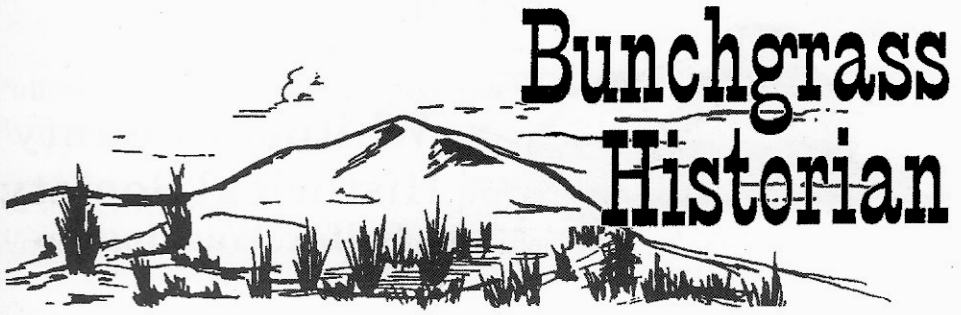


Bunchgrass Historian



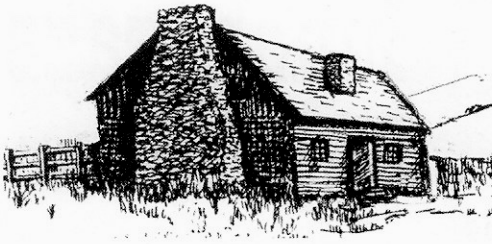
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Pullman and the World's Biggest American Flag in 1909

A Pioneer History



Whitman County Historical Society Colfax, Washington

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

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Cover: Pauline Mitchell's flag carried along Seattle street on Pullman Day and Flag Day, June 14, 1909.

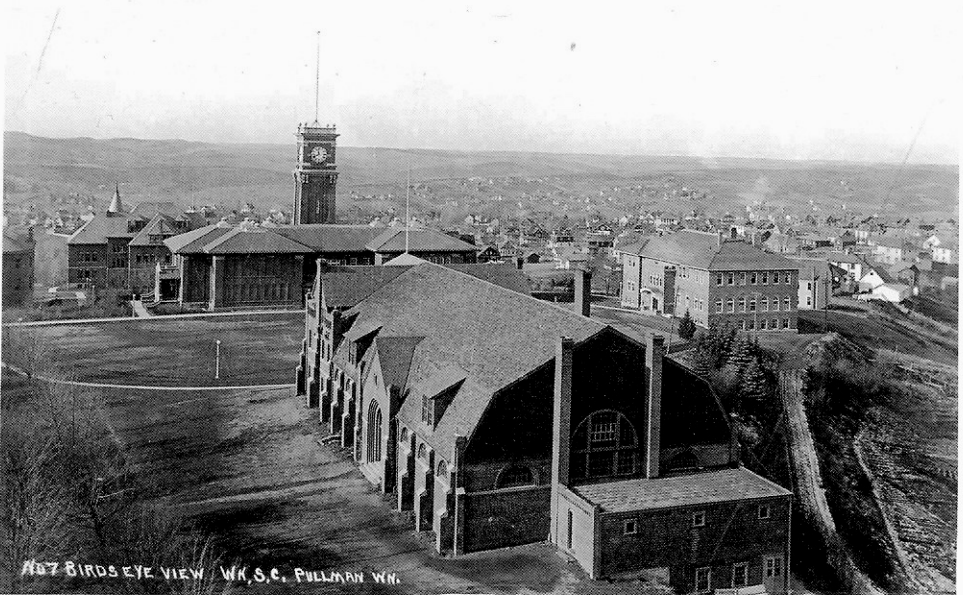
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Written by Helen Bates James Gerding about 1954

AUTHORS

Our long-time readers will recognize **Robert King** as not only an avid collector of Pullmaniana but as one who researches each item he acquires. His article here is the result of his acquisition of an original photograph of Pullman's largest flag and his exhaustive research about it.

Helen Bates James Gerding (1873-1963) came to Colfax in 1877 when her father, William H. James, the second Governor of Nebraska, was appointed Registrar of the Land Office in Colfax. The elder James' lived the rest of their lives in Colfax, here they raised their four children. Helen, the youngest in the family, wrote this delightful account of growing up in Colfax in the 1880s.



*Gymnasium at WSC, where Military Balls were held
(Now site of Holland Library)*



Largest American flag and W.S.C. cadets in front of Science Hall, 1909. This image was used in the Pullman Herald, June 18, 1909, for an article on Pullman Day at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition.

Pullman and the World's Biggest American Flag in 1909

By Robert E. King

This is the story of a most remarkable American flag that was created in Pullman, Washington, in 1908-1909. It would achieve both national and international attention. This is also the story of the woman who created it.

By the early 1900s, Washington State College in Pullman had a thriving military program that provided military training to young men. Graduates typically entered the army with commissions upon completion of college. It was a tradition that dated back to soon after the college opened in 1892, with students serving in the Spanish American War.

Besides courses in military tactics, history, and drilling, the college's military program also sponsored special social gatherings. By the early 1900s, the most important was its annual military ball, held each February 22, on George Washington's birthday. The annual goal was to make the decorations different and outdo the past year's event. The ball, held in the college gymnasium (now where the WSU library is located), was typically festooned with various flags, streamers, and patriotic symbols. Those for the year 1909 were the grandest of all. They would include what was heralded as the world's biggest flag. It would be a gigantic creation: 39 feet wide and over 100 feet long! As shown in photographs, it was large enough when unfurled to cover nearly the entire side of the college's Science Hall.

So how did it come to be? Whose idea was it? The earliest mention of the flag was on the front page of the *Pullman Herald* on February 12, 1909. Under a short article entitled "A Monster Flag," the following appeared:

For the annual military ball, to be held in the gymnasium of Washington State College on Monday evening, February 22, what is believed to be the largest flag in the United States is being made by Mrs. H. E. Mitchell, wife of Captain Mitchell, U.S.A. military instructor at the college ... The stripes will each be one yard in width. The flag is being made by Mrs. Mitchell and assistants and will cover one side of the gymnasium. While there have been "living flags" composed of little girls dressed in the colors of the national emblem that were larger than this, it is believed that no flag made of bunting ever equaled this monster which Mrs. Mitchell and assistants will hang up as one of the many unique decorations for the ball which is expected to eclipse all previous social events in brilliancy and number of attendance.¹

The event subsequently surpassed all expectations. On February 26, 1909, the *Pullman Herald* gave a glowing account of its great success:

Not in the memory of the oldest veteran of the W.S.C. has a more brilliant affair been given than the Military Ball at the Armory on Monday evening, February 22. The Armory was magnificently decorated. Each company of the Regiment, the Band, Signal Corps, Hospital Corps and Bugle Corps had been given a section of the Balcony and the result



February 22, 1909, Military Ball

was a succession of cozy corners, secluded retreats, tapestried corridors displays of pen[n]ants, pictures and curios, while overhead and part way down in front were hung bright streamers ... Upon the high wall at the west end of the armory an immense seal of the W.S.C. had been formed which covered the entire wall, and which was brightened by a circle of lights. The whole thing was covered by a roof of the stars and stripes in the shape of a huge flag which hung on [in] waves the whole length of the Armory. Above the flag were a number of lights which shining down through old Glory cast a beautiful glow over the brilliant scene....

The well-planned events at the ball only made it more impressive, with the gigantic flag further featured. The official start of the gala included a 40-piece military band playing stirring military marches while the event's organizers, college officials, and other attendees paraded into the auditorium. Proudly leading were Captain Harry Mitchell and his wife Pauline, the "Betsy Ross" of the magnificent flag hung overhead. Following the Mitchells were Lieutenant and Mrs. Andrew Smith of the University of Idaho in neighboring Moscow; W.S.C. President Dr. Enoch A. Bryant and his wife; and Professor and Mrs. Cleveland. Following them were more military officers from the University of Idaho, W.S.C. officers, W.S.C. enlisted men, and finally the civilians. In all, around 400 people were in the grand entry parade for the ball, with the balcony filled by additional spectators, who vicariously and enthusiastically, participated in the impressive event.

When the entry parade was completed, around 200 couples were present, and the military band played one last march before dismissal. It was succeeded by an orchestra, which then entertained until 1:00 am. During that time, there were two "military specials" only for men in uniform and their ladies. This included Captain Mitchell and his wife. "During one of these [special dances] lights were turned out and searchlight from above was played down through the flag, upon the heads of the dancers, making an especially beautiful picture."²

While the success of the event and glowing publicity afterward greatly pleased the Mitchells, an even greater honor lay ahead for Mrs. Mitchell and her magnificent flag.



February 22, 1910, Military Ball

Within months, it would become a major attraction at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle. By mid-May, managers of the exposition, designed to promote the economic development of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska, had made arrangements to use the flag prominently at the opening ceremony of the event. To be involved with the flag was none other than the President of the United States.

The front page of the May 21, 1909, *Pullman Herald*, ran the headline "BIG FLAG IN DEMAND: The Monster Flag Made by Mrs. H. E. Mitchell to be Unfurled by President Taft." It carried the following story:

The big American flag made by Mrs. H. E. Mitchell, wife of Captain Mitchell, U.S.A. commandant and military instructor of Washington State College, will be used in the opening exercises of the Alaska-Pacific-Exposition in Seattle on June 1. The management of the big fair has arranged to use the flag, which is said to be the largest in the world in the opening of the exposition. A request for the use of the flag was received by Mrs. Mitchell who has loaned it to the exposition....

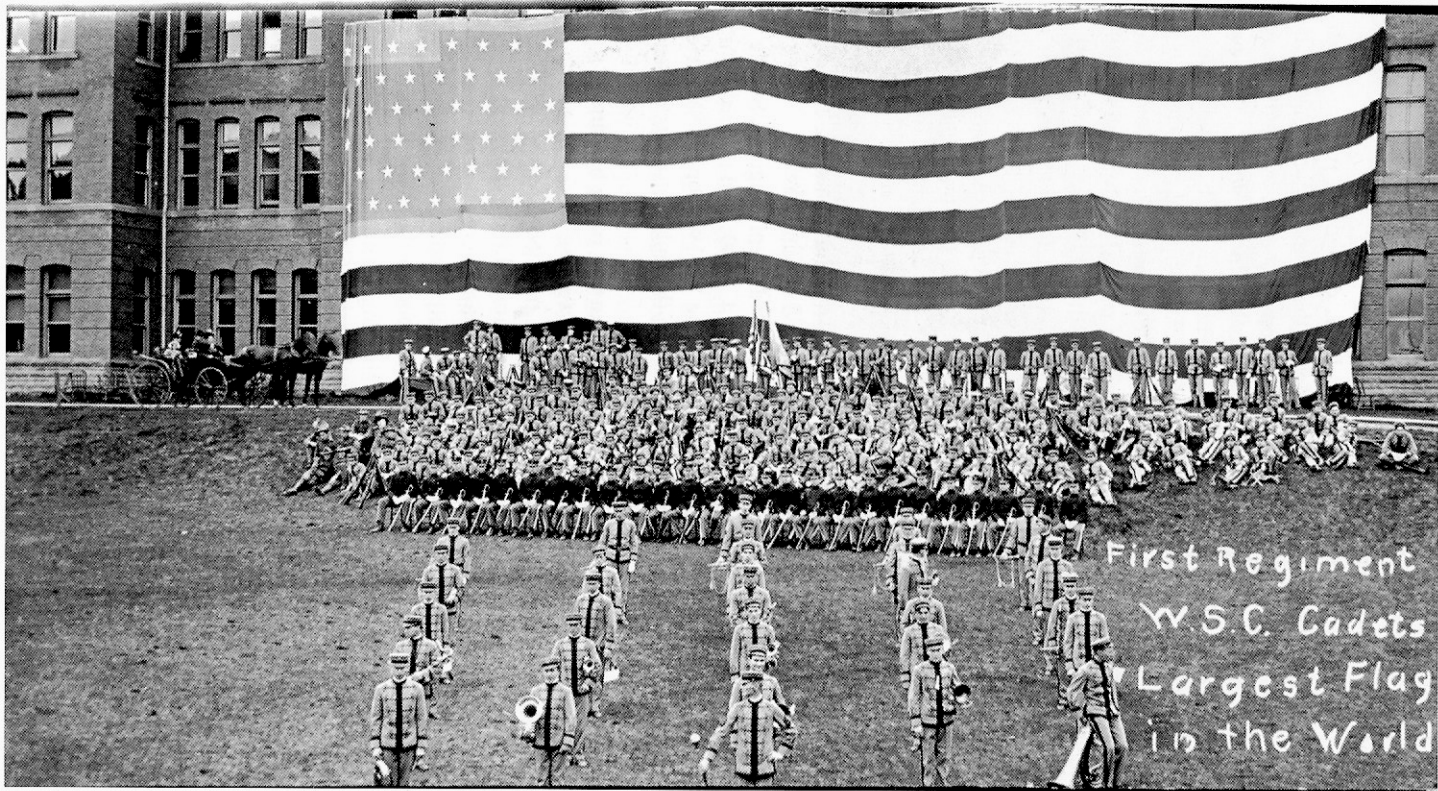
The article went on to reveal that the flag by that time had "attracted great attention across the ocean. *The London Daily Graphic*, the leading illustrated paper of England, has sent for a photograph of the flag to be used in its illustrations. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* recently had a fine picture of Mrs. Mitchell on its front page, and the interest it is awakening in England."

Seattle's paper had indeed printed Pauline Mitchell's photograph on Friday, May 14, 1909. Beside it was a drawing representing her seated and stitching on the flag reminiscent of the legendary Betsy Ross over a century earlier. Yet what the article reported added a new twist to the flag's growing international prominence. It stated: "Pictures of the flag and the lady have been sent to Europe by the Spokane Chamber of Commerce. The Europeans seem to be in a furore [sic] over the flag, connecting it up in some way with Uncle Sam's naval efficiency."

This latter comment apparently referred to the recent world tour of the "Great White Fleet," in which over a dozen American battleships were sent around the world as evidence of the naval prowess of the United States as an emerging world power following the Spanish American War and Philippine campaign. However, there was no such planned connection of



Seattle Post-Intelligencer, May 14, 1909
Pauline Mitchell



Flag draped on Science Hall, 1909

the huge flag and U.S. naval strength. Although details are lacking, evidently the idea for featuring it at the Seattle fair originated not long after the flag's debut at the military ball in Pullman on February 22, based on the publicity it received.

When the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* of May 14, 1909, carried the picture of Mrs. Mitchell, it further noted that the flag would "be unfurled at the moment President William Howard Taft, in Washington [D.C.], presses the button that opens the Alaska-Yukon Pacific exposition." And that's what happened. The June 2 Seattle *Post-Intelligencer's* front page carried a picture taken moments after the president flashed a telegraph signal from the East Room of the White House to the Exposition on a special "golden key." Amid cheers of thousands gathered for the event, the flag unfurled just after noon into the breeze from a long cable stretched between two poles high above the official opening area. Rather than unfurling directly with the president's electric signal, the flag's opening was due to the additional efforts of John T. Leiter of Port Orchard, Washington. He was given the privilege of pulling off the special line wound around the flag as soon as Taft's signal was received. Leiter had been selected for the honorary task because 20 years earlier he had "raised the first flag in the state of Washington at the ceremonies in Olympia when the state was admitted to the Union."³

News of the exposition's opening in Seattle was carried far and wide, including in Nome, Alaska. The June 19, 1909, edition (page 4) of *The Nome Weekly Nugget* reported that "250 feet in height, the largest American flag ever made broke loose, and the Exposition City was buried in a cloud of flags, banners and gaily-colored bunting."

Following the well-publicized event, the gigantic flag was kept longer in Seattle for use at the celebration of "Pullman Day" at the fair on June 14, 1909. And therein lay a bit of a controversy. While the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* on June 15, 1909, (page 8) carried a picture of W.S.C. cadets in uniform carrying the gigantic flag through the streets of Seattle, the accompanying story was only four sentences long:

Carrying outstretched the mammoth American flag made by Mrs. Harry E. Mitchell, of Pullman, said to be the largest in the world, three hundred cadets from the Washington state college paraded down town streets yesterday morning, and in the afternoon paraded the exposition grounds. The college boys made a fine appearance, and were cheered by the people who lined the streets. The flag is made of ordinary bunting and represents a mile of sewing. It has been loaned to the exposition management for the balance of the season.

Coverage by *The Seattle Times* was also relatively brief. Consequently, Pullman's paper blasted Seattle's newspapers for snubbing the event's importance, regretting "the narrow spirit shown by the big Seattle dailies."⁴ It further accused the Seattle papers of displaying "enmity and jealousy" they still feel "against Washington State College," thus alluding to opposition by Seattle in the 1890s to the establishment of another state college and potential rival for state funding.

Despite repeated apologies from the exposition management, the *Pullman Herald* printed a front-page story that included an account of what it felt was Seattle's unfair coverage of the event. The *Pullman Herald's* coverage on June 25, 1909, follows:

PULLMAN DAY BIG EVENT: Pullmanites Who Were in Seattle Declare Parade the Best of the Fair. —That "Pullman Day," Monday June



Seattle Post-Intelligencer front page article, June 2, 1909,
on the opening of the Exposition

14, was a great event in Seattle, is attested by all of those who attended the fair that day. J. M. Klemgard, chairman of the Pullman Commercial Club, who had direct charge of the parade, says: "All agree that it was the biggest parade of the fair and the finest thing since the fair opened. We had a parade three blocks in length. It was led by the college band, which received many flattering compliments, followed by the cadets, 375 strong, and behind them came the big flag made by Mrs. Mitchell, which occupied almost the entire street. Behind the flag were citizens of Pullman.

"All wore 'Pull for Pullman' badges. There were 1,600 of these badges in evidence that day. Seattle people took an interest in the display and many of those on the grounds asked for badges. Those having concessions on the grounds wore the badges and shouted for Pullman. We pinned badges on everyone until the supply was exhausted. On the 'Pay Streak' [amusement area of the exposition] every one but the Philippine Igorotos [native people on display] wore the badges and the Igorotos had nothing to pin the badges to. We asked for mucilage and tried to stick the badges on the bare skins but they would not stick.

"The parade marched more than three miles, going the full length of First, Second, and Third streets, each more than a mile in length. The police treated us royally, giving us free use of the streets and we held street cars for an hour at a time. The big flag spread out until it occupied almost the entire width of the street and street cars could not pass us. The boys would get out of the way for those coming toward them in front,

but those behind the flag had to follow. The motor man would clang his bell and shout, but the cadets held the “right of track” and kept the street cars in the rear.

“The sidewalks were lined with people who cheered continuously as we marched along the street, while people in the tall buildings fairly showered us with flowers. There was an incessant hand-clapping and cheering as we marched along and it was safe to say that more people were forcefully reminded that Pullman is on the map, than ever before in the same length of time. On the fair grounds everyone was cheering for Pullman and the badges which contained the words, ‘Pull for Pullman, the home of Washington State College,’ were in demand for souvenirs. We could have given away hundreds more to people who would have gladly worn them.”

Mr. Klemgard’s statements are borne out by many others. J. J. Rouse declares the town was well advertised and the people of Seattle treated the Pullman people royally.

Whether the abbreviated Seattle newspaper coverage was truly the slight the Pullman paper claimed can be debated; there is a bit of irony in Pullman’s own coverage. It included



Seattle Post-Intelligencer; June 15, 1909, page 8

Picture of W.S.C. cadets in uniform carrying the gigantic flag through the streets of Seattle

no picture of the event, while the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer's* did.

However, at least one other picture was taken of the great flag as it was carried on June 14 through the streets of Seattle. It was taken in front of the Gandolf & Wood Butter Store on Second Avenue near the corner of Yesler Way. Preceding the flag were two men carrying a sign stating: "Governor May Declared This Day 'Flag Day' – **PULLMAN CELEBRATES with the LARGEST AMERICAN FLAG in the WORLD.** OTHER PALOUSE PRODUCTS CORRESPONDINGLY LARGE."

Despite claims by the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*, the great flag did not remain in Seattle for the duration of the exposition. Instead, it was brought back to Pullman where Pauline Mitchell "presented it to the state college, where it floats from a giant flagstaff over the college campus." This was reported by *The Pullman Herald* on July 9, 1909, (page 2), along with a picture of the flag in Pullman and a story of Mrs. Mitchell receiving "a large photograph of the flag," taken on June 1 in Seattle at the exposition during the opening day exercises. The article added that "the photograph is suitably engraved and bears the signatures of President J. E. Chilberg, Director-General I. A. Nadeau, Chairman Josiah Collins and Director L. W. Buckley of the ceremonies committee as appreciation for her efforts." Interestingly, the article was attributed to *The Seattle Times*.

This is the only reference to the flag being flown over the W.S.C. campus. Due to its size and weight, it seems unlikely that it would have been used in this capacity very long. This is especially true if it had to be raised and lowered daily. For such use, it would have required several men to ensure that it did not touch the ground. After a while using it daily would have been both impractical and detrimental to maintaining it in good condition. It also would have suffered inevitable sun and water damage .

The last reference to the use of the flag was for the 1910 Military Ball at W.S.C. held a year after the flag's first use. As at the 1909 ball, the flag was again the centerpiece of the event and was used in the same fashion: suspended in waves from the ceiling of the college's gymnasium. This time even more decorations were added.⁵ But while the 1909 event was a happy occasion for Captain Harry Mitchell and his wife Pauline, the 1910 gala, which they attended, may not have been. Within six weeks, Captain Mitchell "severed his connection with the college." He left Pullman on March 31, 1910, "on the evening train for Omaha, New Orleans, and other points in the east and south."⁶ Reportedly, "he will visit



Harry Elwood Mitchell (1877-1971)

his old home and his parents in Indiana, before returning to Washington, in May, where he will locate on his 800 acre ranch in Klickitat county, north of the town of Lyle.” It also reported that: “Mrs. Mitchell did not accompany her husband east, but will visit her parents until the captain returns.”

The account went on to tell of Captain Mitchell being honored for his three years as head of the W.S.C. Military Department, including having a banquet in his honor and a farewell dinner by the “young men’s class of the Christian Sunday school,” where he had also taught.

But the story didn’t end there. The next issue of the *Pullman Herald* (April 8, 1909, page 4) reported that Captain Mitchell had become seriously ill on the train to Omaha, perhaps connected to his “suffering much with nervousness and headaches, maladies which had become chronic with him and which resulted in him being retired from the regular army last summer.” The May 6, 1910, *Pullman Herald* revealed more of the story -- in effect, that Captain Mitchell may have left under something of a cloud. In reporting that his replacement, Peter J. Hennessey, had arrived in Pullman, the paper noted “The advent of the new commandant is watched with interest by all concerned, particularly because of the fact that Captain Mitchell raised a kick on leaving, to the effect that some of the members of the faculty had not upheld him in matters of discipline.” The paper noted that he was now in Omaha recovering from his illness and that his wife, Pauline, and children were with him there. As a consequence of Captain Mitchell’s departure during the school year, the W.S.C. cadets fell behind in some of their required military work, with the new commander reportedly having to help them make it up “so cadets can get their credits.”⁷

Following the departure of the Mitchells from Pullman just weeks after the 1910 Military Ball, there is no later known record of the gigantic flag made by Mrs. Mitchell. The decorations committee for the 1911 Military Ball seems not to have used it. Possibly by that time it had already become tattered or stained from prior use or storage, with the bunting in a state of deterioration. Whether then or later, its ultimate fate was probably the same. Because the proper disposal of American flags required burning, the world’s biggest American flag of its time likely was burned without fanfare by the college. This was inevitable and indeed appropriate when the flag was no longer presentable.

While no longer physically surviving today, the flag remains now in photographs and history as an amazing achievement. And for the year 1909 it brought international fame and glory to Pullman and its college, and also to its creator, Mrs. Pauline Mitchell, Pullman’s “Betsy Ross.”

Postscript:

Pauline Eastman Mitchell Lander was born Jan. 9, 1886, at the Vancouver military barracks in Vancouver, Washington Territory, a daughter of Frank French Eastman (1854-1935) and his wife Susan Jane (Colby) Eastman. Frank Eastman was a West Point graduate and career army man, who was stationed at the Vancouver Barracks when Pauline was born and was still there in 1902 when Harry Elwood Mitchell (1877-1971) was stationed there. The not quite 17 year old Pauline Eastman married Harry on Dec. 24, 1902. They had three children. Harry served as the military commander at W.S.C. following his appointment Sept. 28, 1907, as Professor of Military Science and Tactics. In 1910, Pauline went to live with her parents in Omaha, Nebraska, where Frank Eastman was then stationed.⁸ After Harry

and Pauline divorced, Pauline remarried in 1915 to Alois Mark Lander (1892-1974).⁹ He was a Portland policeman and immigrant to the United States. He and Pauline had one son: Aeis Mark Lander (1918-1959). Pauline died June 18, 1967¹⁰ in Portland, Oregon at the age of 81.

Following her fame for creating the world's biggest American flag in 1908-1909, Pauline lived the remainder of her life mostly in Portland, Oregon. At her funeral in Portland, Oregon in 1967, various lodges and veterans organizations participated, including the Oregon Centennial Grandmothers' Club. Pauline apparently was a member of this organization which was formed in 1959 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Oregon statehood. Coincidentally, that year was exactly 50 years after the Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition where her amazing flag made in Pullman was a centerpiece of attention. Pauline also lived to see the 1962 Seattle World's Fair, called the "World of Tomorrow." Yet her thoughts were more likely of "yesterday" and her role, and Pullman's participation, in the city's grand celebration of 1909.

1 *Pullman Herald's* account was reprinted in the college's 1910 yearbook on page 241 along with a picture from the event including the huge flag.

2 *Pullman Herald*, Fri., Feb. 26, 1909, p. 3.

3 *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Wed., June 2, 1909, p. 9.

4 *Pullman Herald*, Fri., June 25, 1909, p. 1.

5 *Evergreen*, W.S.C. newspaper, Feb. 22, 1910, p. 1.

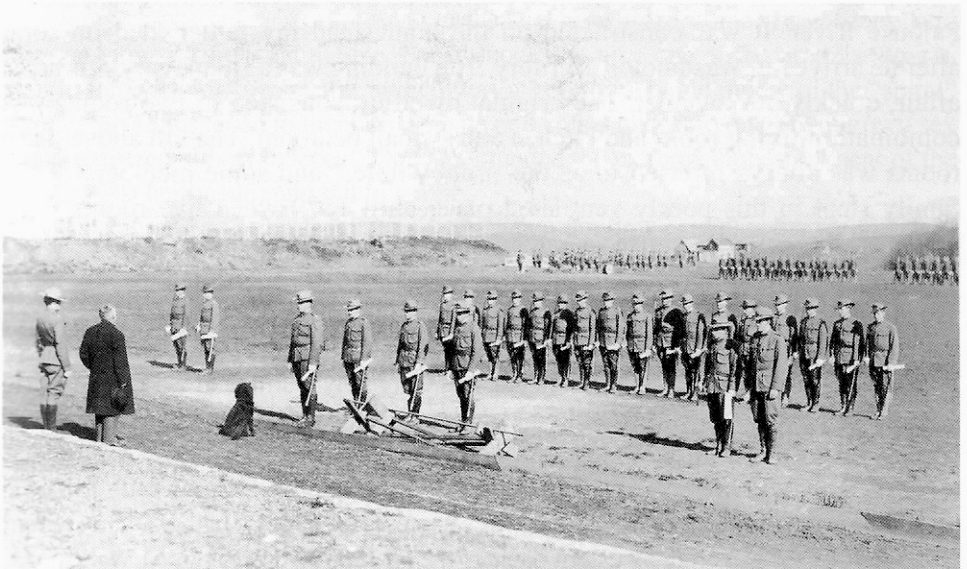
6 *Pullman Herald*, Fri., April 1, 1910, p. 1.

7 *Evergreen*, W.S.C. newspaper, May 24, 1910, p. 8.

8 1910 Federal census of Douglas County, Neb., Precinct 3, 7th Ward of Omaha, census taken April 18, 1910, p. 59a. At that time, Pauline and her two youngest children (but not husband and older son) were reported as living with her parents in Omaha.

9 1920 Federal census of Multnomah Co., Ore., 88th Precinct of Portland, census taken Jan. 13, 1920, p. 189a.

10 Pauline's obituary was in *The Oregonian*, Portland, Oregon, Tues., June 19, 1967, Sec. 3, p. 5.



THE PRESENTATION OF COMMISSIONS BY PRES. BRYAN - W.S.C.

A PIONEER HISTORY

Written by Helen Bates James Gerding about 1954

I recall little of the journey from Nebraska to Washington Territory in the Fall of 1877. I was too young to be greatly interested in the passing scenery encountered during the long trip. My father, William Hartford James, had been appointed register of the newly established land office at Colfax, and we made the long tedious journey by rail, boat, and stage. I distinctly remember, however, being occasionally held over the railing of the steamer on which we were passengers from San Francisco to Portland. I was so afraid the young man who did this would drop me into the ocean! E. W. Talbot was this man's name and he, too, became a resident of Colfax. He eventually married S. Carrie Smith, one of the early school teachers of the town.

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

Our house, which was erected in the Spring of 1878, was one of the first to be built in the south end of town—that portion of Colfax lying south of the South Palouse River. It was constructed on the homestead my father filed on soon after he arrived in Washington Territory. The building was a small, very primitive affair, quickly put together. The original dwelling consisted of two rooms—a combination living room and kitchen and a small bedroom. The loft above these rooms was always referred to as the “cubby hole,” and some members of the family slept in this poorly ventilated place until 1879 when five rooms were added to the original house: a kitchen, bedroom, and living room (or “front room” as we always spoke of it) downstairs and two bedrooms on the upper floor. We had little furniture and the chairs we used were rawhide-bottomed ones which were purchased in Waitsburg where they were made. The first summer spent in our little house was a trying one. The weather was extremely warm, and we had no shade other than that made by a few wild cucumber vines, which were grown from seeds brought by my mother from Nebraska.

The only way we had of going to town—our house was a good mile from the business section—was to follow what was known as the “rocky path,” a narrow trail at the foot of the hill on the western bank of the South Palouse River. At Wall Street, where the street intersected the path, a substantial bridge had been built across the river.



A picture of the three James girls and a friend - Helen Bates James Gerding is among them.

The Moscow branch of the OWR&N railroad was later constructed over this same “rocky path.”

A combination wagon and foot bridge was later built over Cooper Lake which shortened the distance to town considerably, and it was under this bridge that lights were hung so that when the skating season was on the ice would be well lighted. Ice skating, by the way, was a joyous pastime for Colfax residents both young and old. Means and responsibilities were forgotten by the young people while good skating lasted. They skated before school in the morning, again at noon, with a hurried lunch eaten at the schoolhouse, and then again in the evening. The ice was lighted by huge bonfires on the bank of the river in addition to the lights suspended from the bridge. There were many beautiful skaters in Colfax, among them Zoe Davenport, now Mrs. Gillespie of Orofino, Idaho; Ada Ewart, now Mrs. Colonel Pickering of San Diego, California; Miss Lulu Carter, now Mrs. Herbert Warner of Seattle; and many others. There were some very funny and

embarrassing situations on the ice. For instance, the time one of the prominent girls, Myrtle Perkins, lost her bustle, which was a very noticeable model of the “spiral” type. In the 1880s, even to mention a bustle or a corset except to one of your own sex was considered almost indecent. One can imagine the extreme embarrassment of the girl who lost her bustle right out in public.

What a wail went up from the skaters when the time came for the ice to be cut and packed away for use during the summer. The huge blocks, all carefully cut to size, looked like cubes of glass being dragged up an incline of smooth boards. They were placed in “ice houses,” which were usually built very near the river. It was rather discouraging to those who enjoyed skating to see a great yawning hole where good smooth ice had been.

There was much good sleighing during the pioneer winters. I recall a New Year’s Day when nearly a dozen bright shining cutters drawn by well-kept horses, each sleigh filled with young people, were driven up and down Main Street most of the cold sunny afternoon.

Henry Liddle, proprietor of a Colfax livery stable, owned a beautiful span of jet black horses which were much in demand. In winter they were often seen drawing a

cutter with jingling sleigh bells encircling their glossy bodies, prancing along in a lively manner. There were times, however, when they traveled at a slower gait, for they were used to take many pioneers to their last resting place in the Colfax Cemetery. They matched so well the somber black of the hearse.

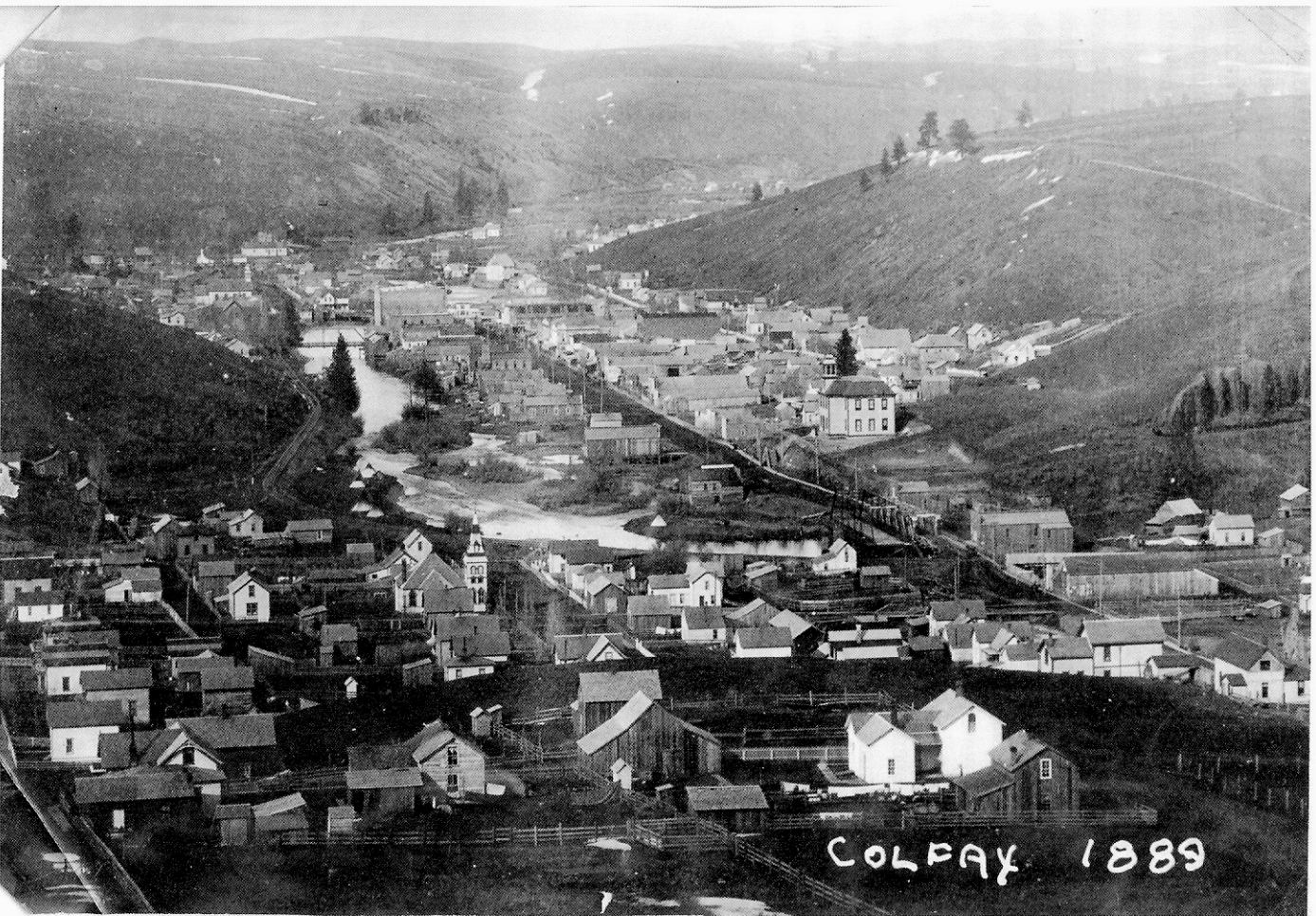
Another animal well known to Colfaxites and worthy of mention is the old roan horse which belonged to Lippett Brothers, the pioneer merchants who used him for several years to deliver goods to their customers. Promptly at 6 o'clock every evening when his day's work was done, he made his way up Main Street towards Liddle's barn two blocks away from the store, walking leisurely and dragging his wagon behind him. At the stable he was met by kind attendants who unhitched, watered, and fed the beloved animal. He was a faithful and trustworthy horse and was "on the job," rain or shine, every day for years.

The dancing parties of long ago in Colfax will long be remembered by those who participated in them. They began early and lasted late. A supper at midnight refreshed the dancers, after which everyone was ready to continue the fun until one or two in the morning. Many elaborate and select social affairs were given, and there were many beautiful dancers in the town.

We went to parties "on foot" in those days and had to be suitably shod for any mud or slush we might encounter on the "journey" to the place of entertainment. At a very elaborate party given at one of the nice homes (A. J. Davis) in Colfax, a prominent girl, Fannie Bragg, came down the broad stairway in a trailing, much beruffled, white organdie dress. As she neared the center of the spacious drawing room, she became conscious of her feet and upon investigation found that she had forgotten to remove her overshoes.

All the homes were heated by stoves in the good old days. Bedrooms seldom boasted of any heat during the cold weather, and armed with blankets and hot irons, there was a wild dash for bed at night. In the morning there was a scramble to reach a downstairs stove behind which there was leisurely dressing. Dressing, by the way, was some job in those days, for we wore clothes for warmth and service and plenty of them. In winter we put on heavy underwear, flannel petticoats, and long-sleeved high necked woolen dresses. When we ventured outdoors we were so heavily laden with clothes I wonder we could navigate at all. With long, heavy leggings, mufflers, wristlets, hood, coat, two-buckle Arties, mittens and fleeced-lined stockings (three pairs for \$1.00) we were ready to brave wintry blasts.

Attending at least two Sunday schools each week was apparently a favorite diversion for a number of Colfax children, for several did that very thing. Diversion it must have been. Certainly religious fervor played no part in the custom as far as some of the young people were concerned. After the lessons were over at the Baptist church, the youngsters went to the Congregational church for further religious instruction. Perhaps though if the matter were analyzed, this generous training in the ways of righteousness was beneficial after all. At least it did no harm.



Colfax, looking north, from South Hill, 1889

At Christmas time people crowded into the little pioneer churches to take part in the holiday festivities. It was indeed an exciting time for the children—the wonderful tree with tufts of cotton hanging from its branches and many bright colored candles and popcorn used as decorations. The climax of the evening was reached when one's name was called and it was necessary to crowd forward to receive a gift from the Sunday School superintendent. I remember being made happy one Christmas Eve at the Baptist church tree by receiving a very gorgeous basket. It was a small bright green affair, filled with everlasting flowers in very gaudy shades. I was never quite sure who was good enough to put that on the tree for me, but thought perhaps Mr. Livingston, the hardware merchant, was the good fairy as he was considered the richest man in town and I was sure it had cost a lot of money.

Many youngsters of pioneer Colfax enjoyed the friendship and hospitality of Mrs. Jim Cooper. The Coopers were early settlers and their home stood near where the OWR&N railroad enters Colfax from the east. The house was constructed of logs, had a large fireplace, and was always neat and cheerful. Mrs. Cooper used to entertain her youthful visitors by telling them of her early experiences in Colfax. Rattlesnakes were numerous when she first came to the country. During her trips over the hills near her home she encountered many, often killing them using her shoes as weapons. Cooper Lake, the broad place in the South Palouse River, was named for this pioneer family, and Cooper Street in Colfax also honors their memory. The flat near the Cooper home was the pioneer athletic field where footraces, ballgames, and bucking contests were held. Here, too, was erected the first circus tent in Colfax.

The arrival of Cole Brother's Circus on June 25, 1884, was an event of great importance. It was a large organization and its coming brought crowds from all the surrounding country to Colfax. Many families were camped along Spring Branch near our home, and my mother gave the women and children access to one of our bedrooms so they could change their clothing. According to old newspaper files, W.W. Cole's show carried 150 horses and five elephants, including "Sampson," the largest Asiatic elephant ever captured. The only act of the circus that remains clear in my mind is the "human fly," a woman who walked head down on a platform suspended from the top of the tent.

We were always up early on the morning of July 4th. The big parade was formed at 10 o'clock. Many of the little girls, myself among them, were to ride in the Liberty Car, which was in reality a lumber wagon with raised slats built along the side and gaily decorated with bunting. A very high seat behind the driver served as a throne for the Goddess of Liberty, usually impersonated by the girl with longest, fairest hair. It always seemed that Fannie Davis or Leila Trumbull were the lucky ones. How they were envied their prominence! The other little girls representing the various states and territories occupied the seats along the sides of the wagon. Each one was dressed in her best white dress and had a white muslin badge across her breast. On this badge was printed in large black letters

the name of the state she represented.

The parade consisted of very crude floats, plug uglies, the Liberty Car, and the fire company with the bright, sparkling fire engine, all led by the town band. The parade usually formed on Mill Street near the wagon shop of Oliver Hall. It then headed south towards Canyon Street, down Canyon to Main Street and then to Perkin's Grove where the exercises were held. Here in this beautiful grove of balm trees, the attentive crowd listened to long patriotic speeches and the reading of the Declaration of Independence. At noon a basket dinner was enjoyed, and the afternoon was given over to ball games, races, and dancing. In the evening the crowd assembled on the west side of Main Street to watch the fireworks, which were set off from the cliffs behind the Baptist church. Late in the evening a weary throng went home feeling well satisfied with the celebration of the glorious Fourth. There were occasional affairs which occurred to mar the enjoyment of the Fourth of July celebrations. One year for instance, there was a disastrous fire and a murder to add to the excitement.



Early Colfax: Canyon Street goes along the side of the church and up the canyon.

Pioneer women were always ready and willing to help those who needed assistance. The Batt family, who lived where St. Ignatius hospital now stands, had a large family of children. Mrs. Batt was a weaver of rag carpets and the youngsters of the neighborhood enjoyed going to her home to watch her form the gay stripes in the loom. Many floors in Colfax were covered with carpets woven by Mrs. Batt. One year there was an epidemic of diphtheria in town and several of the Batt children developed the disease. At that early day the dread malady was usually fatal and three of the Batt children died. There were no trained nurses and few doctors then, so neighbors took their turn at cooking and nursing, in fact doing anything they could to assist the afflicted family.

Our food during the early years was indeed plain. Many prairie chickens were caught in a large trap that was set in our field a short distance from the house. The breasts of the fowl were smoked and dried, and this meat was greatly enjoyed. We had little fruit, but our wonderful garden kept us well supplied with vegetables.

My parents were inveterate campers and nearly every summer we spent several weeks trailing over the country in a lumber wagon, camping along the way. When I grew older, camping was distasteful to me, perhaps because I had too much of it as a child. The preparations made for our annual outing were very simple. A good sized tent, plenty of warm bedding, a large “mess” chest, and the plainest of clothing were loaded into a two-seated lumber wagon, and away we went bumping over the rough, narrow roads headed for the north.

We always dreaded the long tiresome hours it took us to go over the Spokane “prairie” as it was called. It was usually very warm. Our wagon had no covering and we were very much exposed to the sun in the slow journey over the level plain. Very few settlers had made homes there, and the trip was very uninteresting. How different the landscape is today, for now it is a paradise in comparison—beautiful homes, much vegetation, and prosperity are very evident.

Nearly all these trips took us across the Spokane River at Cowley’s Bridge. It was here that Colonel Wright in 1858 killed hundreds of horses belonging to the Indians. As a result, the redmen were unable to carry on further warfare with the whites. The sight of the many bones whitening in the sun on the bank of the river had a peculiar fascination for me. During one of our trips past this place, I picked up a handful of them and kept them for many years. Rather gruesome souvenirs, it seems to me now.

One year we left our horses and wagon at Rockford landing on Coeur d’Alene Lake. A large row boat was secured and, after crossing the lake, we rowed many miles up the St. Joe River. Many pounds of trout were caught which were salted and brought home for use during the winter.

The old-fashioned political rallies as staged in pioneer days were exciting events. Everybody in town, it seemed, took part in the noisy affairs. A procession was formed on Main Street headed by the band, the crowd following on foot, on horseback, and in wagons. Many torchs and banners were carried by the marching throng. At the “city

hall” the speakers talked long and loud, endeavoring by their oratory to sway their listeners to their way of thinking politically. Many children slept peacefully through the long harangues, at the end of which they were led, with eyes half closed, to the platform and urged by their elders to shake hands with the speakers, who were usually candidates for office.

We children had to go through town to get to school, which was in the Baptist church. It was necessary for us to pass the undertaker’s and one morning on our way to school, we heard of a tragedy that had occurred the night before. A man had killed his wife and then shot himself. The bodies were lying at the undertaker’s, and the doors were unlocked, so we all trailed in to view the remains long and intently. I can see the awful spectacle yet, the man and woman with their powder-burned flesh—not a cheerful sight for children. I was severely lectured when I told my mother of the affair.

Many theatrical troupes visited Colfax in early days. Some stars came our way; among them was James O’Neill of *Count of Monte Cristo* fame. He was the father of Eugene O’Neill, the famous playwright of the present day. Two others were Thomas Kean in *Richelieu* and Frederick Warde, the well-known Shakespearean actor. Many others of lesser fame appeared in the very primitive halls of long ago. On one occasion when a barnstorming troupe produced *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the old city hall, some of the hoodlums of the town put cayenne pepper on the stove. As a result the play was delayed until the building could be aired.

The Stutz Acting Company was snowbound in Colfax for several weeks during the winter of 1887, and the people enjoyed a regular season of theatrical productions during the enforced stay of the troupe. Such plays as *Lady Audrey’s Secret*, *Crystal’s Cross*, and *Damon and Pythias* were offered. Things seemed decidedly dull when the company finally left.

Many changes have taken place in Colfax during the years since 1887. No more is heard the ringing of the gong that called hungry boarders to their meals at Joe Ryan’s restaurant. The clanging of the anvil at Kizer’s blacksmith shop, once a familiar sound on Main Street, has not been heard for years, and numerous livery barns have given way to modern gas stations.

To one who as a young girl enjoyed the simple life of a pioneer town, it is a pleasure to look back on days gone by. It seems a privilege to have lived during that period and to have been part of a community that was noted for its many fine families. Friendships were formed which have lasted through the years and, while there were hardships and discouragements, it is true that time mellows all things and the happy memories of the past stand out clearly. The unhappy incidents are almost forgotten.



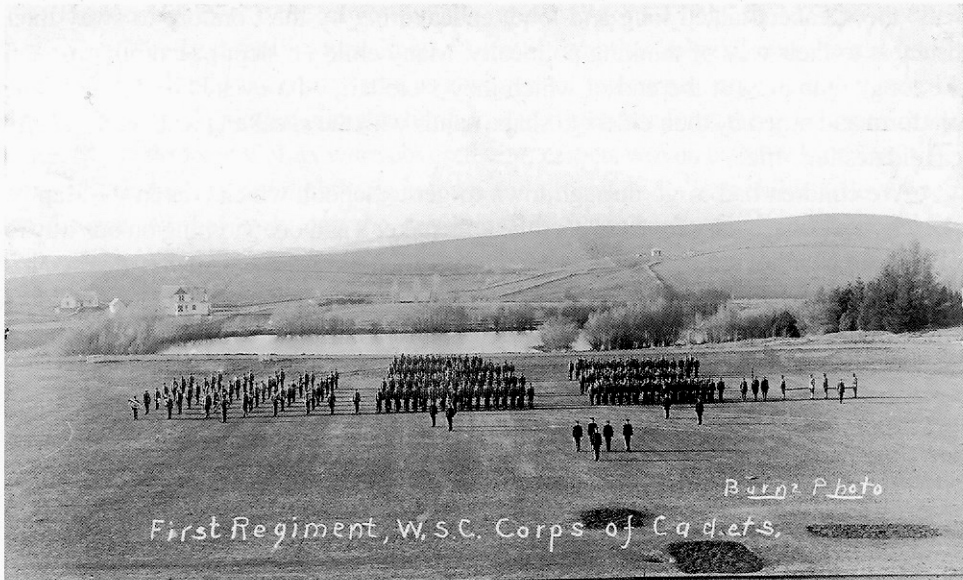
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First Regiment, W.S.C. Corps of Cadets.

W.S.C. military cadets on Rogers Field, c. 1910, with Lake DePuddle behind