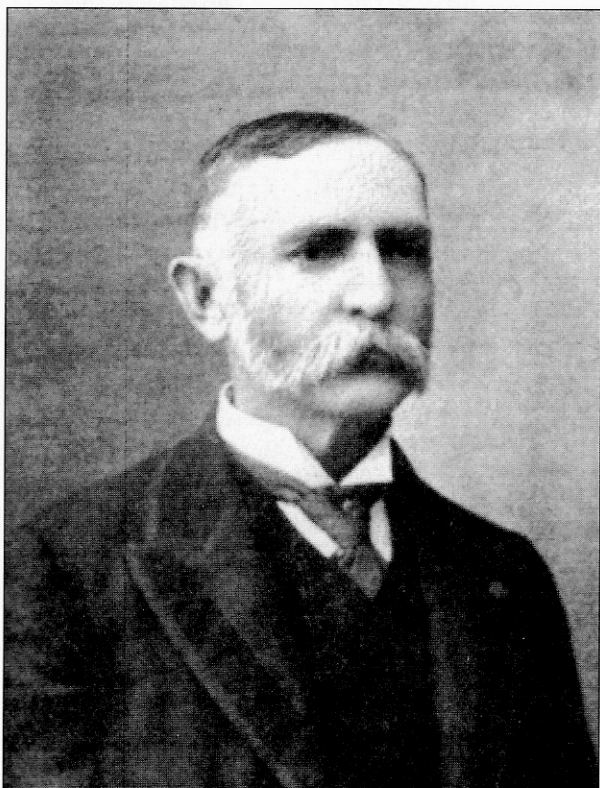


# Bunchgrass Historian



Whitman County Historical Society  
Colfax, Washington

Volume 25  
Number 1  
1999



- JUDGE WILLIAM INMAN OF COLFAX
  - VICTIM OF CORPORATION GREED
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# Whitman County Historical Society

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## JUDGE WILLIAM INMAN OF COLFAX

by Jim Nazzal

*“As for these recorded lives, whether its subject be a simple farmer, learned judge, or accomplished professional, the outcome of the workshop or the ripened brain fruit of academic training, each and all are but units in the sum total of Washington’s success.”*

-Julian Hawthorne, 1893<sup>1</sup>

William Inman was a self-educated man. He fought in the Union Army, worked for the Federal Government, became an attorney, and was a pioneer of Colfax, the county seat of Whitman county, in the Territory of Washington.<sup>2</sup> As I will show, William Inman was a community activist who sought to take a part, and sometimes a lead, in building the frontier community of Colfax. This is not only a story of a Southern gentleman-pioneer in the West. It is a look at how one man became active in building the community through political, legal, and social involvement.

People in the West established towns and took an active part in their town’s welfare for many different reasons. John Fahey argues that pioneers were most interested in personal wealth, political power, and social standing while Richard Lingeman argues that the Western pioneers’ primary goal was to exploit the area’s natural resources.<sup>3</sup> As I will show, Inman does not seem to fit either of these two models. Instead, I will be arguing that Inman’s actions and activities as a frontier pioneer were not—for the most part—different than other pioneers during the latter part of the nineteenth century. “The real history of any community,” wrote Lancaster Pollard, “is to be found in the day by day lives of the people, in the record of how they lived and what they did in their homes and at their professions and businesses. Wars, political campaigns, the speeches of office holders and the catastrophies of a day are not the story of how the people lived.”<sup>4</sup> This is a story of how one pioneer lived.



William Inman was born on 22 January 1843, in Limestone County, Alabama in, according to his autobiographical letters, “the reign of President John Tyler.”<sup>5</sup> His father was William R. Inman, and his mother was Minerva (Kellogg) Inman, both from Tennessee. His parents died before he was 11. Inman then worked as a farm-boy-for hire until he was 15, when he took a job with his brother-in-law’s newspaper, the *Advertiser*, in Springfield, Missouri.<sup>6</sup>

Inman worked at the *Advertiser* until 11 August 1861, when “the loyal portion of Springfield had to retreat with the remnant of General Leyons [sic] army.” Upon fleeing Springfield, Inman went north to “visit my people in Indiana.”<sup>7</sup>

Besides learning a trade while at the *Advertiser*, as well as the business end of publishing, Inman had access to the “finest libraries in the town.”<sup>8</sup> His favorite books were law journals written by Judge John S. Waddis and an attorney named Henry Shepard. Inman received no formal education, thus the Springfield libraries became his surrogate education system—the venue for Inman’s intellectual growth and self-improvement.

Inman always envisioned himself as a Southern gentleman. He was also a Republican whose intellectual interests leaned towards the law. It was a combination of these factors that possibly led Inman to enlist in the Union Army.<sup>9</sup> In December of 1861, Inman enlisted as a private in a Tennessee unit—Company H, of what he called the “Phelp’s six months Infantry.”<sup>10</sup> Inman fought with several other units between 1861 and 1864. He participated with General J.

Davidson's Cavalry Division in the capture of Little Rock, Arkansas in September of 1863. On 29 September 1864, Inman received an honorable discharge with the rank of Captain.<sup>11</sup> He then visited family and friends in Missouri and Indiana, returned to Arkansas and settled at De Valls Bluff on 17 February 1865. Two months to the day later, he married an Indiana girl, Miss Hannah A. Crossen.<sup>12</sup>

Inman then joined the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Lands.<sup>13</sup> His first position was that of clerk for Lieutenant General W. S. McCoullough, in De Valls Bluff, in January 1866.<sup>14</sup> On 28 February, Brigadier General J.W. Sprague (Assistant Commissioner for Arkansas) appointed Inman to Superintendent of the Bureau for the counties of Green, Craighead, and Poinsett. General Sprague thus became Inman's immediate supervisor.<sup>15</sup>

It was at this time that Inman began studying law on a regular basis. He read "Blackstone's *Commentaries*," "Bishop's *Criminal Law*," and "Chitty's *Pleadings*." Although he studied a wide range of "American law," he was most interested in matters relating to the welfare of orphans, estates, and land matters. He had been studying for nearly a year when he informed his wife, by letter, that he hoped to pass the Arkansas bar exam by April of 1867.<sup>16</sup> However, he was concerned that his formal education was lacking. Even though he was licensed to practice law by 1867, he had only a few months of formal education as a boy. Therefore, he began studying "mathematics, languages, and history." After a while he became proficient in Latin and believed he was becoming "a fair English scholar." A possible foreshadow of why Inman would work to establish schools and a library in Colfax regarded Inman's view on education: "I feel too that it lies with myself whether I succeed or fail," Inman wrote to his wife.<sup>17</sup>

The Bureau was dismantled in 1869 yet Inman stayed in Arkansas and worked as the prosecuting attorney for several counties until 1874. While working for the Bureau, Inman concluded that most Southerners were not repentant for breaking away from the Union. For example, while attending what he called a Forth of July "Barbacue (sic) and Railroad Meeting" in Jonesboro, one of the town's leaders spoke out against the federal government. Inman believed the "whole affair [was] lame" and further wrote: "I think they should celebrate it [July 4<sup>th</sup>] hereafter in sackcloth and ashes and be compelled to walk up and bow their knees and kiss the brave old Stars and Stripes for their attempted overthrow."<sup>18</sup>

Inman concluded his remarks by writing: "Every true loyal man present felt that the entire speech was an insult to themselves, the flag which they love, and the Government to which they respect and owe allegiance."<sup>19</sup> Therefore, it is not impossible that Inman, who envisioned himself a Southern gentleman and who saw that many in the South refused to acknowledge their disloyalty to the Union, decided to leave Arkansas.

Why did Inman leave his law practice in Arkansas and move to Seattle? His old Bureau boss, General Sprague, may have been influential. Sprague had earlier moved to Seattle in order to take a position with the Northern-Pacific railroad company and when Inman arrived in Seattle, he stayed at Sprague's

house in 1875. The local newspaper, the *Daily Pacific Tribune*, noted that “Capt. W.A. Inman” had recently moved to Seattle from Arkansas and had already “taken an office over Morrill’s drug store.”<sup>20</sup> However, Inman may have moved to Washington for reasons other than Sprague’s influence.

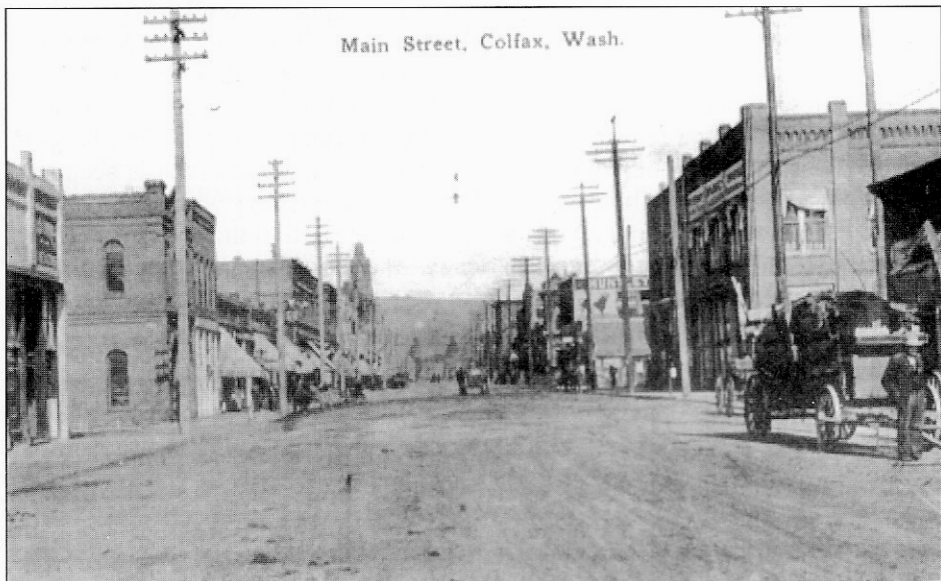
The American historian Gordon B. Dodds notes in *The American Northwest* that in Washington Territory, possibly more so than in any other region of the United States, Republicans campaigned as “the party which saved the Union, branding the Democrats as sessionists, slaveholders and traitors.”<sup>21</sup> Washington Territory was solidly Democratic before the Civil War, but afterwards became staunchly Republican.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the fact that the Territory was so staunchly Republican may have been a reason why Inman decided to move there. In addition, Inman’s decision to move to Seattle may possibly had something to do with the strong position of the Territory’s GOP leaders in support of President Lincoln during the War. The Territorial Republican party issued a declaration of support for President Lincoln, the war, and the inevitable reconciliation of the Union.<sup>23</sup> However, it must be noted that Inman’s move out West came at a time when a significant number of people were moving out West.<sup>24</sup>

Inman arrived with a letter of recommendation from the President of the Arkansas Bar, noting that he “has been a member of this Bar . . . for the last six years, most of which time he has held the office of Prosecuting Attorney.”<sup>25</sup> In August, 1875, Inman passed the Washington Territory Bar.<sup>26</sup> He then formed a short-lived partnership with an established Seattle attorney —Charles M. Bradshaw.<sup>27</sup> Bradshaw was known as “one of the ablest lawyers” in the Territory and eventually became one of King County’s prosecuting attorneys.<sup>28</sup> Inman practiced law both in Seattle and Port Townsend between 1875 and 1879. Late in 1879, he moved to Colfax.

At that time, Colfax’s population was only 444, but it was nonetheless the largest town in Whitman County, and the third largest in Eastern Washington (Walla Walla 3,588 and Dayton 996).<sup>29</sup> Whitman county was also the second largest county in the Territory at that time.<sup>30</sup> Colfax was established a few months before Inman arrived.<sup>31</sup> Colfax was a logical choice for Inman or anyone else interested in probate matters and land law because numerous railroad companies (primarily the Northern-Pacific and the Columbia and Palouse) were laying tracks throughout Eastern Washington with Colfax as the county hub, and more people were moving to Eastern Washington than to Western Washington at that time. In fact, because of the influx of settlers, the Federal government established a land office in Colfax in 1878.<sup>32</sup> Also, Colfax’s economy was one of the strongest in the Territory at that time.<sup>33</sup>

Inman was the first Notary Public in Colfax.<sup>34</sup> He first advertised in the *Palouse Gazette* on 12 December 1879: “WM. A. Inman, Attorney at Law.”<sup>35</sup> In 1880, he changed his ad to attract a specific group of clients: “Will attend business in land, conveyancing, collections, etc.”<sup>36</sup> The *Gazette* was the only newspaper printed in Colfax at that time. It was also an organ of the Republican party. Inman first hung his shingle on the Potter Building, which was owned by the Northern-Pacific railroad company.<sup>37</sup> However, in 1880, Inman moved his

Main Street, Colfax, Wash.



office inside the County Court House where he stayed until his wife died in 1900.<sup>38</sup> Inman formed a brief partnership in August, 1885, with G.R. Blair.<sup>39</sup> Less than a year later they dissolved the partnership and Inman practiced law on his own for the rest of his life. When Inman came to Colfax, he came alone and boarded at the Ewart House.<sup>40</sup> It is unknown when his wife and children arrived.

Examples of Inman's activism in the community as well as his desire to address Colfax's social problems, as he saw them, are evidenced in his political activities and membership in fraternal organizations. One historian, Lancaster Pollard, argues that the further a community was located from Olympia, the more isolated it was from Olympia's legislative, executive, and judicial powers. Therefore, it was not unusual for members of a community outside of Olympia's reach (such as Colfax) to be particularly active in and involved with the day-to-day operations of the town.<sup>41</sup> In addition, Elvin Hatch, a sociologist from Columbia University, argues that a frontier town evolved into a modern "self-conscious" community by individuals who integrated farming interests with other commercial, legal, and political interests through social activism.<sup>42</sup>

Inman's first political position was Probate Judge in 1880. The *Gazette* noted Inman's experience in "public affairs and public business" and even



though he had lived in Colfax for less than a year, Inman was “known throughout the County as a good citizen and a capable lawyer.” The editor of the *Gazette* noted that: “A better man for the position could not be found in Whitman County, and we have no doubt that he will be elected.”<sup>43</sup> However, because the *Gazette* was the local organ for the GOP, the editor’s comments may have been a bit exaggerated. Inman beat his Democrat opponent, George J. Buys, by only 90 votes (739 to 639).<sup>44</sup> In fact, the Probate Judge election was the closest of Whitman County’s positions. The GOP took every position in the county from Congressional delegate to Sheep Commissioner.<sup>45</sup> For the most part, Inman’s responsibilities as Probate Judge included dealings with estates, appointing guardians for minors, and officiating weddings. He also handled insanity cases and minor civil offenses.

While Probate Judge, Inman attended to many non-probate matters. For example, he served as the Colfax city attorney in 1882.<sup>46</sup> However, his most public act was his first (and last) instance acting as the defense attorney in a murder trial. In mid April, 1884, Louis A. Knott was arrested and charged with first degree murder in the death of Thomas Higgins. Knott had no money to pay for an attorney, so Inman volunteered to act in his defense.<sup>47</sup> Possibly, this example is evidence of Inman’s social conscience.<sup>48</sup> After a short trial, the jury found Knott guilty of first degree murder. The *Gazette* noted that Inman “made a splendid effort” but was “checkmated at every point by facts and the skill of the prosecution.” Immediately after the judge sentenced Knott to death for the murder of Higgins, Inman filed an appeal for a new trial, but was denied.<sup>49</sup> Then, Inman filed an appeal with the Territorial Superior Court in Olympia. However, some people in Colfax could not wait for the Court’s decision. On 22 August, while Inman was in Olympia, the Colfax sheriff was met by a mob of masked men who demanded the keys to the jail. “Justice demanded” it, replied one of vigilantes when the sheriff initially refused to hand over the keys. Knott was taken from his cell and hung from the Courthouse.<sup>50</sup>

The other major non-probate work by Inman was in 1885 when he acted for the plaintiff—Columbia and Palouse Railroad Company (C&PRR)—which sued for condemnation for right-of-way. This case was part of the larger lieu-land litigation between the Northern Pacific Railway Company and certain settlers along its line, dating back to 1870.<sup>51</sup> The railroad company wanted to lay track through the property of several Colfax residents. Those residents refused to sell, thus refusing the railroad company the right-of-way.<sup>52</sup> The defendants were Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Moulton, Mrs. And Mrs. Joseph Baird, Mr. Charles Pendleton, Mr. Arthur Goseline, and Mr. Philip H. Teats. Some tracks were laid in 1883, and the line was designed to be the feeder for the Oregon Transcontinental.<sup>53</sup> However, construction halted in 1885 when the C&PRR failed to come to terms with those five land owners regarding the price the C&PRR would pay to lay tracks through their properties.

Inman requested an impartial panel of “householders” to review the situation. Judge Charles Porter selected John Boswell, William Hiney, and Frank Young.<sup>54</sup> The property owners sided with the plaintiff. The defendants sought to

be reimbursed from the C&PRR the full value of their property. Yet, the C&PRR needed no more than 100 feet from each of the property owners. Thus, instead of having to pay the full value to each property owner, the C&PRR was ordered to pay between \$15 and \$25 to each landowner for each 100 foot right-of way.<sup>55</sup> This example may be an indication of Inman's respect for the law as well as his desire to work within rather than outside the established system because according to a county law passed in the early 1880s, the residents were mandated to sell their land to the railroad company. On the other hand, the importance of the railroad to the prosperity of any town in the West in the nineteenth century cannot be over stated. "In America in the eighties urbanization for the first time became a controlling factor in national life," Arthur Schlesinger wrote in *The Rise of the City*. The railroad, as Schlesinger and others have pointed out, were not only important, but in some smaller towns the railroad was the most powerful economic force.<sup>56</sup> In addition, Gordon Dodds wrote that the railroad was paramount to any Northwest community in the nineteenth century. "It was the symbol of progress, wealth, and modernity," Dodds argued in *The American Northwest*.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, regarding the railroad and political parties, Dodds argued that "the railroad was the paramount issue" to the Republicans in Washington Territory.<sup>58</sup> Hatch argues that those who were politically, economically, or socially active in a small town tended to view progress as not only important, but vital for the town's survival. Progress, according to Hatch, was most evidenced in the construction of railroads.<sup>59</sup> Thus, Inman's support for the railroad should not be viewed as out of the ordinary.

Another aspect of Inman's life and civic-minded personality was lodge membership. Lodge membership was an integral part of the social setting of Colfax and one way for someone to gain social and political power was through lodge membership and activities.<sup>60</sup> All of the fraternal organizations in which Inman was a member dealt with cradle to grave issues. Colfax lodges issued health insurance, sick benefits, operated retirement homes, issued pensions, and even donated cemetery plots to its members. In a time before federal or state welfare systems, the fraternal organizations of Colfax acted as a social safety net. Inman held nearly every position in every lodge he joined and he traveled extensively throughout the Northwest and California attending conventions and other lodge activities.

Although Inman belonged to most of the lodges of Colfax, he was a member of the International Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) for 54 years. He first joined the IOOF while in Arkansas on 23 July 1869.<sup>61</sup> When he came to Washington Territory, he joined the Port Townsend lodge just prior to moving to Colfax.<sup>62</sup> The IOOF was established in Colfax on 13 June 1878.<sup>63</sup> The Odd Fellows were a patriotic group, assuming the task "of leading men to a true appreciation of his whole duty, whether to God, himself, or to his brother man."<sup>64</sup> One of the many duties of this organization was to care for the sick of the community. The IOOF gave \$5.00 per week to members who were sick as well as made arrangements for funerals. In fact, in 1885, the IOOF purchased one acre of land lying south of the Colfax cemetery to be used for donating plots to those who could not



afford them.<sup>65</sup> Membership in a town's fraternal organizations was not uncommon. According to Gordon Dodds, men and women joined (and actively participated) in fraternal organizations because of the obvious social benefits they received, such as increased prestige in the community. And, Dodds argues that the establishment of fraternal organizations was one of several conditions necessary for a frontier town to transform itself into "a complete community."<sup>66</sup>

One of the founding members of the IOOF in the United States was Schuyler Colfax, the namesake of Colfax, Washington. He also established the Daughters of Rebekah (DOR), a "female Oddfellow" organization, in 1851.<sup>67</sup> The DOR "took care" of older members of the community as well as staffed the DOR-operated retirement home in Walla Walla.<sup>68</sup> Both of Inman's wives belonged to the DOR.<sup>69</sup> Inman's extensive fraternal activities are more than mere examples of his community activism as well as his belief that volunteerism was preferential over governmental intervention.

Inman was also active in veteran organizations and causes. Inman was a charter member of the Colfax chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). This organization began as a fraternal order for honorably discharged Union soldiers but eventually encompassed all honorably discharged veterans to

include Confederate troops and Spanish-American war veterans. In 1886, the GAR began organizing Colfax's annual Memorial Day activities. Inman was on the first committee to organize a Memorial Day celebration.<sup>70</sup> He served on the committee annually until 1900. Inman also traveled extensively, attending GAR conventions throughout the Northwest and California. He obtained numerous ranks within the organization to include Commander of the Washington GAR in 1894. In that same year, the Colfax GAR took over the organization of the town's annual Fourth of July celebrations.<sup>71</sup> At the GAR's twenty-fifth anniversary in 1891, Inman gave the key-note address on the history of the Grand Army of the Republic.<sup>72</sup> Inman's work for Whitman county veterans went beyond civic pride-related activities such as parades and picnics.

Inman was also active in the Whitman County Veteran's Association (WCVA). He held numerous positions within the Association and in 1898, he gave the key-note address at the WCVA's annual encampment in Pullman.<sup>73</sup> In 1896, he was a delegate to the Whitman County GOP convention. That year, their platform called for, among other things, state and federal support of legislation that would give preference to honorably discharged veterans who sought state and federal employment. Inman introduced the resolution and it was unanimously adopted into the GOP platform.<sup>74</sup>

In addition, in 1889, at the Territory's annual GAR encampment, Inman supported a resolution which called for the establishment of a "Soldier's Home" in Washington as well as called for federal support of a pension bill for retired war veterans.<sup>75</sup> In March of 1890, the Territorial legislature passed a bill which provided for a Soldiers' home as envisioned by the GAR.<sup>76</sup> Meany argues that the Territory had an extensive history of support for veterans, legislation that would benefit veterans, and especially the establishment of retirement homes for veterans. Thus, Inman's active involvement with veterans' issues should not be seen as unusual, according to Meany.<sup>77</sup>

Inman was also very active in GOP politics at the county level. In 1888, 1890, 1894, 1896, and again in 1898, Inman was a member of the Colfax delegation to the GOP's Whitman county convention.<sup>78</sup> At the 1896 convention, by a vote of 61 to 40 the Whitman county Republicans adopted the Free Silver plank as part of their platform. However, the State convention opposed the silver issue in its platform, thus a split in the GOP ranks occurred.<sup>79</sup> The free silver position is traditionally looked upon as reformist as well as an issue usually associated with the Populists. Inman did not support the free coinage of silver and thus helped to reorganize the Colfax Republican Club (which Inman helped to establish several years earlier) as the McKinley Club.<sup>80</sup> The reorganized club's charter pledged to "encourage the best interests of the republican party." Because the silver issue was the most divisive issue for the GOP at that time and because McKinley did not support the free coinage of silver the "best interests" of the local Republicans were support for McKinley and opposition to the silver issue.<sup>81</sup> In 1898, (the same year he ran against the incumbent as the GOP nominee for Whitman county prosecuting attorney) Inman helped to re-establish the Whitman County Republican Club. He was its first President.<sup>82</sup> Fahey argues that merchants in Eastern Washington tended to refuse to accept

(or devalue) Greenbacks and supported the coinage of gold and silver.<sup>83</sup> Thus, if Colfax's merchants also supported the coinage of silver (there is no evidence indicating the merchant's position in Colfax) then Inman's reaction against the coinage would go against Fahey's argument that pioneers tended to be interested in building a prosperous community in order to become more prosperous themselves. Unless, of course, Inman believed that the coinage of silver would adversely effect Colfax's economy. However, there is no evidence why Inman rejected the coinage of silver.

During the wane of the Populists' popularity in Whitman county, Inman ran for the county's prosecuting attorney position. Possibly because of the Peoples' Party strength (William Jennings Bryan took Washington in the 1896 Presidential election) no Republican was willing to throw his hat into the ring. The editor of the *Gazette* suggested that William Inman would make a good prosecuting attorney.<sup>84</sup> Inman accepted the challenge and became the GOP nominee for Whitman County Prosecuting Attorney. It was actually a close nomination at the Republican convention. Inman received 76 votes while R. Roberts received 72.<sup>85</sup> Not surprisingly the *Gazette*, the GOP organ, fully supported Inman's candidacy:

For prosecuting attorney William A. Inman, a sturdy, honest and upright lawyer who has been known in Whitman county and the town of Colfax since their earliest days, has been named. Mr. Inman is a republican in whom republicans glory, but a most tolerant man withal of the political beliefs of others. Quiet and studious, alert to the needs of the hour, Mr. Inman is fully equal to every exigency of the office of prosecuting attorney. If elected -and there can be little doubt of this- he will retire at the end of his service with a record to be proud of.<sup>86</sup>

Inman received 1,813 votes while the incumbent, a Populist, received 1,626 votes.<sup>87</sup> Inman took office on 1 January 1899 and served until 31 December 1900.

In 1899, Inman sought to streamline the annual auditing process of the prosecuting attorney's financial books in order to "save the county money," according to Inman. Before then, the County Commissioners audited the PA's books and records on an annual basis after the PA conducted his own internal audit. Besides being a waste of money and time, Inman argued the county commissioners exceeded their legal authority by auditing his records. Besides the financial and legal arguments Inman presented, another reason for his desire to remove the county commissioners from the auditing process could have something to do with the Populists.<sup>88</sup>

John Tobin was a prominent leader of the Silver Federation (a group which supported the free coinage of silver). He was also a leading Populist politician in Whitman county. But more importantly, he was the Whitman county Auditor. During that same period, Charles Ross, another member of the Silver Federation as well as a Populist politician, served as Whitman county clerk for the county commissioners. Thus, it is not improbable that Inman's desire to remove the county commissioners from the auditing process had something to do with his desire to curb Populist influence in county government.<sup>89</sup> In addition, Inman's

rationale (saving money) for getting the commissioners out of the auditing process does ring a bit convenient. Inman was the county prosecuting attorney for only two years. He was more involved in county and local politics through holding minor positions of power and authority.

He was first nominated for Justice of the Peace in 1886.<sup>90</sup> He held the position of Justice for the North Colfax precinct for the next 14 years. In 1887 he was appointed Colfax City magistrate.<sup>91</sup> He was re-appointed in the following year.<sup>92</sup> From 1892 until 1895, Inman was the City Clerk for Colfax, making \$64 per month.<sup>93</sup> Also, in 1896, Inman was elected President of the Whitman County Bar Association.<sup>94</sup>

However, more often than not, Inman failed to obtain the Republican nomination for the political positions he sought. For example, Inman's name was put forward by the editor of the *Palouse Gazette* as a potential delegate for the 1889 State Constitutional convention. However, Superior Court Justice Sullivan, a republican, was selected over Inman to represent Whitman county at the State level.<sup>95</sup> Also in 1889, Inman was one of two men nominated to replace retiring Judge Sullivan. However, W.N. Ruby received 79 votes to Inman's 27. Thus, Ruby became the GOP nominee for Superior Court Judge in 1889.<sup>96</sup> Six years later, Inman sought one of the city councilmen positions. After the first ballot at the GOP convention, Inman came in third with 29 votes to Howard's 92 and Pattison's 100. Inman then withdrew.<sup>97</sup> In all three cases, Sullivan, Ruby, and Pattison, had held more Republican positions within county and local government than Inman. In addition, all three men were more active in the Whitman county GOP dynamics (such as leading or speaking at the conventions and being in charge of the primary elections at the county level) than Inman was. This indicates a strict hierarchy to the Whitman county republican organization. Thus, those with more seniority and influence gained the nominations for better and more powerful positions over those with less seniority and influence, such as Inman.

Nevertheless, Inman remained active in the GOP party on the local level. From 1884 until 1890 he served as the party's chairman for primary elections in Colfax. In 1890, the Whitman county chairman asked Inman if he would be the GOP's permanent precinct chair. It is unclear why "Probate Judge Inman . . . declined to serve as permanent chairman."<sup>98</sup> One possible reason was that Inman declared himself a candidate for Whitman county Prosecuting Attorney position that same year. The *Gazette* called Inman an "admirable ticket."<sup>99</sup> However, Inman lost the GOP nomination to a man who had more seniority in Whitman county GOP affairs. At the county GOP convention, Inman's fellow republicans selected F.M. Ellsworth to run against the Democrat incumbent. Inman received 27 votes to Ellsworth's 42 in the first ballot. He only received 9 votes to Ellsworth's 61 in the second ballot.<sup>100</sup> This example further suggests a hierarchy to Whitman county republican politics. While Inman was clearly active in the political arena, he was also active in non-political matters.

Edmond Meany suggests that frontier communities in the Territory characteristically developed through social improvements. Meany argues that communities established schools, libraries, clubs and fraternal organizations, profes-



sional organizations, as well as numerous “Old Soldiers” homes as a way of evolving from a frontier town to a modern community.<sup>101</sup> One Inman’s earliest positions for the city was that of Chairman of the Colfax Health Board in 1881. It is unknown why Inman was initially asked to chair the Board. Although, Fahey argues that pioneers tended to view attorneys as the “acknowledged intellectual leaders” of the community.<sup>102</sup> In an attempt to prevent the disease from running rough-shod over Colfax, several citizens established a health board and elected Inman as its Chairman. Inman advised that people “stay away from public gatherings,” avoid visiting neighbors “no more . . . than is actually necessary,” to get vaccinated, and to use disinfectant in all private homes and public businesses.<sup>103</sup> Inman also asked all schools and churches to close until the disease had passed, requested that people do their laundry at home instead of using the Chinese laundry services, and then appointed Dr. Cal Boswell to act as the Board’s Chairman in his place.<sup>104</sup> It is unlikely that his suggestion regarding the town’s Chinese laundry services was directed against the Chinese of the community, per se. The Chinese were the only people operating laundry businesses and because Inman suggested that people stay away from public gatherings and from visiting with their neighbors, it only makes sense to want to keep the public from any place where their clothes would mingle. Inman never called for city, county, or Territorial government assistance or intervention, nor did he ever request financial assistance from any government agency to deal with the epidemic. Fahey argues that pioneers in Eastern Washington were mutually dependent upon one another. The town’s reaction to the 1881 chicken pox epidemic is an example of how the town fits this aspect of Fahey’s model.<sup>105</sup>

**-to be continued**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Julian Hawthorne. *History of Washington, the Evergreen State, from Early Dawn to Daylight*, Vol. I (New York: American Historical Publishing Co., 1893), p. 347.

<sup>2</sup> According to Julian Hawthorne Inman was of the the most 500 important pioneers of Washington. See above, pp. 347-348, 619.

<sup>3</sup> John Fahey. *The Inland Empire, Unfolding Years, 1879-1929* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986) p. 5. Richard Lingeman. *Small Town America, A Narrative History, 1620-The Present* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980) p. 176.

<sup>4</sup> Lancaster Pollard, *A History of the State of Washington* (Portland: Binford & Mort, Publishers, 1941), p. 146. Interestingly, Pollard thanks Professors Herman J. Deutsch and L.L Chisholm, among others, for their assistance in editing this book.

<sup>5</sup> Papers of William Inman, folder 7, letter dated January 22, 1865, p. 1. Manuscripts and Special Collections, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Everett Carl Ladd argues that there were two characteristics which separated the Republicans from the Democrats. According to Ladd, the Republicans were opposed to the extension of slavery into the territories. Also, the GOP first began promoting itself as the party of business interests during the Civil War. See *American Political Parties* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1970). Robert Kelley argues a similar thesis in *The Cultural Pattern in American Politics, the First Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> For information on the battles in Arkansas, see William Monks. *A History of Southern Missouri and Northern Arkansas* (West Plains, MO: West Plains Journal Co., 1907).

<sup>11</sup> Inman Papers, Folder 1, "Special Orders No. 235."

<sup>12</sup> Inman Papers, Folder 7, pp. 8-9.

<sup>13</sup> For information on the Bureau see, Peirce, Paul Skeels. *The Freedmen's Bureau: A Chapter in the History of Reconstruction* (St. Clair Shores, MI: Michigan Scholarly Press, 1970).



<sup>14</sup> Inman Papers, Folder 7, Letter dated January 22, 1867, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Inman Papers, Folder 3, "Special Order No 22."

<sup>16</sup> Inman Papers, Folder 7, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> "Personal Mention," *Daily (Seattle) Pacific Tribune*, 4 April 1879, p.

2.

<sup>21</sup> Dodds, *The American Northwest*, p. 165.

<sup>22</sup> Pollard, *A History of the State of Washington*, pp. 123.

<sup>23</sup> Edmond S. Meany. *History of the State of Washington* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1924) p. 311.

<sup>24</sup> Elvin Hatch. *Biography of a Small Town* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> Inman Papers, Folder 8.

<sup>26</sup> Inman Papers, Folder 9.

<sup>27</sup> Beardsley, Arthur S. *The Bench and the Bar of Washington, The First Fifty Years: 1849-1900*, Unpublished manuscript, Washington State Law Library Archives, Temple of Justice, Olympia, Washington [nd.], p. 702.

<sup>28</sup> Hawthorne, Julian (ed.). *History of Washington from Early Dawn to Daylight* (New York: American Historical Publishing, 1893) p. 619, Special Collections, University of Washington Archives, Seattle, Washington.

<sup>29</sup> "Town Population in 1880," *Palouse (WA) Gazette*, 7 October 1881, p. 2. Hereafter cited as *PG*. Actually, numbers vary. For example, the *Gazette* reported in 1880 that the population of Colfax was 600. See "Whitman County," *PG* 20 February 1880, p. 2. Note that more citations are used from the *Gazette* than from the *Commoner*. That is because Inman was a Republican. The *Gazette* was an organ of the GOP party and thus was more likely to report on Republican happenings. Also, Inman did not even advertise in the *Commoner*, possibly because it was the local organ of the Democrats. The *Commoner* had stronger ties to the Democrat party than the *Gazette* had to the GOP because the editor of the *Commoner*, Chester Warner, was also the Chairman of the Democrat party in Washington Territory. See, Riddle, Thomas Wayne. *The Old Radicalism in America: John R. Rogers and the Populist Movement in Washington, 1891-1900* (Unpublished Dissertation, Washington State University, 1976).

<sup>30</sup> The *Gazette* reported that Whitman county had a population 7,079 while Walla Walla county (the most populated county in the Territory) had a population of 8,683. See "Territorial Census," *PG*, 13 August 1880, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Colfax was incorporated on 14 January 1879, "The City of Colfax," *PG*, 3 August 1888, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Fahey, *The Inland Empire*, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> W. H. Lever (ed). *An Illustrated History of Whitman County* (Colfax, WA.: W.H. Lever, 1901) p. 111.

<sup>34</sup> Governor Elisha P. Ferry Papers, Box 1, "Appointment-Notary Public," Washington State Archives, Olympia.

<sup>35</sup> *Palouse* (Colfax, Washington) *Gazette*, 12 December 1879, p. 2.

Hereafter cited as *PG*.

<sup>36</sup> "Personal Mentions," *PG*, 2 January 1880, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> "Personal Mentions," *PG*, 19 December 1879, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> "Personal Mentions" *PG*, 14 October 1881, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> "Inman and G.R. Blair have formed a partnership in the law business" *PG*, 7 August 1885, pp. 1, 3.

<sup>40</sup> "Ewart House," *PG*, 20 December 1879, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Pollard, *A History of the State of Washington*, p. 122.

<sup>42</sup> Hatch, *Biography of a Small Town*, p. 32.

<sup>43</sup> "W.A. Inman, nominee for Probate Judge," *PG*, 3 September 1880, p.

3.

<sup>44</sup> It is unknown if Inman's pro-woman's suffrage position was known at this time. However, George Buys was a known anti-suffragist who supported the Emancipation of Married Women law. For more on the EMW law, see "Mrs. Packard's Law," *The New Northwest*, 21 November 1879, p. 1. Also, for more information about George Buys, see "Eastern Washington," *The New Northwest*, 30 June 1881, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> "Official Vote of Whitman County -1880," *PG*, 12 November 1880, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> "City Officers," *PG*, 6 January 1882, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> "MURDER!," *PG*, 18 April 1884, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> In no other instance have I come across a defendant financially incapable of obtaining a defense attorney. In fact, according to my research, a defendant in a capital murder case usually obtained several attorneys.

<sup>49</sup> "Guilty as Charged," *PG*, 13 June 1884, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> "Hanged By Mob!," *PG*, 22 August 1884, p. 3. Lynchings were not uncommon at that time. For more examples of vigilante justice see Edith E. Erickson's *Colfax: 100 Plus* (Colfax, WA.: Edith E. Erickson, 1981) pp. 11-13 and Lever's *History of Colfax*, pp. 124, 128-129.

<sup>51</sup> For more information on the lieu-land litigation, see Lever's *The History of Colfax*, pp. 177-180.

<sup>52</sup> Inman possibly viewed the position of the landowners as illegal because the Whitman county County Commissioners adopted a resolution in 1883 mandating that private property landowners must sell their lands to railroad companies. Interestingly enough, no one ever challenged the Constitutionality of this act.

<sup>53</sup> "The City of Colfax," *PG*, 3 August 1888, p. 1, and, West, J.B., "The Development of Railroading in Whitman County," *The Bunchgrass Historian*, 2 (1974): 2-11.

<sup>54</sup> *Columbia & Palouse Railroad Company vs. Reuben Moulton, et al.*, Case number 1445, District Court, Territory of Washington, 1885. Whitman county Superior Court records, Colfax, WA.

<sup>55</sup> *Judgment filed December 15, 1885*, Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Lingeman, *Small Town America*, p. 321.

<sup>57</sup> Dodds, Gordon B. *The American Northwest* (Arlington Heights, IL.: The Forum Press, Inc., 1986) p. 110.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165. For more information on the history of the railroads in Colfax see Erickson's *Colfax: 100 Plus*, pp. 218-225.

<sup>59</sup> Hatch, *Biography of a Small Town*, pp. 53-54. "The concept of progress was a fundamental ingredient of the beliefs of homesteaders and other settlers of the American frontier in the nineteenth century," wrote Hatch. See p. 54.

<sup>60</sup> Lever, *History of Colfax*, pp. 207-209.

<sup>61</sup> Inman Papers, Folder 22.

<sup>62</sup> Inman Papers, Folder 11.

<sup>63</sup> Colfax Lodge No. 14 indicates that the Colfax IOOF lodge was the fourteenth IOOF lodge established in the Territory.

<sup>64</sup> Preuss, Arthur. *A Dictionary of Secret and Other Societies* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1924) p. 335.

<sup>65</sup> LaFollette, *History of Colfax*, pp. 503-504.

<sup>66</sup> Dodds, *The American Northwest*, pp. 114-117.

<sup>67</sup> Preuss, *Dictionary*, p. 335.

<sup>68</sup> LaFollette, *History of Colfax*, p. 508.

<sup>69</sup> The only official records of the IOOF between 1888 and 1923 which exist today are regarding the Lodge's taxes, property, titles, mortgages, bills from the Washington Water and Power Company, and a few newsletters. These papers were kept by Inman but were not discovered until after the Lodge burned

down in 1992. Also, there was a fire in 1882 that destroyed the IOOF records up to that time. The fire also destroyed the records of the Masonic lodge and the AOUW. For more information on the legal and financial records of the IOOF between 1888 and 1923, see Inman Papers, Folders 12 through 22. Also, "Colfax in Ashes Again," *PG*, 21 July 1882, p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> "Memorial Day," *PG*, 7 May 1886, p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> "Grand Army Men," *CG*, 29 June 1894, p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> "Twenty-Five Years Old," *PG*, 10 April 1891, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> "Veteran's Association," *CG*, 3 June 1898, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> "County Convention," *CG*, 28 August 1896, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup> "Department Officers," *PG*, 3 May 1889, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> "The Bill Passed," *Spokane (WA) Falls Chronicle*, 11 March 1890, p.

4.

<sup>77</sup> Meany, *History of the State of Washington*, p. 327.

<sup>78</sup> "County Convention," *CG*, 3 August 1894, p. 1 and "Well Done," *CG*, 28 August 1896, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Riddle, *Whitman County Populism*, p. 58.

<sup>80</sup> "A Club Organized," *CG*, 22 June 1894, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> "M'Kinley Club Meets," *CG*, 24 July 1896, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> "Republican Club," *CG*, 14 October 1898, p. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Fahey, *Inland Empire*, p. 9.

<sup>84</sup> "Republicans are Confident," *CG*, 22 July 1898, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> "Troubles the Pops," *CG*, 29 July 1898, p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Editorial page, *CG*, 9 September 1898, p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> "Election Results," *CG*, 11 November 1898, p. 1. Matthews was actually the incumbent. He served as Whitman county P.A. as a Democrat. However, he joined the Peoples' Party for the 1898 election, thus forcing the Democrats to choose a new candidate.

<sup>88</sup> For further information on the Populist movement in Whitman county and Washington, see David Griffiths. *Populism in the Western United States, 1890-1900*, Volume 1, (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), Chapter 3 "Populism on the Pacific Slope: Washington State." Also see Pollard's *A History of the State of Washington*, pp. 166-169.

<sup>89</sup> For more on the Populist movement in Whitman county see, Thomas Wayne Riddle. *Whitman County Populism and Washington State Politics: 1889-1902* (Unpublished MA Thesis, Washington State University, 1971) pp. 44-45.

<sup>90</sup> "Justices and Constables," *PG*, 5 November 1886, p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> "Council Proceedings," *PG*, 11 March 1887, p. 3.

<sup>92</sup> "City Council," *PG*, 22 April 1888, p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> "The City Fathers," *PG*, 5 January 1894, p. 1. Also see Lever's *History of Colfax*, pp. 157-159.

<sup>94</sup> "The Bar Meeting," *CG*, 9 February 1894, p. 3. For reasons unknown, another Whitman County Bar Association was formed in 1895. See "Whitman County Lawyers," *CC*, 25 October 1895, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> "Possible Candidates," *PG* 26 April 1889, p. 3 and "Republican Ticket," *PG*, 10 May 1889, p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> “A Ticket Nominated,” *PG*, 30 August 1889, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> “The Next City Officers,” *CC*, 22 November 1895, p. 7.

<sup>98</sup> “Delegates Elected,” *PG*, 8 August 1890, p. 1.

<sup>99</sup> “They Like It,” *PG*, 26 September 1890, p. 1.

<sup>100</sup> “County Convention,” *PG*, 26 September 1890, p. 5.

<sup>101</sup> Meany, *History of the State of Washington*, pp. 317-318, 325, 327.

<sup>102</sup> Fahey, *Inland Empire*, p. 12.

<sup>103</sup> “Health Measures,” *PG*, 4 November 1881, p. 3.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Fahey, *Inland Empire*, p. 7. Pollard also argues the need for members of a community to be self-reliant and inter-dependent. See Pollard’s, *A History of the State of the State of Washington*, p. 122.

**VICTIM OF CORPORATION GREED**  
**The mysterious tombstone in Palouse**  
**by Karen Kiessling, Pullman**

In the Palouse, Washington, cemetery, just beyond the equipment shed, is the L Brown family plot. Mother, Orra, father, Leon, daughter, Sylvia, and son Bert are there. This was a religious family as evidenced by the inscription on Orra's grave, where her birth and death dates are reversed so that she is born into Heaven at her death, and her actual birthday is listed second. Orra's inscription reads,

"Life Everlasting  
Began December 27, 1926  
Born October 27, 1867"

What intrigued me about this family plot beyond Orra's piety is the inscription on the headstone of Bert Brown, dead at 24 and whose tombstone says, "Victim of Corporation Greed". Young Bert died on May 31, 1913. What was the story behind parents so bitter over the loss of this young man that they would choose to forever condemn those responsible for his death instead of saying something loving about their son?

The town of Palouse was obviously a bustling and larger town than it is now, with connections to lumber, mines and railroads. Which corporation and what greed had stolen the life of Bert Leon Brown?

I found the answer in the volumes of the Palouse Republic newspaper in the huge volume of yellowed paper labeled, 1913. The front page of the Friday, June 6, 1913, issue has the headline: RAILROAD ACCIDENT PROVES FATAL TO PALOUSE BOY, IN N.P. YARDS, SPOKANE. Under this attention grabber, the subhead: Son of Leon Brown the Victim—Parents Make Race with Death in Automobile, Reaching Son While Consciousness Remains. The newspaper story is poignantly written, with beautiful phrases such as "...the parents beating death by 40 minutes and finding their son conscious and able to talk to them during the few remaining minutes that he lived. The parents rejoice that they were able, even by so narrow a margin, to see their son alive."



I repeat the entire text of the story for its pathos and ability to transport us back to that harrowing car ride to Spokane and the hideous anxiety of the parents and fiancée that they would see Bert alive. Here is the text of the story:

“With his father and mother, and the young lady to whom he would have been married within a few weeks, at his bedside, Bert Brown, son of Mr and Mrs. Leon Brown of this city, died at the Sacred Heart hospital in Spokane at 9 o’clock from injuries sustained six hours before in an accident in the Northern Pacific yards, where he was employed. Mr. and Mrs. Brown received word of the accident about 5 o’clock. All trains for the day had gone and they secured the services of William Peek, who took them to the city in his automobile. The trip was made without mishap, in quick time the parents beating death by 40 minutes and finding their son conscious and able to talk to them during the few remaining minutes that he lived. The parents rejoice that they were able, even by so narrow a margin, to see their son alive.

The young man was a carman and had been in the employ of the Northern Pacific some three years. At the time of the accident he was filling an oil can from a tank on the step of a small building close to the track, where oil, waste and other supplies are kept. The track where he was at work is known as the repair track. A string of cars was being shunted in to take their turn at the shops, when a door from a ballast car swung out and caught young Brown, crushing him against the building where he was at work, breaking the pelvis bone and inflicting internal injuries. He was rushed to the hospital, where an examination

showed at once that his injuries were fatal. The parents were informed by telephone of the accident shortly after he had reached the hospital.

Bert Brown was 24 years of age. He was born in Bismarck, North Dakota, but had spent most of his life in Palouse, where he had many friends and where he was known as an excellent young man, with good habits and an ambition to make his way in the world. The case is more sad from the fact that he had written his father but a few days before his death that he intended to quit railroading the 15th of June and come home. He was to have been married shortly and wished to take up some less hazardous line of work. The body was brought to Palouse Sunday evening, the funeral taking place from the family home just east of town Monday afternoon, the Rev. M. F. Tull, pastor of the Baptist church conducting the services. The attendance was large and there were many beautiful floral offerings. The pall bearers were young men, most of whom had been schoolmates of the deceased. The parents, two brothers and two sisters, are left to mourn the untimely death of the son and brother.

Among the out of town relatives in attendance at the funeral were Dr. Marsch of Clarkston and H.S. Marsch of Nezperce, cousins, and Mrs. Smith of Spokane, an aunt."

That is the entire text of the newspaper story and I was delighted to have solved the mystery of the headstone. I knew the corporation and the hazardous work that had caused a young man's death. I would have liked to know what conversations, if any, the family had with Northern Pacific Railroad, to try to make work safer for other sons, brothers and fiancées. I could find no further reference to the story in the Palouse Republic.