his wife and two children, but on September 10, 1958, he turned over the management to Harry Harris. Within a few years, Dorner sold the business. It was owned for a time by Roger and Gwendolyn Grove,¹⁸ later by D. M. Bradley, and finally in 1967 by Gordon R. “Jack” McDonald, the long-time owner and operator of Burgerville, which he sold in the later 1960s.¹⁹

Employing carhops for the delivery of fast food presented a new variation on drive-in dining. Instead of parking and coming into a building to order and pick-up food (as at Chuck’s, Pullman’s first drive-in), or ordering from an outside window (as at Smoothies, Pullman’s second drive-in), or driving by a speaker and placing an order and then picking it up at a drive-up window (as at Burgerville, Pullman’s third drive-in), customers at the new A & W Drive-In had the option of either coming to the counter to order or being served by an attendant in their cars.

Drivers could head-in park either in front of the A & W or under a tall car shelter later built by Jack McDonald on the south side of the building, using scrap

iron from Scrappy Richardson's nearby junkyard. Initially, carhops took most of the orders, but in later years individual ordering stations were added for each parking space and carhops only delivered the food. These stations had microphones for speaking to the personnel inside the drive-in and menus with prices on large signs.

When the food was ready, a carhop clipped a folding tray to the car window, which was rolled up a few inches. The padded trays were braced against the exterior of the car in a way that would not scratch the paint. Food and drinks, plus napkins, straws, and plastic utensils, were put on the tray. The customer paid using cash or a check. Carhops carried change and thus were able to complete the transaction, with tips welcomed by the (usually) friendly and smiling servers. Once the food was eaten, the customer again used the call button to announce that the tray was ready for pick-up.

Always a favorite at the A & W Drive-In was its signature root beer, served in hefty glass mugs with the A & W decal. The mugs were frosted, meaning frozen in a chest-type freezer. Jack's son Bob, who worked there for several years, recalled more than once having the skin on his hands stick to the mugs because they were so cold! When a family came to the drive-in, the children were given free miniature glass mugs of root beer, which were eagerly received. Sometimes the kids persuaded their parents to bring home an additional gallon jug of root beer. Many other loyal patrons without families also did the same. Another favorite was the A & W root beer float made with vanilla ice cream. The floats came in taller mugs also with decals. In 1958 when Pullman's A & W Root Beer Drive-In opened, the price was 20 cents for a root beer float 25 cents for a large mug of root beer.

It was particularly important for the carhops to retrieve everything before a customer left, in part due to the replacement expense of the special glassware. Nonetheless, sometimes customers kept "souvenirs" that today are found in antique stores or on websites for sale. On occasion some people deliberately drove away with the tray and napkin holder (which cost about \$3 in the mid-1960s) after not paying at all due to the trick of having the food delivered, but then asking for something more before paying and having the carhop leave to get it. Jack McDonald reported that when he wasn't too busy in the kitchen, he would sometimes chase after such wayward A & W Drive-In customers in his car. One time he followed two young women onto the WSU campus and confronted them, still in their car, with the purloined A & W glassware quite visible in their laps. Despite being caught red-handed, they claimed not to have taken the glassware! Eventually, the cost of replacing glass mugs forced the A & W to use disposable paper cups.

Over the years, Pullman's A & W faced other incidents. On a few occasions the back door was kicked in, although nothing major was stolen. Usually it was only some buns and hot dogs. Jack McDonald was not so concerned about it, since the culprits were probably just poor students or other people in need of food. After the ordering stations were installed, careless drivers sometimes scraped them with

their car mirrors causing damage, or hit the heavy iron poles of the car canopy. On one occasion, a car driven by a probably drunk driver had to be pulled out of the nearby creek with a large chain after it failed to stop under the car canopy.

The United Fruit Company purchased the A & W's parent company in 1963. In late 1978 or early 1979, Jack McDonald was notified that if he wished to retain the A & W franchise, he would have to pay a 6% royalty on sales. Jack refused,²⁰ surrendered his franchise, and changed the name of the restaurant to "McD's." By that time, after several remodelings that included inside seating, the business had ceased to be a drive-in and had only indoor dining.

In the early 1980s, Jack leased the building to a series of other restaurants, none of which operated as drive-ins. By 1983, it had become Sam's Old Southern Bar-B-Que. As Pullman phonebooks show, Sam's ended its business at the location in 1988. Other restaurants followed. In 1990, Miguel's Mexican Restaurant was located there, while in 1991, it was Benny's Philippine Cuisine. After five or more remodeling jobs over the years, the old A & W Drive-In building is today's Neuvo Vallarta Restaurant. The original tall car canopy on the south side of the establishment remains in use today and is a reminder of the original business, now only a fond memory.

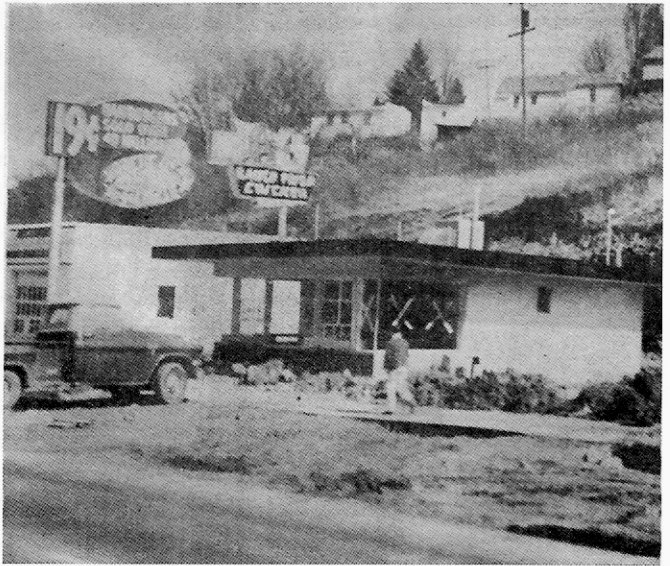
The Parkview Drive-In (1960- about 1962)

The next drive-in restaurant in Pullman lasted a much shorter time than the A & W. The May 12, 1960, the *Pullman Herald* (p. 7) reported plans for a new Pullman drive-in soon to open, the town's fifth since 1948. It was the Parkview Drive-In, located across from Pullman's City Park and built by Bob Yates, owner of the adjacent Parkview Miniature Golf Course, which had opened in August of 1959.²¹ The new drive-in offered "picnic tables beneath the overhang of the modern pumice block and rough-beam construction building" as well as indoor counter service. The menu included "barbequed chicken and spareribs, barbequed beef and pork sandwiches, and barbequed burgers." When interviewed, Mr. Yates was optimistic about the new enterprise's future, as he thought that having the only combination of a miniature golf course with a "fine eating establishment" in the entire country would bring continuing success. Nonetheless, the facility closed after only two years, probably a victim of its somewhat out-of-the-way location and more competition from a sixth Pullman drive-in. The Parkview Drive-In was listed in Pullman phone directories in November 1960 and November 1961, but not afterwards.

Arctic Circle Drive-In (1961-about 1975)

April of 1961 saw the opening of another franchise drive-in, the Arctic Circle, located at 520 Grand (now South 400 Grand). The owners were two brothers with early Pullman roots, Marshall and Tom Neill, and their partner Hartman L. Gearhiser. According to the April 13, 1961, *Pullman Herald* (Sec. 2, p. 1) the cost

of the new business was \$30,000, and it was “leased for operation by the Arctic Circle Drive-In Corporation of Salt Lake City.” The frontage of the new drive-in was 100 feet “assuring ample parking.” A photo of the soon-to-open restaurant showed its sign already in place stating: “19C Hamburger - Sold Over 40 Million.” Like all Arctic Circle Drive-Ins of the time, it featured the trademark character of a rooster named “Acey”



Arctic Circle, Pullman Herald, April 13, 1961

wearing a western hat, with a holster strapped around its feathered waist. In time, the character’s moniker inspired a running joke for the drive-in’s name: “Acey-Greasy.”

In 1964, according to the Moscow-Pullman City Directory, Howard Sharp owned or managed Pullman’s Arctic Circle, but from 1966 through 1975, it was owned or managed by Mrs. Margaret T. “Peggy” Robinson, after whose time the business apparently soon ended. On December 4, 1968, the *Daily Evergreen*, newspaper of Washington State University, featured Mrs. Robinson as “merchant of the week” with a profile and picture (p. 12). It reported that she had been in Pullman at the Arctic Circle for three years, starting January 1, 1965. Originally from Helena, Montana, where she raised four children and was also a grandmother, she had come to Pullman to pursue her education at WSU and was planning to become a priest.

The same article added that the Arctic Circle specialized “in good food, moderately priced with speedy service,” including “Hamburgers, Chicken, Tacos, Ice Cream products and soft drinks.” Arctic Circle tacos were 34 cents each. At times there were specials. The December 11, 1970, *Daily Evergreen* (p 3) listed four cheeseburgers for just one dollar on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. An ad in the May 14, 1970, *Pullman Herald* (p. 2) advertised Arctic Circle milkshakes for twenty-five cents — probably cheaper than milkshakes at most other local drive-ins.

According to one frequent patron, Arctic Circle’s burgers were made in advance and kept in warming trays for quick sale — originally at 19 cents each, the cheapest price in Pullman. They were garnished with special sauce that resembled Thousand Island dressing. Judging by its listings in Pullman phone directories, the Arctic Circle closed under that name sometime after August 1975, though later

another drive-in would operate for a time at the same location.

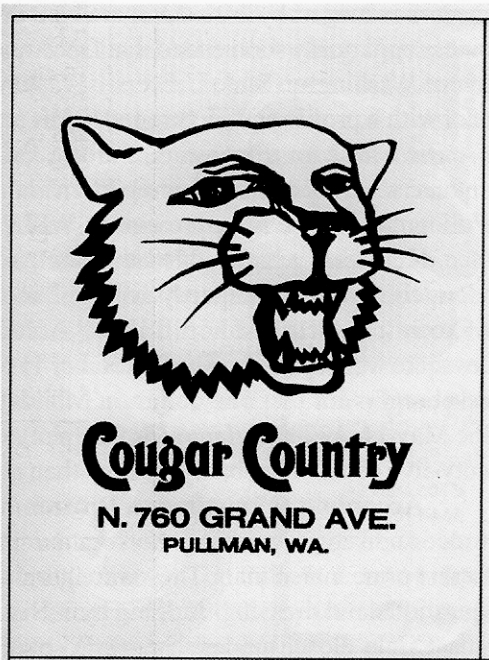
Taco Time (1970-2009)

Pullman's Taco Time opened in 1970 at 410 E. Main Street (now 530 Main Street) across the street from where Smoothies had operated in the 1950s. Its owner was Bruce Finch,²² who remained with the franchise until it closed almost 40 years later. This new restaurant was advertised simply as "Taco Time," thus not directly calling itself a "drive-in," even though it had a drive-up window for ordering and receiving food without getting out of your car. Later, by the early 21st century, this type of arrangement would more often be called a "drive-thru." Taco Time included interior seating, with some parking provided around the outside of the business. The fare was described in a Taco Time ad in the 1976 Pullman phonebook as "Americanized Mexican Food," with the establishment offering "inside dining [and] orders to go."

At least two amusing rumors circulated about Taco Time involving cats. One was that large empty cat food tins could be found in its trash, suggesting that cat food was used in the tacos.²³ The other was that partial remains of dead cats were found in its trash. While that notion (certainly false) that Taco Time's tacos might contain cat food or cat meat may have given pause (paws?) to some people, the majority of customers laughed it off and the Taco Time in Pullman thrived for nearly 40 years.²⁴ About 2009, Taco Time closed and today the Oasis restaurant occupies the original Taco Time building. The drive-thru window is still in place but is no longer in service.

Cougar Country Drive-In (1973-operating in 2015)

In 1973, another family owned, non-franchise drive-in opened at 760 North Grand Avenue. The still highly successful Cougar Country Drive-In occupies land formerly part of Scrappy Richardson's junkyard. Besides a drive-up window for ordering and picking up food, the new drive-in offered indoor seating for 88 customers, who ordered and paid for their food at an inside counter. Customers were given an order number and would pick up their food when their number was called—a system still used




in 2015. The new business was established by Raymond E. Stephens. In 1988, his son Ray reflected on the long life of the family-owned establishment.²⁵ He stated that the Cougar County Drive-In produced “an old-fashioned kind of burger,” and their clientele included “a lot of the working class people.” Thus, it was operating more in the model of the earlier privately-owned Pullman drive-ins, whose menus offered a variety of food items not found in the standardized menus of later franchise outlets.

In 2013, the business celebrated 40 years in Pullman with a special event. For a day, menu prices were rolled back to those charged in 1973. Long-time Cougar Country patrons and new customers alike were elated with the nostalgic (and economical) event. In 2015, Rhonda Witt-Miller of Pullman owned the still highly successful Cougar Country Drive-In. As a measure of the restaurant’s current popularity, at busy times cars lining up to use the drive-up window extend out onto Grand Avenue and temporarily block the right-hand lane of the street.²⁶

Pac-Out Drive-In (1977-1978)

After the Arctic Circle closed in 1975, a second drive-in using the same building opened for a short time as the Pac-Out Drive-In. The 1978 Moscow-Pullman City Directory reported that DuWayne Duran was its owner or manager. It operated under that name for only a short time. But by August 1979, Jerry’s Restaurant, owned by Jerome Brummel, was in business there. Jerry’s closed in 1985, and the building was soon remodeled and expanded, opening later that same year as the New Garden Restaurant, owned by Loi Vinh Lam. It continues in business today, and its front still resembles the original Arctic Circle Drive-In.²⁷



PAC-OUT DRIVE IN

Fresh Burgers, Fries and Ice Cold Drinks

We Pack Em' in at Pac-Out

S. 400 Grand St. Phone 567-2222

Pac-Out Drive-In 1977 Kamiakin

Serv-A-Burger (1982-1986)

The next Pullman drive-in restaurant to open was Serv-A-Burger in 1986. It was located at East 1005 Main Street (on the road to Moscow), near where Pullman’s first drive-in, Chuck’s, had been. Serv-A-Burger was part of a small chain of establishments by the same name. Like some of its predecessors, Serv-A-Burger

operated a drive-up system of ordering and pick-up. But its location was a bit unnerving to some customers. The drive-through lane circled the building and cars had to pass rather close to a steep drop-off behind the structure to get to the drive-up window.²⁸ Serv-A-Burger closed in 1986. By 1990, the Lotus Restaurant occupied the building, and now Tam's Restaurant is well established there.²⁹

Pop's Kozy Korner Drive-Inn (1987-1988)

The shortest-lived drive-in (but called a "drive-inn") ever to operate in Pullman opened in 1987 at East 1115 Main Street, farther east on the Moscow highway than Serv-A-Burger. It was first listed at that location in the December 1987 Pullman phonebook, but the December 1988 edition showed that it had already been replaced by today's Sella's Restaurant, a non-drive-in. In all, Pop's lasted barely a year or even less.

The End of an Era – The Third Generation of Pullman Drive-Ins

After Pop's Kozy Korner, no other non-chain or locally-owned drive-ins would be built in Pullman. Already the drive-in business was changing. The year 1986 marked the opening of the town's first McDonald's Restaurant, owned by Bob Hallis.³⁰ It was built in the new Wheatland Shopping Center.³¹ In many ways this was a turning point in Pullman's experience with drive-ins. It was the first of eight internationally known major corporate drive-in restaurants to open in Pullman between 1986 and 2015.

The next was an Arby's that opened as a "drive-thru" restaurant in 1990, also in the Wheatland Shopping Center. Kenny Eng, a longtime Pullman restaurateur, operated it. His family had previously operated the Oriental Restaurant in downtown Pullman since the 1930s. Also in 1990, the first Pullman Burger King opened at 1040 NE Colorado Street on the WSU campus. Because of the limited size of its lot and its location on a hill, it lacked a drive-thru window, and it closed within a few years. The building is now owned by Washington State University and is used by parking services.

After Burger King, five more drive-ins opened in Pullman, including a Dairy Queen with a drive-thru window at 1485 South Grand. It is in operation today, with its sign saying "DQ Grill & Chill." In the summer of 1998, a second McDonalds opened at 400 N.E. Stadium Way, a site previously occupied by a service station, across from a mall that was originally a Rosauer's grocery store. The site was expanded to allow for more parking and a drive-thru window. A newspaper article on the new restaurant³² reported the McDonald's Corporation would own the building; but the land was leased from Darl Roberts and Mark Dissmore of Dissmore & Roberts L.L.C. Albert Eng, who was then also managing the McDonald's in the Wheatland Mall, was to operate the new McDonald's. The same area saw three more drive-ins locate nearby — a second Burger King (also later closed and demolished), a Jack

in the Box, and, most recently, in 2014, a Taco Bell that occupies a new building standing on the approximate site of the second Burger King building.

As of 2015, all six surviving drive-ins of the group of eight just mentioned had drive-thru windows and inside seating for customers ordering at the counter. This is also true of the Cougar Country Drive-In, the only still-operating drive-in established before Pullman's first McDonalds arrived in 1986.

In sum, as of 2015, Pullman has a total of seven operating drive-ins (Cougar Country, 2 McDonalds, Arbys, Dairy Queen (DQ), Jack in the Box, and Taco Bell), including six that are franchises of widely known corporations. Since 1987, no smaller, individually designed drive-in restaurants have come to Pullman. And whether they will again remains to be seen. But the evolving history of Pullman's drive-ins suggests that the future may yet hold more surprises for this type of restaurant business that began in the mid-20th century.



Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pullman Herald, August 30, 1969

1 *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, Spokane, Wash., Jan. 14, 1949, p. 20.

2 Wallis Friel, personal communication 1/3/2015, reported that Chuck's used carhops with roller skates for a time in the later years.

3 *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, Spokane, Wash., Jan. 14, 1949 p. 20 and April 22, 1952, p. 70.

4 "Pizza pie" was a term often used in the 1950s for pizza. In 1958, when Lew's was advertising pizza, few other places in Pullman offered it.

5 *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, Spokane, Wash., Aug. 22, 1958, p. 30.

6 *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, Spokane, Wash., Aug. 10, 1961, p. 68.

7 *The Pullman Tribune*, Pullman, Wash., July 28, 1911, p. 1; *Pullman Herald*, Pullman, Wash., June 16, 1960, p. 1. In mid-1960, Julius & Hazel Lycan were the owners of Pullman's Manor Lodge Motel, which included the old Smoothies Drive-In location.

8 *Pullman Herald*, July 1, 1954, 2nd Section, p. 1.

9 *The Palouse Republic*, Palouse, Wash., July 27, 1951, p. 1.

- 10 Much of the information about Burgerville not otherwise attributed came from Jack McDonald and his son Bob during an interview on Jan. 8, 2015, in Pullman.
- 11 William W. Hazlett obituary, on-line at Find A Grave, 1/12/2015.
- 12 *Pullman Herald*, Jan. 29, 1954, p. 7.
- 13 *Pullman Herald*, Aug. 25, 1955, front-page article: "City Gets Second Motorists' Mailbox – From Letters to Hamburgers, It's Drive-Ins."
- 14 "Drive-In Movie Theaters of the Palouse," by Robert E. King. *Bunchgrass Historian*, Vol. 34, No. 1.
- 15 *Pullman Herald* July 10, 1958, p. 1; Jack McDonald, personal communication 1/8/2015; obituary of Maurice Geddes (1915-1999) in *Moscow-Pullman Daily News*, Moscow, Idaho, July 8, 1999, p. 3A.
- 16 *Pullman Herald* July 24, 1958, p. 1
- 17 *Moscow-Pullman Daily News*, Weekend June 11 & 12, 2005, p. 1C.
- 18 *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, August 10, 1961 reported that Roger and Gwendolyn Grove of Pullman were the owners of Pullman's A & W Root Beer Drive-In. Polk's 1964 and 1966 Moscow-Pullman Directory listed the A & W Root Beer with D. M. Bradley the owner.
- 19 Many of the details of how the A & W Root Beer Drive-In operated from the later 1950s onward came from Jack McDonald and his son Bob during an interview on 1/8/2015 in Pullman.
- 20 Later, Jack would have some second thoughts. In losing the franchise, he also lost being able to receive royalties for all A & W products sold locally, including canned and bottled A & W root beer in Pullman supermarkets. Revenue from that might have more than balanced out the expense of the new 6% royalty.
- 21 *Pullman Herald*, Thurs., Aug. 13, 1959, p. 2.
- 22 In 2015, Bruce Finch owned Happy Days Corporation.
- 23 Personal Communication, Richard Old, January 13, 2015.
- 24 My grandmother, Edna Adams (1886-1972), who lived in Pullman until her death in 1972, somehow heard this rumor and cautioned my mother, Blanche King, a long-time Home Economics instructor at the Pullman High School and WSU, about the possible "cat meat" tacos. However, my mother (who liked Taco Time tacos) quipped that if so, it was tasty cat meat and kept on buying them. Others told me similar stories.
- 25 *Moscow-Pullman Daily News*, Jan. 7, 1988, p. 6.
- 26 The realignment of Grand Avenue in the early 2010s trimmed some frontage off the property, perhaps losing up to a car length for its drive-through window. (Monica and Don Peters, Personal Communication 12/31/2014)
- 27 Notes on Pullman businesses by Pullman historian Esther Pond Smith (1899-1988) on file at the Whitman County Historical Society Archive.
- 28 Personal Communication, Pat Mueller, Jan. 5, 2015.
- 29 Personal Communication, David C. and Sang T. Shermer, Jan. 7, 2015.
- 30 *Moscow-Pullman Daily News*, Jan. 7, 1988, p. 6.
- 31 *Moscow-Pullman Daily News*, Dec. 29, 2010, p. 2A (25 Years Ago Column).
- 32 *Moscow-Pullman Daily News*, April 6, 1998, p. 1B.



SACKED WHEAT FROM THE PALOUSE

A Photo Essay



Sack sewing was a harvest job that took considerable skill, and a good sewer did the job in less than a minute. Sewers averaged several hundred sacks a day. For all that they were not paid much over ten dollars a day.



Sacks of wheat near Uniontown



Horse-drawn wagon loaded with sacked grain at the warehouse of the Tekoa Mercantile Company

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