

# Bunchgrass Historian

Whitman County Historical Society Quarterly

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## *The Lewis and Clark Expedition*



Also In This Issue:  
**Palouse: Boom and Bust? 1900-1920**

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

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**Verle G. Kaiser** lived in Spokane, "as close to the Palouse country as he could get," he said in a recent letter. A retired soil conservationist, he lived in the Inland Empire for more than sixty years until his sudden death on June 16, 1982. He became interested in Whitman County history while serving with the Soil Conservation Service in Colfax, from 1942 to 1957. He will be missed by his many friends and associates in the Westerners and in the Whitman County Historical Society. Verle was a fine historian; "Lewis and Clark Never Saw the Palouse Country" stands as a tribute to the kind of history he wrote.

**Evelyn Rodewald** is very interested in local history and historic preservation. She has previously contributed to the *Bunchgrass Historian* and is currently involved in several projects with the Latah and Nez Perce County Historical Societies, working to preserve and catalog portions of their manuscript collections.



*Inscription on face: "TH. JEFFERSON PRESIDENT OF THE U.S. A.D. 1801  
Inscription on the reverse: "PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP"*

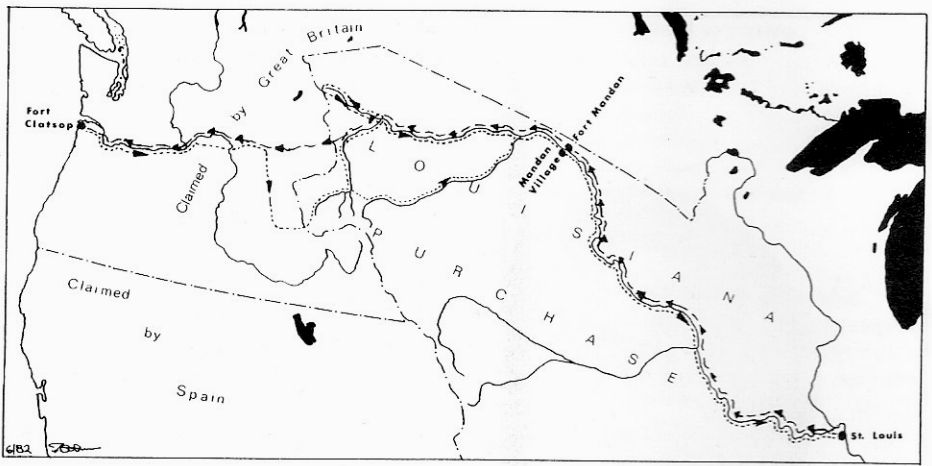
## **The Cover**

### **The Discovery of a Lewis and Clark Expedition Medal: A Personal Recollection**

**by**

**Roy M. Chatters**

One day in the summer of 1964, I went to the Washington State University archeological "dig" at the mouth of the Palouse River to visit my son, a member of the archeology team and to pick up some wood samples from a dug-out canoe burial to identify the species of tree used for the canoe. My son was across the Snake River, so I missed him. But while I was standing at the burial site, the diggers in the pit exposed several leather pouches lying upon the ankle bones of the skeleton of the person who had been buried in the canoe. The young man who had exposed the pouches took them at once to Dr. Roderick Sprague, who was in charge of the Palouse burial site excavations. A few minutes later, he emerged from the work tent with an object found inside a small leather pouch contained inside one of the larger ones. It was one of the "Jefferson" or "Peace Medals" of 1801—the kind given to important Indians by Captain Meriwether Lewis and Captain William Clark as they made their way down the Snake River in the fall of 1805. Obviously, all work came to a halt as a result of the spectacular discovery of this small silver medal. Oh yes, I believe the wood in the canoe turned out to be Western Red Cedar. □



Route followed by the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

## An American Odyssey

by  
Roy M. Chatters

Even before becoming the third President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson and some of his associates, not the least of whom was George Washington, had been interested in investigating what lay beyond the Mississippi River. We know from Jefferson's own writings that for at least twenty years he had been interested in such an expedition and it was only after he had become President that he was able to carry out this long-held desire. Jefferson and his associates, some of whom were members of the American Philosophical Society, were prompted by a number of considerations to push for an expedition to the West: one was scientific curiosity about what was out there beyond the great river, what minerals existed, what the Indians were like, their customs, the vegetation in general and, among other things, whether or not the woolly mammoth still existed, as had been rumored.

The second great motive for exploring westward was to increase commerce with the Indians. Of course, there was considerable commerce already, up as far as the Mandan Villages, near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota. But beyond that it was more or less *terra incognita* and it was this vast untapped market that Jefferson and others, with whom he was allied in this project, were interested. Third, like Columbus, these men were seeking a water route which would give them a short cut to the East Indies, to the Hawaiian Islands and to China. Fourth, they were prompted by political reasons, that is fear of France and Spain, England and Russia; that they would become so firmly established in that part of the North American Continent west of the Mississippi River that the young colonial United States would be swallowed up or be completely at the mercy, commercially and politically, of these other countries. Spain at that time claimed the land west of the Mississippi River. France, under Napoleon, was planning to take over at least that part of the Spanish possessions now known as Louisiana.

England had sent its hunters and trappers into what is now Canada, and Russia had become established in Russian Alaska and had, at one time, established a colony in the vicinity of San Francisco. Therefore, Jefferson, as did his colleagues, felt it was imperative that someone make an expedition to the West to get a good idea of what was out there.

Prior to the Lewis and Clark expedition a number of attempts were made to determine what was in this vast unknown western land. In 1783 Jefferson contacted George Rogers Clark, famous Revolutionary hero, suggesting that he make such an expedition on his own to explore the land west of the Mississippi and to see if he could find the water route to the Pacific. However, George Rogers Clark felt that he must turn it down because he had neglected his business and personal affairs for so long in the service of the young country and must now begin to prepare for his own later years. In 1786 John Ledyard began an expedition by himself through Russia toward Kamachatka and thence, to the Columbia river, from there go up the river and overland to the United States over the mountains to Washington, D. C. However, after he penetrated well into Siberia, Empress Catherine the Great became aware of his presence, even though Ledyard assumed that he had been given a passport to make the trip through Russia. She had him arrested and put in a closed coach and driven back to Poland, where he was dumped and had to make his way back to Paris on foot and ultimately back to the United States, having failed in his mission. In 1790 Henry Knox, then Secretary of War, and apparently unknown to Jefferson, had sent a man by the name of Lieutenant Armstrong to the West to explore what lay beyond the Mississippi River. However, he got only about as far as the Mississippi River where he was advised by the Governor of the Western Territory to discontinue his expedition because of its being quite unsafe, and this he did. In 1793 Jefferson, along with George Washington and several others, hired the French botanist, Andre Michaux, to make the expedition by himself. He had hardly started, he had gotten as far as Kentucky, when it became known to Jefferson that Michaux's main aim, supported by officials of the French Republic, was to raise a western force to attack Spanish possessions beyond the Mississippi. As soon as this scheme was discovered, Jefferson requested that Michaux's government recall him. This was done, thus ending that attempt to find what was out West.

Shortly after becoming President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson had Meriwether Lewis, then a paymaster for the Army, transferred to Washington to serve as his private secretary. Lewis's function would probably more properly be called that of an aide-de-camp or executive secretary. Lewis's family were neighbors and long-time friends of Thomas Jefferson. As Lewis had been aware of the earlier attempts at expeditions it is rather obvious that Jefferson had brought him to the White House to assist him in making further plans for the exploration of the West. So, in 1801 Lewis moved into the White House with Jefferson and became confidential secretary to the President, as well as being a member of the family. The opportunity was there for the President and Lewis to talk over at great length the plans for an expedition. In 1803, at a secret session of Congress, Jefferson was able to get through Congress a bill and \$2,500 to put the expedition into effect. It was not enough to pay the entire cost, as has often been implied. The total was more than \$2,500—closer to \$50,000. The reason for the secrecy was to allay any fears which the Spanish Government and other governments might have about the true purpose of the expedition which was certainly one of expansion of the territories under the Colonial government.

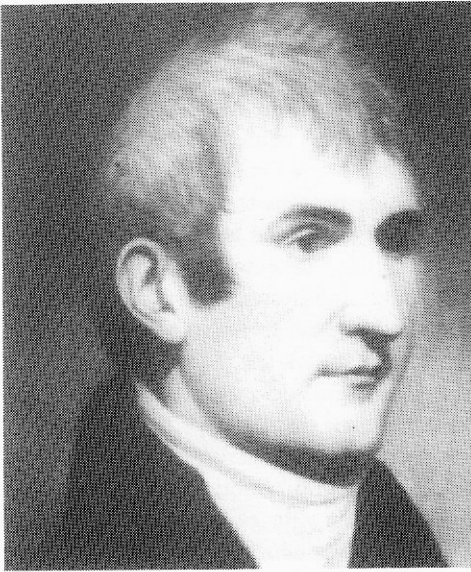
Because it was considered improper, if not unlawful, for the Federal Government to support scientific research, in asking for the money the reason set forth was that it had as its main purpose that of increasing trade with the Indians. This, apparently, removed the opposition of Jefferson's political enemies of which he apparently had many and before he ended his term in office he had acquired a great many more. Immediately after the money had been approved for setting into motion an expedition which was first planned to have only about twelve men, all told, Lewis left Washington for Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Lancaster and Harper's Ferry to begin his preparation for the expedition.

In addition to the twenty-five hundred dollars which had been appropriated by Congress he had letters of credit and access to all public stores. Jefferson had sent Lewis from Washington, D.C. to Philadelphia to meet with the then best-known scientists and medical men for instruction in the various fields of botany, zoology, meteorology and a number of the other sciences. In Pittsburgh he went to have a keelboat of about 55 feet in length constructed. In reality this was the start of the expedition. Meanwhile, the United States had purchased the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon and thus one of the fears of trespassing on Spanish territory in that large segment of the country, i.e., all of that section which watered the Mississippi was gone. Upon the completion of the keelboat, Lewis and several hands took it down to St. Louis and there having picked up Clark on the way, set up winter quarters north of St. Louis on the Mississippi River. During this winter of 1803-04 Lewis and Clark literally whipped the men into shape, as some of them were not quite familiar with the discipline that was necessary for the trip. However, by the time they were ready to start out on the main part of the expedition in May, 1804, they were a well disciplined group.

When he was first informed that he was to be in charge of the expedition, Captain Lewis requested that Clark, who had been his former commanding officer, should be his second in command, with equal authority and rank. William Clark, who was the brother of George Rogers Clark, mentioned earlier, readily accepted with the understanding that he would, as promised by Lewis, share the command equally as Captain with Lewis. Congress, when it came time to confirm his appointment, did not quite see it this way and as a result, he was given a title of second Lieutenant of artillery. In spite of this, Lewis informed the men that any orders from "Captain" Clark were to be the same as commands from him and they shared the expedition and its command equally.

When the expedition was ready to start out in 1804, there were forty-five persons, including Lewis, who was twenty-nine years of age, Clark, who was 33, Clark's slave York, Lewis's dog "Scannon," a large Newfoundland which, incidently, earned its keep along the route by helping to capture swimming deer and such-like. In addition, there were others: soldiers who had been picked up at various military posts, selected because of each man's abilities either as a good hunter or as a gunsmith or woodsman, but each with a particular skill. There were no gentlemen soldiers along with the possible exception of Lewis, but each one was expected to carry his own weight and military discipline was maintained. So the expedition, then, included soldiers, boatmen, and the commanders. The youngest person on this portion of the expedition, that is, during the first season of the expedition, was a young man by the name of Shannon, who was then seventeen years old.

Prior to leaving Washington, Jefferson gave Lewis very strict instructions on what he was to seek in the way of scientific information, including orders that any person who could write and keep a diary should do so, in the hope that at least one record



—American Philosophical Society

*“When he was first informed that he was to be in charge of the expedition, Captain Lewis (left) requested that William Clark (right), who had been his former commanding officer, should be his second in command, with equal authority and rank.”*

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would be returned to Washington when the expedition was over. At the present time, six of the diaries, believed to have been eight in all, have been preserved. When we consider that in the years following, when the large commercial hunting and trapping parties went out, that out of a party of about 300 who started, no more than perhaps thirty would have survived the rigors of the wilderness, including disease, grizzly bears and such, and possibly each other, the record of the Lewis and Clark expedition is outstanding.

The instructions of Jefferson required in addition that Lewis keep careful records of the amount of trade possible at each Indian Village, samples of the language, their customs; to make maps, collect minerals, samples of plants and animals and a host of other details, meteorological and such. In addition, he gave implicit instructions for the use of cowpox vaccine to be used on the Indians or on any of his men who happened to be in need of it. Before the expedition started out the entire Louisiana territory had been transferred to the United States. The lower part of the Louisiana territory had been transferred Jan., 1, 1804 and the upper Louisiana territory was transferred on March 10, 1804 at St. Louis, and Meriwether Lewis was there as the representative of the President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson. So, with their seven tons of supplies, which included food, small cannon, tools, clothing, air gun, trade goods, mill for grinding corn and many other items held in the keelboat and two large pirogues, the expedition then set out on May 4, 1804, not to return until September of 1806. In addition to the boats, they had several horses which were used for pulling the large boat along the shore by means of shore ropes and also for hunting.

In the vicinity of Sioux City, Iowa, the only fatality of the expedition occurred, and this was the result of an appendix attack on Sergeant Floyd, who died south of what is now Sioux City, Iowa, and was buried there. As they moved up above Sioux

City, they began to meet other Indians; the Yanktoni Sioux were quite friendly to them. Farther up the river, however, they were not as fortunate; they began to encounter the less friendly Sioux, which they refer to as the Kansas, which were actually Siouxi, the Teton Sioux. They continued up the river to the Mandan Villages near what is now Bismarck, North Dakota, and established their winter camp. Here they remained until April of 1805 when the party started out again. One group returned to St. Louis and Washington, D.C. and about thirty-three persons started West; included among the latter group was Sacajewea, a Shoshone captive and her husband Chabonneau, who had been hired as an interpreter and a guide. Sacajewea, herself, was taken along because Lewis and Clark wished to go through Shoshone country. They reasoned that her services as a Shoshone interpreter would be necessary to obtain horses to carry gear across the mountains. She was not, by any stretch of the imagination, hired as a guide, nor did she function in that respect. She did serve a purpose in that her presence with the party allayed the fears of many Indians that the expedition was a war party, as the Indian women did not usually take part in the war activities. Also with the group was one addition of a very young member, her child "Baptista," who was only about six-weeks old when the expedition left the Mandan villages. This infant survived all the rigors of the expedition and later grew up and was educated at Clark's expense in this country as well as in France.

The expedition continued toward the Great Falls of the Missouri, taking thirty days to portage their gear the eighteen miles around the falls which delayed them considerably. They continued on to the three forks of the Missouri where they named the forks the "Jefferson," the "Madison" and the "Galatin." They continued on down the Jefferson branch until they encountered the Shoshone, the first Indians that they had seen in a considerable time. Here Sacajewea met her brother, Cameawait. At this point the party bought horses and continued their journey over the mountains. They went up over what is now Lost Trail Pass, between Salmon, Idaho, and Ross's Hole in Montana. At Ross's Hole they met the Flathead Indians who provided them with information on how to proceed to the Columbia. They continued up the Bitter Root Valley to what is now called Traveler's Rest, just outside of Lolo, Montana, where they remained several days, hunting and making preparations for crossing the mountains. This passage over the Bitter Roots was one of the most hazardous and came close to being fatal to the whole party. They were eleven days in crossing the mountains and were in bad shape from lack of food. Exhausted they found little or no game in the mountains and resorted to eating the horses which they had brought along for that purpose. In desperation Lewis had Clark and a small party of men go ahead in hopes of getting out of the mountains and finding Indians who might sell them food. Coming out upon the Weippe Prairie, they met Indians who provided them with food, some of which was sent back to the party in the mountains. After the reunion of the entire party, they went down to the Clearwater where they stopped at what is now Canoe Camp (Athaska) and built the canoes which were to take them down the river to the ocean. As they passed what is now called the Palouse River but it was named by the party as "Drewyer's River" after their hunter, Drewyer, they encountered a number of Indians on horseback; they hailed and asked to continue down the river advising the Indians of their coming and their desire to have a pow wow, several days hence. This pow wow was held in the vicinity of what is now Sacajewea State Park, near Pasco. Following this pow wow, the explorers gave medals to the Indians who had helped them. It is possibly one of these medals that was found in the burial site in the mouth of the Palouse, in the summer of 1964 by the WSU archeology field team.





—Roy M. Chatters

*This never-before-published photograph is of "Old Ocean," a Shoshone who accompanied the expedition from Shoshone country westward. The photograph was taken about 1900, shortly before Old Ocean died at the age of 112.*

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After much difficulty in negotiating the rapids and fighting the waters close to the ocean they finally set up their winter camp on December 8 at what is now Fort Clatsop, south of Astoria. Here they remained until March 23, 1806. At this time they started up-river again. When they came to the Pasco area they left the river and traveled overland, coming through what is now Dayton and Pomeroy and ending up at the site of Lewiston and Clarkston. They continued up the Clearwater until they came to the Weippe Prairie again. They attempted to go over the mountains on June 10, but because of the snows they had to return to the prairie. There they remained until June 24 when they began their crossing. Arriving at Traveler's Rest, June 30, the exploration party was broken into two groups, Lewis taking the one group and going north to look for a possible northern river route, Clark's company returning south and east to the Yellowstone River which they followed to its junction with the Missouri. There he met Lewis. (August 12). The expedition ended at St. Louis on September 3, 1806 except for the Captains' reporting to Jefferson several months later in Washington, D.C. In his essay on "Self Reliance" Ralph Waldo Emerson said "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man. This great nation is the lengthened shadow of three men, Thomas Jefferson, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark." □

# Lewis and Clark Never Saw the Palouse Country

by  
Verle G. Kaiser

On September 18, 1805, William Clark, co-leader of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, wrote the following to describe the country he saw from the six thousand foot level of a mountain now called "Rocky Ridge" in the Clearwater National Forest, about twenty miles east of present-day Weippe, Idaho: "from the top of a high part of the mountain at 20 miles had a view of an imence Plain and leavel Countrey to the S.W. & West [sic]." Some readers have interpreted this to mean that Clark, whose party had gotten ahead of the Lewis party by a day's march, was looking across the Palouse region onto the great plains of the Columbia plateau. Ask almost anyone in this area the question, "who were the first whites to reach the Palouse country?" He probable will answer, "Lewis and Clark."<sup>1</sup> Written records do not, however, support this view. A study of the daily journals kept by members of the expedition and a careful examination of the expedition route shows that neither Lewis, Clark, nor any member of their expeditionary force ever saw the area of today's Palouse wheatlands, let alone set foot on it.

Seven and possibly nine members of the Lewis and Clark party kept diaries or journals of day-to-day activities during all or part of the trip from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean and back. Published editions of the journals kept by four men during the period when the expedition traveled adjacent to the Palouse region on the westward trip will be examined; these are the journals of William Clark, Joseph Whitehouse, Patrik Gass, and John Ordway. For the return trip the Diary of Meriwether Lewis will be examined in addition to those of Clark, Gass, and Ordway.<sup>2</sup> Several historians, drawing on the records of those who actually made the trip and other material, have written accounts of the Trek. Cutright's *Lewis and Clark Pioneering Naturalists*, Chuinard's *Only One Man Died*, Eide's *American Odyssey*, and Skarsten's *George Drouillard of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* are especially enlightening.<sup>3</sup>

Records yield the following information pertinent to the question of whether or not Lewis and Clark visited the Palouse wheatlands: From Rocky Ridge, where Clark made his observation on September 18, 1805, the Palouse wheatlands are out of sight—hidden behind the 4,000 foot high Moscow Mountains and the Thatuna Ridge spur. Further, the Palouse country is north and west of Clark's observation point, not southwest and west as he recorded. Serious students of the Lewis and Clark expedition now think it likely that Clark saw the prairie lands lying south of the Clearwater River in present-day Lewis and Nez Perce Counties. The route traveled from Rocky Ridge to the expedition's canoe-building camp on the Clearwater River, opposite the mouth of its north fork and across the main stream from present-day Ahsaka, led them across lower-lying land on the ridge separating Lolo and Orofino Creeks in the area between Orofino and Pierce, Idaho. The Palouse wheatlands are not visible from this area.

During the nearly three weeks the party spent at Canoe Camp, all hands were busy ministering to stomach sickness brought on by eating too much strange food, hunting game in the adjacent river canyon, and chopping and burning out five clumsy dugout boats from big yellow pines; in these they planned to continue their journey to the ocean. It is not surprising that no one had time to make a hard fifty or sixty mile trip across rugged canyons and through mountains just to get a look at the hilly plains country now called "the Palouse."

Late in the day on October 8, 1805, the expeditionary force reached the mouth of the stream now called the Potlatch River. Traveling in the five dugout boats launched the previous day, they reached the southeastern corner of the Palouse region. (see map). The spot is deep in the Clearwater River canyon and the Palouse wheatlands are perched high above on a plateau to the north and west. They camped for two nights on the north shore of the river, a short distance below the mouth of the Potlatch where there was a large Indian village. The day at this encampment was spent drying goods which had been soaked when one of the canoes sank in the rapids at the mouth of the Potlatch.

## The Journals

On the morning of the tenth of October members of the expedition resumed their westward journey. For the next four days they coursed down the Clearwater to its junction with the Snake; then they floated down the Snake past the mouth of the Palouse River.<sup>4</sup> The mouth of the Palouse marks the extreme southwest corner of the Palouse region. So in four days' time, from October 9 to October 13, the explorers traveled *parallel* to the southern boundary of that area (see map). The journals of the diarists covering those four days contain numerous observations about the nature of the stream on which they floated, the surrounding river canyon which they could see from their camps, and the Indians who inhabited the area. Intermixed with the considerable volume of this information are a few statements concerning the Palouse prairie located on the plateau above them to the north. The following extracts from the four diaries are the extent of the expedition's observations of the Palouse:

**October 9, 1805** [The party was in camp all day on the north bank of the Clearwater River just below the mouth of the Potlatch.]

*Clark:* (Nothing was recorded pertaining to the Palouse.)

*Gass:* "All the country around is high prairie or open plains."

*Ordway:* "the River hills still continue high and broken on each Side. Some Scattering pine timber &C."

**Whitehouse:** "The River hills are high and continue barron on each Side. a few scattering pines along the Shores. but fiew creeks put in."

**October 10, 1805.** [The party cruised downstream from the mouth of the Potlatch River to a camping location on the Whitman County shore of the Snake River opposite present-day Clarkston, Washington.]

**Clark:** "The Countray about the forks is an open plain on either side."

**Gass:** (Nothing recorded pertaining to the Palouse.)

**Ordway:** "the country on each Side is high barron mostly broken Some high plains which look pleasant but no wood only a fiew willows in Some places along the Shores."

**Whitehouse:** "No timber barron and broken prairies on each Side."

**October 11, 1805** [This day's journey was downstream on the Snake River to the mouth of present-day Almota Creek where the expedition camped on the Whitman County shore.]

**Clark:** "... at this time they [the Indians] are out on the Plain on each side of the river hunting the antelope as we were informed by our Chiefs. The Country on either Side is an open plain leavel and fertile after ascending a Steep assent of about 200 feet . . ."

**Gass:** "The country on both sides is high dry prairie without a stick of timber"

**Ordway:** "the country is barron and broken. Some high plains no timber" "high plains no timber"

**Whitehouse:** "the country is barron a high hills and cliffs of rock on each Side of the River not even a tree to be seen no place"

**October 12, 1805** [The journey this day carried the Lewis and Clark party down the Snake to the mouth of present-day Alkali Flat Creek. They camped just below the creek mouth at the head of Texas Rapids on the Whitman County side of the stream.]

**Clark:** "here the Countray ascends with a gentile assent to the hill plains" "today Countray as yesterday open plains, no timber of any kind a fiew Hackberry bushes and willows excepted" "The hills or assents from the water is faced with a dark rugged stone"

**Gass:** "The country and river this day is much the same in appearance as what we passed yesterday."

**Ordway:** "high plains no timber"

**Whitehouse:** "the country continues the Same as yesterday" "high cliffs of rocks & high prairie on each side."

**October 13, 1805** [The party cruised down the Snake past the mouth of the Palouse River and on west toward the Columbia and away from the Palouse Region.]

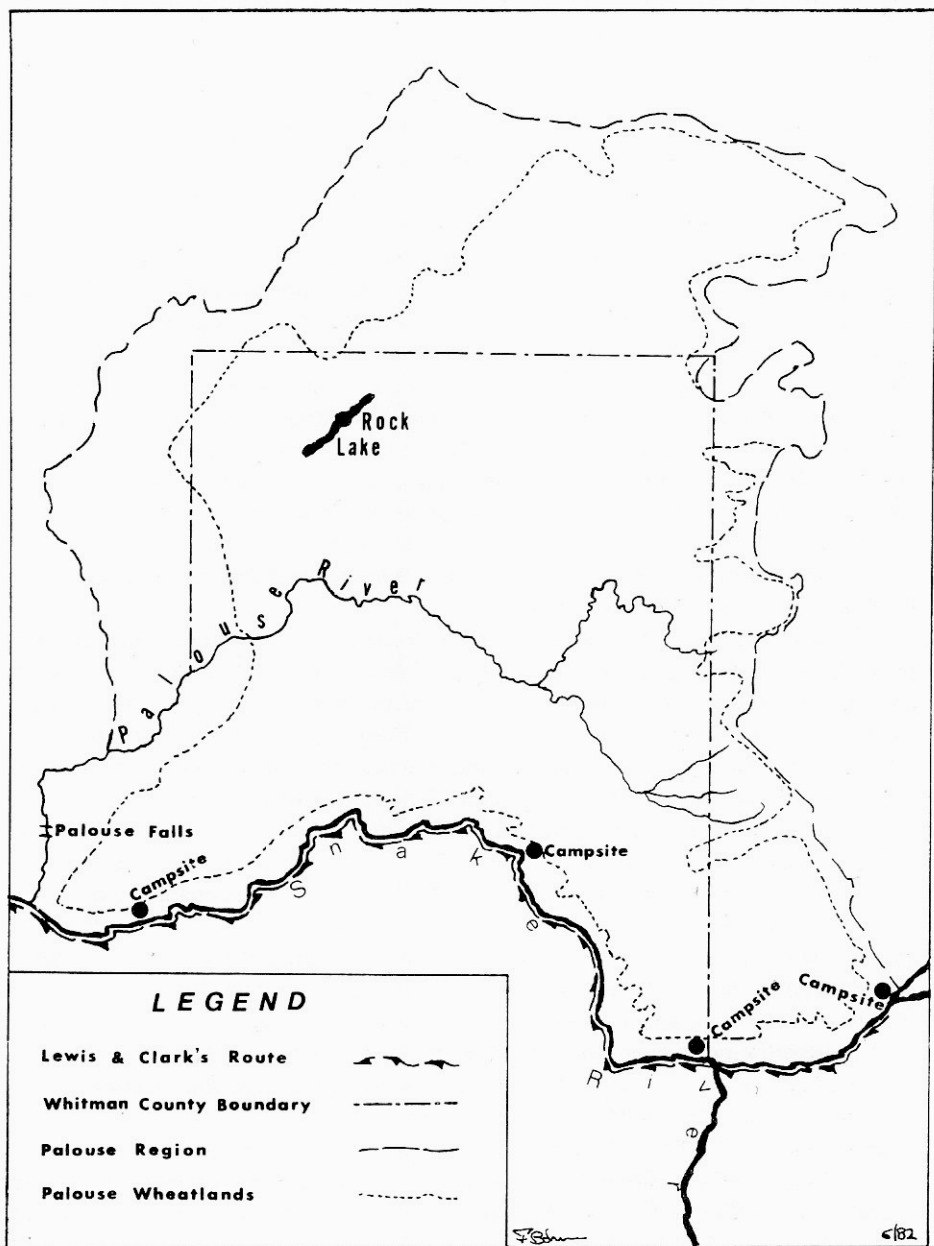
**Clark:** "The Countray thro' which we passed to day is Similar to that of yesterday open plains no timber"

**Gass:** "The country continues much the same, all high dry prairie"

**Ordway:** "the barrons and plains continue as usal"

**Whitehouse:** "the cliffs & hills high plains & barrons continues on each Side of the River as usal"

A single sentence can summarize the daily observations of the four men in regard to their conception of the Palouse region during this period of four days: "a high leavel plains or prairie dry and barron but fertile, which is reached by a steep assent off the river" (the spelling and punctuation are in their style). A comparison of this woefully inadequate, stereotyped description of the Palouse country with accounts the men penn-



“A study of the daily journals kept by members of the expedition and a careful examination of the expedition route shows that neither Lewis, Clark, nor any members of their expeditionary force ever saw the area of today’s Palouse wheatlands . . .”

ed of other regions they passed through, accounts complete in colorful detail, is in itself strong evidence that they never saw the Palouse region, let alone enter it. But there are other facts to support this contention; they relate to the physical characteristics of the country the expedition was passing through.

## Palouse Topography

Prior to the construction of Lower Monumental, Little Goose, and Granite Point Dams in the 1960's and 1970's, the Snake and Clearwater Rivers flowed in channels which raise from an elevation of 480 feet above sea level at the mouth of the Palouse River to an elevation of 819 feet at the mouth of the Potlatch, ninety-two crooked miles to the east. "The Palouse wheatlands" lie above the river on a plateau which rises from an elevation of about 1,535 feet, on the southwestern corner, to about 2,750 feet on its southeastern corner. This means the river canyon bordering the Palouse is about 1,000 feet deep at its western end and twice that deep at the eastern end.<sup>5</sup> When these dimensions, plus the exceedingly steep nature of the canyon walls, are considered it is easy to understand why such poor observations of the Palouse are to be found in the journals. It was like an ant trying to describe the roof of a house after walking along one side of the building close to the foundation.

It is doubtful that any member of the party climbed to the top of the canyon walls to the level of the plateau from which he could make first hand observations. None of the diaries record such an effort. Everyone in the party must have been busy navigating the treacherous river in the unstable canoes. Clark's detailed records give a graphic picture of the problems the party encountered. He noted the passage of thirty-five rapids in a ninety-two mile stretch of water. Ten of these were sufficiently treacherous to be called "bad rapids"; he described them as having "current at right angles," "raged rapids," "rocks in every direction," and "rapid 4 miles long." Elsewhere, he said the Snake rapids were "swift as a mill tale the canoes ran down the channel Swifter than any horse could run. In one location he found a "narrow channel not more than 25 yards wide for 1½ miles." Just above and below this stretch of river he stated that the stream was between 250 and 400 yards wide.<sup>6</sup> Small wonder that Clark wrote, "we should make more portages if the season was not so far advanced and time precious to us."<sup>7</sup> The crew must have been occupied every day, trying to keep the boats from swamping, as well as trying to protect their lives when they were dumped into the swift current (many of the men could not swim<sup>8</sup>). When boats were swamped men were busy rescuing goods from the water, repairing damaged craft, and drying out the cargo. The drying of cargo alone required a great deal of manpower as merchandise had to be kept out of the hands of pilfering Indians who crowded about the expedition at many stops.

Who would argue that anyone in a wet, exhausted, and undoubtedly hungry condition, at the end of such a day would have sufficient energy and ambition to climb a rough, steep canyon wall nearly 2,000 feet high just to get a peek at the country beyond the canyon rim? It is certain that none of the men climbed out of the canyon to shoot game. According to their records, a listing of what kinds of animals were shot and by whom, no game was killed along this stretch of the river. As a matter of fact, one member of the party said, "we saw some ducks and a few geese, but did not kill any of

them. There is no four footed game of any kind near this part of the river that we could discover, and we saw no birds of any kind, but a few hawks, eagles and crows.”<sup>9</sup>

In further support for the contention that Lewis and Clark never were in or actually saw the Palouse wheat lands during their westward trek, is the fact that their descriptions of the region were stereotyped and far from being accurate; we can only conclude that they parroted what someone else tried to tell them. Are we to believe that diary-writers who had previously been so observant of the character of the country they passed through should suddenly become blind and wordless during this period alone? Are we to believe that Captain Clark, the man who calculated the ninety-two mile stretch of crooked water to within only one-half mile of the distance listed on present-day survey maps, would be so inaccurate as to describe the 1,000 to 2,000 foot deep canyon as being, “a steep ascent of about 200 feet,” if he had actually climbed the canyon walls himself?<sup>10</sup> Would the same keen observer describe the uniquely rough, hilly Palouse plateau as, “an open plain, level and fertile,” if he had seen it himself? One would think not. It appears as if the diarists wrote only what the Indians told them about the character of the plateau which was out of sight to the north. The descriptions are too meager, too inaccurate, too stereotyped to have come from first hand observations.

During this segment of the journey resident Indians of stature accompanied the expedition; thus, leaders of the party discussed with them the character of the country that they were passing through, as well as the topography of the country not on the main route. In addition, we know that the expedition encountered Indians from other tribes who themselves were traveling through this vicinity; they were pumped for information as well. It appears that local Indians were, however, the true source for the few statements made regarding the Palouse plateau. Keep in mind the fact that the information the diarists got from the natives had to go through four, and possibly five, translations, a considerable language barrier. What is surprising is that they were able to record as much information as they actually did.

## The Return Trip

In all honesty, it must be conceded that the Lewis and Clark Expedition had an opportunity to see the Palouse region on their return trip to the East, even though such a “look” would have been at a distance of twelve to fifteen miles across a canyon 2,000 feet deep. But evidence suggested that they missed even that view. On the return trip, during the spring of 1806, the expedition reached the mouth of the Walla Walla River on April 29. From that point, traveling overland on a route roughly paralleling today’s highway through Walla Walla, Waitsburg, and Dayton, they took a shortcut across present-day Marengo to where Pomeroy now stands. They camped overnight on the upper reaches of Pataha Creek, east of what is now Pataha City on the night of May 3. The following morning they crossed the high plateau which separates the headwaters of the Pataha from upper Alpowa Creek, descended the latter stream, and reached the Snake River a few miles downstream from where Clarkston, Washington now stands. During the overland trip from Walla Walla to this point, their route generally followed valleys which are out of sight of the Palouse plateau. However, there are two points along this route where the Palouse Country could have been seen at a distance and

**Distances recorded by Captain Clark along the Clearwater and Snake Rivers from the Mouth of the Potlatch River to the Mouth of the Palouse River as compared to distances measured on present-day United States Geological Survey Maps.**

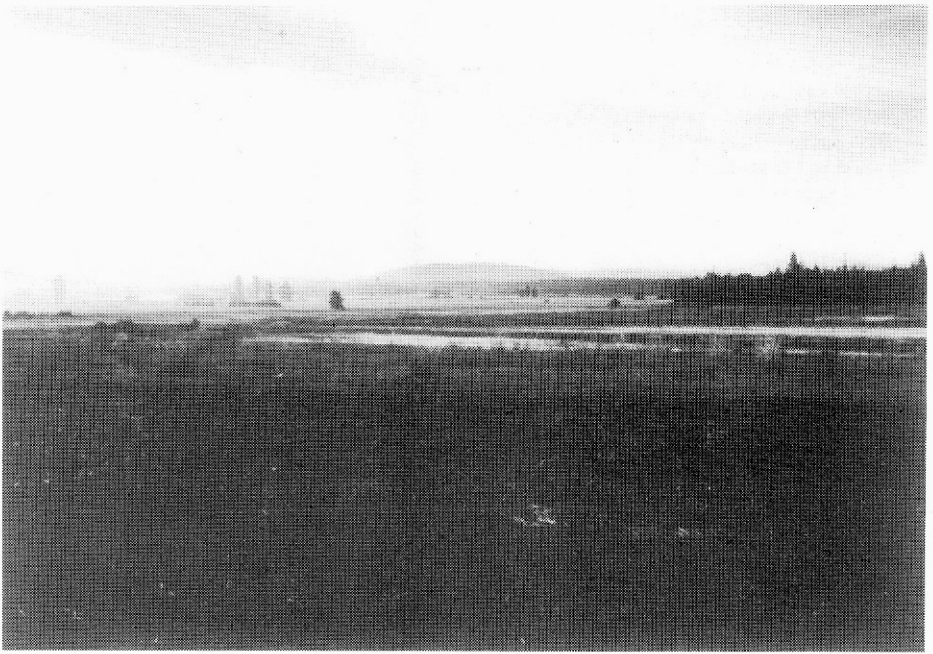
<b>Site</b>	<b>Clark's Measurements</b>	<b>USGS Measurements</b>
Coulter Creek (Potlatch River)	0 miles	0 miles
Cottonwood Creek (Lapwai Creek)	7.5 miles	3.0 miles
Ki-moo-e-nen (Snake River)	10.5 miles	14.0 miles
Not Named (Alpowa Creek)	28.0 miles	23.0 miles
"brook" (Almota Creek)	51.5 miles	48.0 miles
"brook" (Penawawa Creek)	61.5 miles	60.0 miles
Not Named (Deadman Creek)	66.0 miles	69.0 miles
"brook" (Alkali Flat Creek)	81.5 miles	84.0 miles
Ki-moo-e-nium (Tucannon River)	86.5 miles	89.0 miles
Drewyer's River (Palouse River)	91.5 miles	92.0 miles

across the Snake River canyon to the north. The better of these two opportunities was on the high plateau between Pataha and Alpowa Creeks; this ridge they crossed on the morning of May 4. A state highway rest station is now located on the site. On a clear day, when looking north and east from this point, one has an excellent view of almost the entire Palouse plateau, as well as the striking and unforgettable landmark, Steptoe Butte, which stands like a sentinel in the region's geographic center.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the fact that the expedition's diary-keepers described in considerable detail the character of the Blue Mountains, fifteen miles to the south, as well as the plateau to the south of Lewiston, their May 3 and 4 entries contain not a word about the Palouse. Why this oversight? The only reason that can be put forward is that they were prevented from seeing it because of adverse weather. Statements in the party's records support this assertion. According to the journals, May 3 was most disagreeable. Clark wrote, "it rained, hailed, snowed and blowed with Great Violence the greater part of the day." The other three men who kept journals during this part of the trek echoed his statements. These were not ideal conditions for one to see great distances and make observations about distant scenery. All four record-keepers agreed that the morning of May 4 (during which time they crossed the highlands between Pataha and Alpowa watersheds and should have had an excellent view of the Palouse country) was "very cold and disagreeable." Gass alone wrote that the morning was "clear" inspite of the fact that the meteorological table for that morning recorded "fair after hail."<sup>12</sup>

With such conditions on the high plateau south of the Snake, it is possible and probable that a view of the Palouse, a thousand feet below and twelve to fifteen miles away, was blocked by fog over the intervening Snake River canyon, or over the Palouse itself. In any event, there are no written records in the journals of the four men who kept diaries during this portion of the expedition to indicate that they saw the Palouse from this vantage point. Nor is there anything of record to suggest they either entered the Palouse or saw it during the following two days, as they traveled parallel to its southern boundary, up the north bank of the Clearwater River to the mouth of the Potlatch.





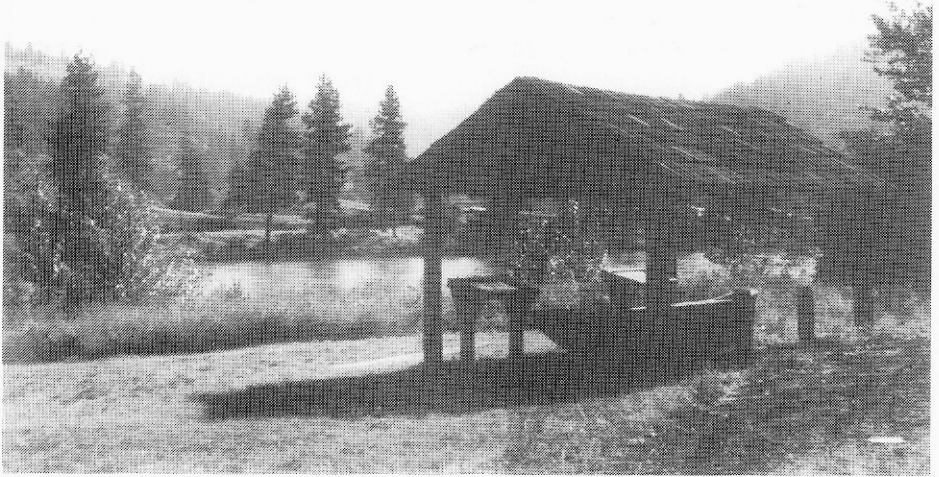
—Roy M. Chatters

*Weippe, or Quamash, where the expedition finally emerged from the Rockies and, for the first time in eleven days, was able to obtain food.*

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Close examination of their diaries during the following forty-nine days, during which they camped at various locations on the upper Clearwater waiting for snow to melt on the Lolo Trail, gives no indication that any of the party was in, or even near, the Palouse during that period. The first eight of these forty-nine days were taken up with moving from the mouth of the Potlatch to a fine camp on the north bank of the Clearwater, across from present-day Kamiah, Idaho. This route of travel took them out of the Clearwater River canyon, up its south side, and over the Nez Perce Prairie past the present-day town of Nez Perce. The expedition headquartered for twenty-seven days on the Kamiah flats. During this time men were busily engaged in hunting game and bartering with the Indians for food. These endeavors, with the exception of two sidetrips, were conducted within a radius of twelve to fifteen miles of the base camp; this afforded no opportunity for seeing or exploring the Palouse country.

During the longer of the two side-excursions mentioned above, Sargeant Ordway two other whites and a group of Indians, traveled up, what is now called, Lawyer's Canyon, past present-day Cottonwood, and reached the Salmon River near the mouth of Deer Creek, which is located fifteen miles upstream from the Salmon-Snake River junction. They made the trip to try to get salmon to eat while the party crossed the Bitter Root Mountains. But finding that the fish had not yet migrated this far, they descended the Snake, going down a few miles to where they were able to procure fish and dried roots from the Indians. They returned to base camp over this same route—a route well out of sight of the Palouse country.



—Roy M. Chatters

*“During the three weeks the party spent at Canoe Camp, (historic marker shown above), all hands were busy . . . hunting game and chopping and burning out five clumsy dugout boats from big yellow pines . . .”*

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The second side excursion, made by Drewyer and two Indian chiefs, went back over the original trail, across the Nez Perce Prairie, to the vicinity of a camp the party made on Musquetoe (or “Musquetor” or upper Jack’s Creek) on the night of May 7. Drewyer made the journey to try to reclaim two tomahawks which the party had lost. One of the weapons apparently had been misplaced by Captain Clark while in camp on “Musquitoe” Creek during the current trip. The other had been stolen from “Canoe Camp” in the fall of 1805. Drewyer’s trip likely took him to the vicinity of present-day Gifford or Reubens. Thus, he was also denied a glimpse of the Palouse region.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition spent fourteen more days at camps on the Weippe Prairie and to the east. During that time they made several attempts to get through the deep snow that covered the Lolo Trail. Finally, when the snow diminished toward the end of June, the party made its way across the mountains and to the east, saying “goodbye” to the area of the Nez Perce. In summary, the written record does not indicate that Lewis, Clark, or any member of their expeditionary force set foot in or saw the “Palouse wheatlands” during either their westward trip in late 1805 or their eastward return trip in early 1806. Evidence is, however, strong to the contrary. Therefore, we must deny them the honor of being the first white men to see or penetrate the Palouse region. □

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- <sup>1</sup>Donald W. Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain*, Seattle 1968.
- <sup>2</sup>*Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition 1804-1806*. Edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites. 8 vols. 1905-1905. Reprinted New York 1959: *Original Journals of Captain William Clark*. Vols. 3 & 4; *Original Journals of Captain Meriwether Lewis*. Vol. 4; *Journal of Private Joseph Whitehouse*. Vol. 7; *Meteorological Data*. Vol. 6. See also *Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* by Patrik Gass, Minneapolis 1958; *The Journals of Capt. Meriwether Lewis and Sgt. John Ordway, Kept on the Expedition of Western Exploration, 1803-1806*. Edited by Mylo Quaife. Madison, Wisconsin 1916; Paul R. Cutright, *Lewis and Clark Pioneering Naturalists*. Chicago, 1969; E. G. Chuinard. *Only One Man Died*. Glendale, 1979; Ingvard H. Eide. *American Odyssey; The Journey of Lewis and Clark*. Chicago, 1969; M. O. Skarsten. *George Drouillard, Hunter and Interpreter for the Lewis and Clark and Fur Trader, 1807-1810*. Glendale, 1964.
- <sup>3</sup>Lewis and Clark called the Clearwater River the "Kos-kos-kee," after its Indian name. They gave the name "Coulter's Creek" to the Potlatch in honor of one of their party.
- <sup>4</sup>In their diaries they called the Palouse River "Drewyer's River" in honor of a member of their party. But a year later, Clark referred to it as the "Pal-lice's River" on the map he prepared from information gained from the Indians.
- <sup>5</sup>Data from the U.S. Geological Survey Topographic Map, 1964 (scale: 1:250,000).
- <sup>6</sup>*Original Journals of Captain William Clark and Journal of Private Joseph Whitehouse*.
- <sup>7</sup>*Original Journals of Captain William Clark*.
- <sup>8</sup>See note one.
- <sup>9</sup>*Journal of Patrik Gass*.
- <sup>10</sup>Distances here are compared to those on a current USGS map.
- <sup>11</sup>Called Pyramid Butte or Pyramid Peak on early maps.
- <sup>12</sup>*Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, Vol. 6. *Meteorological Data*.



# PALOUSE CITY!



Manufacturing

AND

Geographical

# !·CENTER·!

OF THE

# Great Palouse Country!



**POPULATION :**

1888,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	350
1890,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,200

THE NEWS POWER JOB PRINT.

*As illustrated by the cover of this turn-of-the-century booster pamphlet, the town of Palouse claimed to be the "manufacturing and geographical center" of the region, as did Colfax, Pullman, and Moscow.*

# **Palouse: Boom and Bust? 1900-1920**

by  
**Evelyn Rodewald**

## **The Early Days**

The clatter of horses' hooves and farm wagons, the excitement of the spring log run down the Palouse River, talk of crops and weather, logging in the woods and the hopeful excitement of miners were all familiar to the streets of Palouse in 1900. By 1920 the horses and wagons were beginning to disappear. Logs no longer were floated down river to the sawmill. The number of loggers and miners on Palouse streets was very small. But talk of weather, prices, and crops could still be heard. Warehouses were filled with grain and new enterprises had sprung up to meet the needs of the progressive farmer.

The town of Palouse developed in the 1870's on the eastern border of Whitman County, Washington Territory along the banks of the Palouse River. In 1873, James A. "Modoc" Smith filed a claim on the present townsite. A year later W. P. Breeding homesteaded a plot adjoining Smith's and built a grist mill on the south bank of the river to grind wheat into flour with waterpower. Trees on the hills were a convenient resource to build homes for men and animals. So, from the beginning, grain and timber dominated the economy of Palouse.<sup>1</sup> The two industries brought changes to Palouse between 1900 and 1920. The production of lumber changed from a proliferation of small companies selling their product to the local inhabitants for homes and businesses, to a large national company producing for national markets. Improved mechanization allowed agriculture to expand. The development of international trade brought improved prices and encouraged agricultural production.

Settlers first used the Palouse hills for grazing and the valleys for cultivation. But they slowly discovered the hills were fertile and struggled with their farm equipment to break up the native bunchgrass. Most of the early farms were small and grew a variety of crops. Wheat, oats, barley, and flax were widely produced, but fruit and potatoes were also important. By 1900 the productivity of the Palouse, a name given to region, river, and town, was well known.<sup>2</sup>

Logging had been a vital element in the local economy of Whitman County since the arrival of the first settlers. Sawmills supplied, not only the necessary ingredients for shelter for families and livestock, but also part-time employment in the woods often supplemented meager farm incomes. But the lumbering business was always a tenuous affair in the late nineteenth century. The mills in operation changed hands frequently and were constantly plagued by fire. Success depended upon weather as well. A dry spring in 1900 prevented men from getting the logs out of the woods. Each spring, the high river water from melting snow was needed to float the logs downstream to the mill. Occasionally, if the demand for lumber was great, additional logs were floated down after the rains in the fall had increased the stream flow above its summer low level.<sup>3</sup>

## Palouse Comes of Age

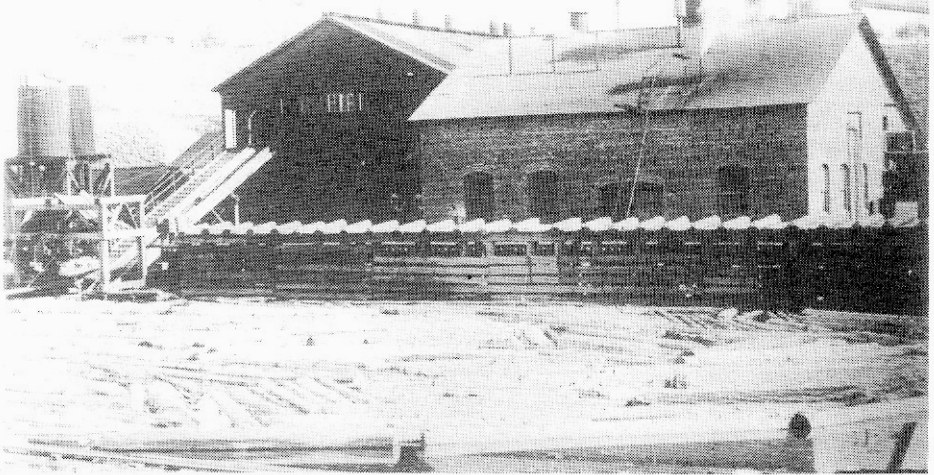
The Northern Pacific Railroad came to Palouse in 1888 and gave easier access to markets for agricultural products and lumber than could be found by sending them by barge down the Snake and Columbia Rivers. To illustrate the importance of the railroad, in one week in 1904 two cars of oats, two of hay, one of bricks, one of wheat, one of flour, and three of lumber were shipped from Palouse.<sup>4</sup>

The citizens of Palouse welcomed the twentieth century with great anticipation. Those who had survived the crop losses and financial panic of 1893, with its aftermath of bank closures, business bankruptcies, and loss of farms, wanted better prices for their goods and additional employment. In 1901 W. H. Lever in *An Illustrated History of Whitman County* expressed the belief that the position of the town at the mouth of the river basin extended to the east, made Palouse a natural trading center and supply point. The forest along the banks of the Palouse River was an invaluable asset. The timber, together with power and transportation provided by the river, supplied the lumber needs for a growing city and surrounding farms.<sup>5</sup>

In 1891 the Palouse Mill Company acquired control of all of the mills in Palouse in exchange for stock in the company. The business conditions during the depression of the 1890's forced them into receivership. It was then purchased at auction by J. K. McCornack and G. W. Peddycord and reorganized as the Palouse River Lumber Company. After two disastrous years, a fire in 1899 followed by a lack of water in the river in 1900, the following ones were successful and 1901 and 1902 were good years for the local lumber industry. In addition to supplying the surrounding communities with building materials, the Palouse River Lumber Company operated a factory which made doors, sashes, and fruit boxes. The sawmill cut 42,000 feet of lumber a day and employed fifty-six men at the mill.<sup>6</sup>

The January 6, 1903 issue of the *Spokesman Review* summed up the recent past of the town when it reported that Palouse had suffered badly in the panic of the 1890's and had lost population and business. The census revealed a drop from 1,119 in 1890 to 929 in 1900.<sup>7</sup> But since then the economy had improved, farm prices had risen and the largest employer, The Palouse River Lumber Company finished its most productive season.<sup>8</sup>

The city itself provided for the needs of its residents and surrounding community with general merchandise establishments, grocery stores, hardware and implement dealers and suppliers of hay and grain. These, with other activities offered by the community, banks, churches, and schools addressed the needs of the resident working to develop a farm or establishing a business in the town.



—Whitman County Historical Society

*The expansion of the Palouse Lumber Mill after 1903 caused a sensation in the community. The facility's capacity was expanded from 60,000 feet of lumber per day to 100,000 feet.*

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## Potlatch Lumber

The announcement in March 1903 of the sale of the Palouse River Lumber Company to the newly organized Potlatch Lumber Company of St. Paul, Minnesota caused a sensation in the community. The Potlatch Company included the holdings of the Wisconsin Log and Lumber Company and the Northland Pine Company which had been working in the forests of northern Idaho for several years. The report of the purchase included plans for expansion. The capacity of the mill in Palouse was enlarged from the ability to cut 60,000 feet of lumber per day to 100,000 feet. There was speculation about building a railroad from Palouse into the timbered hills of Idaho for reliable year around transportation of logs thereby eliminating the dependence on the river. The *Spokesman Review* prophesied "It is thought Palouse will be the manufacturing center for the syndicate's business in eastern Washington and Northern Idaho."<sup>9</sup>

The effect on Palouse was startling. By the end of April 1903, only a month later, the local newspaper reported a shortage of housing and spaces for business. The growing population was now up to 1,504 and according to the papers only lack of housing limited the size of the town.<sup>10</sup>

Electric power was available in Palouse and in July 1903 the Potlatch Company equipped the mill with electricity to enable a shift to work at night. The facility expanded with new drying sheds, and a steam drying kiln. Workers at the sawmill numbered eight plus the crew in the woods.

Employment was frequently erratic even under the new management. The availability of jobs remained dependent on the number of logs brought down from the woods, the market for lumber, and the condition of the river. Many of the employees

were farmers who worked in the woods in the winter, but an increasing number of people came to Palouse to find work in the expanding lumber industry and depended on it for full time employment.

The growing labor movement among the loggers of the Pacific Northwest expressed itself in November 1903 with a strike in the woods. In the past the loggers had freely contributed money when needed for an injured worker, now the Potlatch Company initiated a monthly one dollar assessment upon the men; this they used to establish a special fund for the care of disabled workmen. At a time when the average worker in the woods was paid \$1.00 to \$1.75 per day, this was a large sum. The union chose this issue on which to make a stand; 160 men in the logging camps refused to pay the fee and went out on strike. After a week, the saw mill in Palouse closed for lack of logs. The townspeople denounced the unions, as they could see the wider implications for the town if the workers stayed out on strike. After several attempts, the company sent strike breakers into the camps, and by the end of November work resumed. The Palouse mill, however, remained closed while improvements were made to increase its capacity. The spring and summer brought increases in production and employment; by August the Potlatch Company employed 600 men in the mill and in the woods.<sup>11</sup>

Recognizing that Palouse could not provide services for the additional workers, the company contracted with Doctor E. T. Hein and a Doctor Armstrong of Spokane to care for the medical needs of the employees. They built a two story brick hospital with room for twenty beds. In addition, small low cost houses were built to accommodate the mill workers. Placed close together in rows and all of the same design, they were a quick answer to the housing problem.<sup>12</sup> The growing town paved the main street with crushed rock during the summer of 1904 and voted a special levy for a new school.<sup>13</sup>

It became apparent that there was insufficient water in the Palouse River to rely on for a year around supply of logs on the scale which the Potlatch Company wanted to operate. Hauling the logs by train was an obvious answer during this period when rails were extending into all areas of the west. The Company asked the Businessmen's Association of Palouse to arrange for a free right-of-way to their proposed Washington, Idaho, and Montana (WI & M) line, which would connect the timber lands of Idaho to the mill at Palouse and with the Northern Pacific Railroad network. The road bed would follow the Palouse River for forty-seven miles giving access to 4,000,000 feet of timber. (See map.) The city happily gave land for the depot as well. A locomotive turntable and an elevator to move freight to connecting rail lines were installed.<sup>14</sup> The *Spokesman Review* pointed out that the railroad would open up new agricultural lands along the Idaho border which had suffered from lack of railroad facilities.<sup>15</sup>

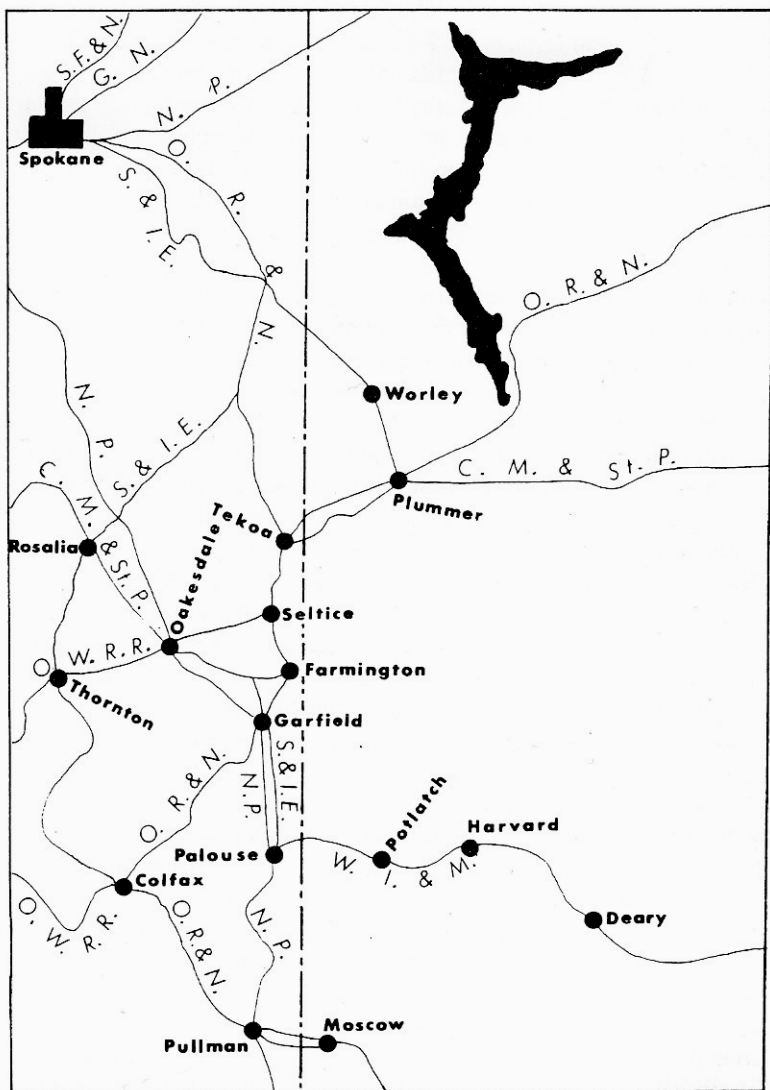
In the spring of 1905 with the announcement of the building of the new railroad it was predicted that by 1910 there would be a population of 10,000 in the city. The summer of 1905 must have been the high point of expectations for Palouse residents. Shortly thereafter the management of the Potlatch Lumber Company announced plans to build a company town nine miles away to house their employees and to be the site of the largest, most modern sawmill possible.<sup>16</sup> As the timber resources receded into the Idaho hills, the Company decided that a location nearer the supply was necessary. Another important factor related to future growth, the location of the mill in Palouse precluded the construction of a yard large enough to hold the projected production of the modern equipment they intended to buy.<sup>17</sup>

The employees of Potlatch at Palouse worked day and night during the following year supplying the cut lumber for the construction of the new plant and houses. The Palouse Pottery Manufacturing Company sent five carloads of sewer tiles and the brick yard supplied bricks for the foundations. The new mill opened September 8, 1906.



The anticipated output would require ten trains a day of thirty cars each to keep the huge saw busy. Also located in Potlatch would be the machine shops and offices for the Washington, Idaho, and Montana Railroad.<sup>18</sup>

Palouse was the center of railroad construction and, at one time, 250 men were employed building railroads in the area. Shortly after the completion of the Washington, Idaho, and Montana (WI & M) Railroad, the Spokane and Inland Electric line announced plans to build south from Spokane and arrived in Palouse in 1908. This railroad provided easy transportation for people and goods on a regular basis between the towns along the eastern border of the state. Palouse acted as the supply point and transportation link for the Potlatch Lumber Company and the agricultural area. The WI & M built two large grain warehouses in Palouse capable of holding half a million bushels of wheat.<sup>19</sup>



*“Palouse was the center of railroad construction after 1900 and, at one time, 250 men were employed in building railroads in the area.”*

The years between 1906 and 1910 had been good ones for Palouse. The mill ran much of the time and in 1908 Potlatch employed 500 men. Up to this time the number of people working for the railroads and the timber industry, whether at the mill or in the forests, had spurred businesses to respond to the needs of this transient population. By that year there were five general merchandise stores and five grocery stores, twice the number found ten years earlier, twelve saloons, a brewery, five hotels and boarding houses and from three to five houses of prostitution. The business concerns also continued to supply the agricultural community by offering five hardware and implement stores. An increase in the number of dry and transfer businesses indicated the importance of railroads and warehousing.<sup>20</sup>

## The Mill Closes

In 1910 rumors became more and more persistent that the sawmill in Palouse would be permanently closed. The contradiction between the statements of the officials of the Potlatch Company and what actually happened became increasingly apparent. They refused to confirm the rumors and insisted that it would remain in operation with the summer run to begin with the spring thaw. It was their reported intention to operate day and night throughout the summer. However, by August, acute fire danger in the woods stopped logging and subsequently closed first the planing mill and then the big saw.<sup>21</sup>

General Manager Laird of the Potlatch Company attributed the closing of the mill in Palouse that summer to a "lack of demand for lumber in the east." *The Spokesman Review* speculated that the real reason was a scarcity of logs already cut and the great fire danger in the woods due to the use of stream engines. The danger was certainly a real one as within a week the area was beset by fires in the forests covering much of northern Idaho. Finally, in October rain allowed the other mill to resume production, but the operation in Palouse would remain closed because of "poor business conditions."<sup>22</sup>

The citizens of Palouse began to look around for other industries to replace the opportunities which seemed to be disappearing. A letter in the 1910 *Palouse Republic*, a resident pointed out the slowdown of the economy and suggested that other resources such as clay, coal or cement could be developed. He noted what must have been obvious to many, several houses were remaining empty and growth had stopped. The April 15, 1910 issue of the same paper devoted several pages to a "boost Palouse" campaign put together to encourage new business development which would take advantage of their natural resources and agricultural potential.<sup>23</sup>

A drastic social change was spurred by the visit to Palouse on May 6, 1910 of the nationally known prohibitionist Carrie Nation.<sup>24</sup> Palouse, as well as other towns in the area, responded to her pleas against alcoholic beverages and the town voted dry in the election of 1910. The closure of twelve saloons on December 31, 1910 was an additional shock to the economy of the town. Within a week, C. B. Eslick, owner of a liquor store, sold it and his rooming house at auction in anticipation of leaving. Although the law did not affect the brewery, the owner of the business sold his property shortly thereafter.<sup>25</sup>

A certain pessimism prevailed, not only in Palouse but throughout the area, and in April 1910 six railroad cars of families and goods from the Palouse area left Spokane to look for new opportunities in Montana.<sup>26</sup> One longtime resident in the general merchandise business sold his share of the property and left the city. Hope still remain-



—Roy M. Chatters

*The Main Street of Palouse as seen from the viaduct of the Spokane and Inland Electric Railroad viaduct.*

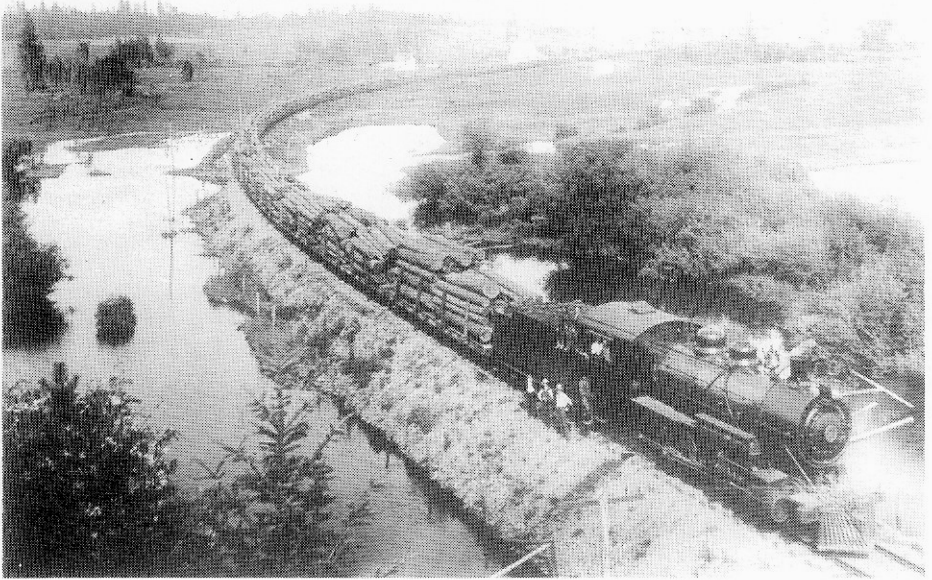
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ed, however, as owners of the Johnson Variety Store chose that year to open business. Many houses were vacant, not only the shacks built during the boom but also better quality homes. The city decided to light only twelve street lights instead of the twenty-five previously used. An attempt to pass bonds for city improvements failed.<sup>27</sup>

In August 1911 the *Palouse Republic* reported that the planing mill, the only Potlatch operation remaining in Palouse, employed twenty-eight men that month and was operating at full capacity. The market for lumber was slow and no one “except the head of the Potlatch knows what will happen to the mill.”<sup>28</sup> The paper attempted to be optimistic by editorializing that the mill was still in good condition and the additional cost of bringing logs that far would not matter if the market for the product was good.<sup>29</sup>

The opening of a big new mill in Elk River was reported that summer. About 500 people were to be employed at the new mill, repeating a boom which had been Palouse’s six years earlier. The editor of the *Palouse Republic* tried to persuade his readers that all was not lost.

People say the loss will kill the town, not so—it was to be expected that as uncut timber went farther and farther away it was inevitable Palouse would not be the best place. Possibly Palouse has expected too much from the sawmill. It has run in fits and starts, labor income has been good but not continuous, therefore sometimes it has bad effects. People move in and out—possibly leaving bills and obligations. If the mill goes maybe something more permanent will come in capable of growth. Let it be borne in mind also that a town situated in the center of fertile and productive agricultural country will not perish. Agriculture is permanent and dependable. Land will continue to produce. Not so lumber towns built in a gulch or on a stony, sterile land. It will spring up quickly, grow fast, flourish and be prosperous for a time, until all the lumber around it has been felled and sawed and hauled away, and then it will fall into decay. We here in Palouse may never have a fear of this kind.<sup>30</sup>



—Roy M. Chatters

*A logging train, said to be the longest logging train ever to come to Palouse enters the town shortly after the completion of the W I & M line.*

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The paper went on to note that several people had purchased new cars, a sure indication of prosperity. The summer brought a good wheat harvest along with its demand for a large labor force to operate the threshing machines.<sup>31</sup> The development agent for the Northern Pacific Railroad toured the region in the summer of 1911. He was interested in the potential farms which could be created in the logged off areas. The railroads offered low immigration rates from the east and southeast to the Pacific Northwest throughout all of this period.<sup>32</sup>

Finally it ended! The yard at the sawmill cleaned out all of its lumber and in December 1912 the machinery was sold and moved to Montana.<sup>33</sup> Editorial comment notwithstanding, the town could not easily adjust to the loss of a major employer. The Palouse Steam Laundry was sold at a sheriff's sale and two general stores quit business.<sup>34</sup> The economic depression continued into the new year. In 1913 eleven businesses either closed completely or changed hands. One general merchandise store sold its goods to pay debts and retained only the grocery department. In 1914 an empty boarding house of twenty-four rooms burned to the ground; it was an unused leftover from the booming years before 1910.<sup>35</sup>

### **Years of Uncertainty**

The years were ones of economic upheaval but the town turned away from the dependence on the payroll from the lumber industry and attempted to find other areas to support the community. The manager of the Potlatch Lumber Company's retail yard, John Kendall developed a plan to manufacture silos. They would be used to store ensilage for feeding dairy herds and hogs. The American Silo Company filed corpora-



—Boyd Beeson

*Main Street of Palouse, looking east, in 1913. The man in the center of the photograph is seen to be servicing a street light. This activity has attracted the attention of a young man on a balloon-tired bicycle.*

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tion papers in March 1913 with a capitalization of \$100,000. The newspaper supported the idea and published many articles explaining the concept and the value of ensilage as well as information on dairying and other means of income for small farms. Several farmers bought dairy herds as an auxiliary source of income. The business men of Palouse saw small diversified farms as a way to encourage a higher population on the farms thereby improving their position as agriculture suppliers.<sup>36</sup>

After 1910 there was a national movement encouraging people to leave cities and develop small farms. The census of that year brought to the attention of the press and the public a steady decline in the percentage of people on farms. In 1890 the percentage of the population on farms had been 44%. This figure dropped to 32% in 1910. In a nation built on the virtue of availability of land for everyone as one of the cornerstones of a self-governing democracy this was regarded by some as a national calamity,<sup>37</sup>

In 1914 the Federation of Whitman County Commercial Organizations endorsed a plan for a state wide conference on immigration. Contingent to the plan was the partition of the large Palouse wheat farms for the settlement of families on 20, 40, and 80 acre tracts devoted to diversified farming. They wanted to list 200-300 small farms for sale at reasonable rates and make arrangements with the railroad for transportation of the immigrants.<sup>38</sup>

Unfortunately, they faced a widespread trend toward larger farms as improved mechanization allowed farmers to cultivate larger acreages and they were interested in expanding their holdings. The average acreage in the county rose from 379 acres per

THE  
 PALOUSE  
 CORNET BAND,  
 OF  
 PALOUSE WASH.  
 Under the  
 direction of  
 G. B. JOSLIN.  
 A band that  
 uses and  
 recommends  
 C. G. CONN'S  
 INSTRUMENTS  
 made at  
 ELNHART, IND.



—Paul Bockmier Collection  
 Whitman County Historical Society

*The Palouse Cornet Band of Palouse, Washington can be seen here regaled in their fine white uniforms, complete with sashes and American flags on the jacket pockets. They are, as the advertisement suggests, playing C. G. Conn's band instruments.*

farm in 1900 to 383 acres in 1910, not a large change, but this process continued after 1910 to the present. The land available for homesteading was gone by this period, so land values increased under the pressure for expansion. Much property exchanged hands without the use of cash, land frequently was traded for farms elsewhere and for business lots or houses.<sup>39</sup>

The search for gas, oil, and copper continued during this period. Some of the first lumber cut in Palouse after the turn of the century was for the construction of an oil derrick near Rosalia. Gold Hill, about thirty miles east of Garfield, still had working mines. The Palouse Coal and Oil Company had a coal prospect on Cedar Creek not far from Palouse. Gas and oil coming spontaneously from the ground had occurred in several places in the county and the Spokane Natural Gas, Oil, and Coal Company did exploration work. Many residents of Palouse were involved in these efforts and the town acted as a provisioner for the outlying districts.<sup>40</sup>

The Mizpah copper mine was owned by Palouse businessmen and showed a great deal of promise in the decade after 1910. Located in the Idaho mining district about seventeen miles from Harvard, Idaho, the company spent several years expanding the mine to increase production. Lack of good transportation hindered the work. The ore had to be sent to Anaconda, Montana for milling which was an additional expense. In 1913 a holding company, The Merger Mining Company took over with the same stockholders to enable them to sell stock at a better rate and raise money for expansion. In 1919 a new, rich discovery encouraged the developers to build a mill at the site. Although never producing great amounts of copper, the mine continued in operation into the 1920's.<sup>41</sup>



—Whitman County Historical Society

*The interior of the Ankcorn Hardware Store in Palouse, circa 1904 makes it clear to the late twentieth century observer that methods of merchandising have changed significantly in the past eighty years.*

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Use of the automobile multiplied after 1910 bringing a new set of problems. Roads suitable for farm wagons and buggies were not adequate for cars. A state highway association of Whitman County was formed to facilitate the building of new roads. Each commercial body or municipality was entitled to three representatives for each 400 population and one for each additional 200. Each farmers organization could have one representative. Nine men were chosen to represent Palouse.<sup>42</sup>

Feeling was strong in the county over the issue of the route of a proposed state highway. The eastern part of the county wanted the road to go through Garfield, Oakdale, Palouse, and Pullman and the westerners wanted a route through Colfax and Rosalia. Good roads would bring people and trade, both vital to the survival of these communities. The eastern segment offered to separate and become a different county if the west would not cooperate. In 1913 the state highway law gave Whitman County two miles of improved roads a year. The local association felt this was inadequate and suggested a bond issue be used to build additional mileage.<sup>43</sup>

## The Great War

Events in the fall of 1914 in Europe caused repercussions which were to change life permanently in the Palouse. With Great Britain and Germany at war the first demand was for horses for their cavalry and oats to feed them. The price of oats jumped to \$1.20 for 100 pounds and by the end of October wheat prices rose to \$1.00 a bushel from 80¢.<sup>44</sup>

George N. Lamphere Sr., one of the editors of the *Palouse Republic* and active in development efforts for Palouse wrote a letter to the paper:

While just before the war in Europe and Asia all voices in this country were raised in the promotion of a nationwide propaganda for diversified farming, the great war worked a wondrous change. It is evident that the withdrawal of so many active men from agricultural pursuits must inevitably reduce the amount of grain heretofore yearly produced in the nations at war . . . This condition therefore will check the movement for the growing of a greater variety of crops in the United States and will stimulate the grain growing industry.<sup>45</sup>

OFFICERS OF THE  
**Palouse Pulp & Paper Co.**

---

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**R. L. Smith, Vice President**

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**H. D. Wagon**

INVENTOR OF PROCESS USED IN MAKING BLEACHED SODA PULP, PALOUSE, WASHINGTON

**E. E. Boone**

PROPRIETOR OF PALOUSE HARDWARE & IMPLEMENT COMPANY, PALOUSE, WASHINGTON

**George N. Lamphere**

PUBLISHER OF THE STAR-MIRROR AND IDAHO POST, MOSCOW, IDAHO

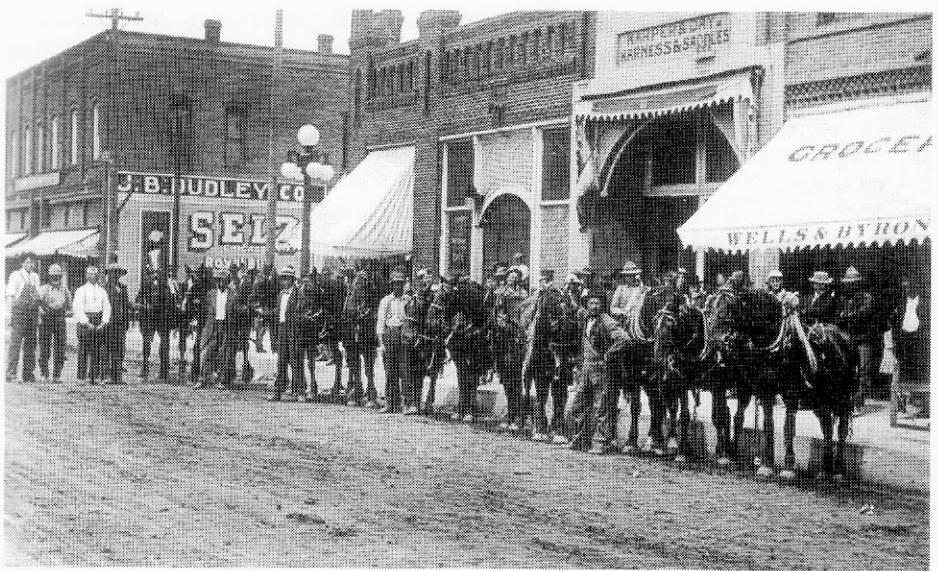
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PROPRIETOR OF COZY NOOK HOTEL AND CONGRESS THEATRE; PRESIDENT PALOUSE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PALOUSE, WASHINGTON

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CANNON, McKEVITT & FRASER, Attorneys





—Frank Williamson Photograph  
Whitman County Historical Society

*After 1920, scenes like this one became rare on the streets of Palouse. Agriculture became mechanized and the automobile quickly supplanted the horse as a means of transportation in the area—this was especially true as the state highway system extended into Whitman County.*

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He went on to encourage the Palouse grain growers to expand their production as much as possible; the demand for grain would cause prices to rise. The cost of goods also increased during the war. The price of wheat was guaranteed by the government at \$2.20 a bushel to stimulate production. That kind of return encouraged increased acreage and speculation in farm land. The census of 1920 indicated that the average price for land in all of Whitman County was \$91.47 but locally the land sold for \$110 an acre in January 1919 and \$200 by January 1920.<sup>46</sup> The average had risen to 423.6 acres per farm. The number of farms of over 1,000 acres rose from 163 in 1910 to 200 in 1920.<sup>47</sup>

For over a year farm land and businesses exchanged hands rapidly. In 1919 five commercial enterprises were sold to new owners and two in 1920. Some land was sold three times in three weeks and each seller made a profit. At these high prices farmers who bought land intending to keep it could not afford to allow land to lie fallow on alternate years as approved farming methods dictated. Peas, which had been introduced in the Palouse area in 1913, and alfalfa acreage were increased to provide nutrients to the soil. The harvest of 1919 produced the greatest profit in the history of the area which meant increased profit to the businessmen as well.<sup>48</sup>

The government attempted to return the economy to normal in 1920. Business and industry were encouraged to reduce prices to a prewar level and the guaranteed price was removed. The price of wheat started to fall from \$2.62 in May 1920 to \$1.97 at harvest time and \$1.50 by the end of the year. This was the beginning of a national agricultural depression which lasted until 1925.<sup>49</sup>

From 1910 to 1920 the town of Palouse lost 400 people. This was not unlike trends in some other towns in the county although most other cities lost only 100 to 200 people in the same period. The number of farms in the county dropped from a high of 3,096 in 1910 to 2,957 in 1920. The smaller farm population could not support the multiplicity of stores, hotels, and restaurants which the railroad and sawmill workers needed.<sup>50</sup>

Palouse did suffer when the sawmill closed, at the same time expanded agricultural acreage decreased the trade population. A study done in 1926, although a few years outside of the scope of this article, found that in that year 110 farm families were using Palouse as their trading center, a figure which may have been quite different had the farms remained in 80 to 100 acre plots. Cars and better roads ultimately caused problems although this was not significant until after 1920. Other attempts to provide an industrial base were not successful for various reasons and the mineral possibilities never lived up to their promise.

In 1920 Palouse was back in business as a solid agricultural trading center. Two new hotels were in operation and several garages to service the automobile market had started and expanded. The Farmers Union Warehouse built an addition and although the larger grain dealer, C.W. McFarland sold his business in 1919, his successor continued to enlarge the company. The town once again, provided goods and services to the agricultural community. In 1920 there were only two grocery stores and two general merchandise stores. The number of hardware and implement dealers had remained relatively constant. Only one hospital was now necessary. One general merchandise store remained in the same hands as in 1900 as well as two of the grocery stores, a hardware and two drug stores. The jewelry and shoe stores and the two banks were also found to have the same ownership from the early 1900's through 1920 indicating a core of stability throughout the excitement of the boom times and the gloom of the bad times. □

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Fred C. Bohm, "Logging and Lumbering Along The Palouse River", *The Bunchgrass Historian*, 8 (Summer 1980):3-10; A. H. Harris and Garrett, Kincaid, *Palouse In The Making*, (Palouse, Washington, by the author), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>J.B. West, *Growing Up In The Palouse* (Palouse, Washington, by the author) 1980, p. 11, 12.

<sup>3</sup>Harris and Kincaid, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup>*Palouse Town and Country Study*, (Palouse, Washington: 1962), p. 22.

<sup>5</sup>W. H. Lever, *An Illustrated History of Whitman County*, (Olympia, 1910), p. 215.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Wayne Swanson, *A History of Logging and Lumbering on the Palouse River, 1870-1905*, (Master's thesis, Washington State University, 1958), p. 29-32.

<sup>7</sup>Calvin F. Schmid and Stanton E. Schmid, *Growth of Cities and Towns: State of Washington*, (Olympia: Washington State Planning and Community Affairs Agency, 1969), p. 61.

<sup>8</sup>*Spokesman Review*, January 6, 1903.

<sup>9</sup>*Spokesman Review*, March 30, 1903.

<sup>10</sup>*Palouse Republic*, April 25, 1903.

<sup>11</sup>*Spokesman Review*, November 4, 1903, November 7, 1903, November 16, 1903.

<sup>12</sup>*Spokesman Review*, June 28, 1904, and West, p. 135.

- <sup>13</sup>*Spokesman Review*, July 7, 1904, July 26, 1904.
- <sup>14</sup>Swanson p. 34.
- <sup>15</sup>*Spokesman Review*, March 6, 1905.
- <sup>16</sup>*Spokesman Review*, March 25, 1905.
- <sup>17</sup>*Palouse Republic*, September 27, 1912.
- <sup>18</sup>*Palouse Republic*, September 14, 1906.
- <sup>19</sup>*Spokesman Review*, March 25, 1905, and *Palouse Republic*, May 27, 1910.
- <sup>20</sup>West, p. 164-189 and *Palouse Republic*, the year of 1910.
- <sup>21</sup>*Palouse Republic*, April 8, 1910, June 3, 1910, July 22, 1910, August 19, 1910, and *Spokesman Review*, November 11, 1910.
- <sup>22</sup>*Palouse Republic*, August 19, 1910.
- <sup>23</sup>*Palouse Republic*, April 15, 1910, November 11, 1910.
- <sup>24</sup>*Palouse Republic*, May 6, 1910.
- <sup>25</sup>*Palouse Republic*, January 6, 1911, January 11, 1911.
- <sup>26</sup>*Palouse Republic*, April 1, 1910.
- <sup>27</sup>*Palouse Republic*, December 2, 1910, May 20, 1911.
- <sup>28</sup>*Palouse Republic*, August 18, 1911.
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup>*Palouse Republic*, November 10, 1911.
- <sup>31</sup>*Palouse Republic*, July 21, 1911.
- <sup>32</sup>*Palouse Republic*, June 23, 1911.
- <sup>33</sup>*Palouse Republic*, December 22, 1912.
- <sup>34</sup>*Palouse Republic*, March 22, 1912.
- <sup>35</sup>*Palouse Republic*, May 2, 1913.
- <sup>36</sup>*Palouse Republic*, January 17, 1913.
- <sup>37</sup>George K. Holmes, "Movement From City and Towns To Farms," U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Yearbook of Agriculture*, 1914, (Washington, D.C.; Government Printing Office, 1914). p. 257, and Philip M. Raup, "Societal Goals in Farm Size," *Size, Structure, and Future of Farms*, A. Gordon Ball and Earl O. Heady, editors, (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1972), p. 6.
- <sup>38</sup>*Palouse Republic*, March 13, 1914.
- <sup>39</sup>U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Washington*: 633, and *Palouse Republic*, May 1, 1914.
- <sup>40</sup>*Palouse Republic*, April 18, 1901, December 5, 1913.
- <sup>41</sup>*Palouse Republic*, January 3, 1913, October 24, 1913.
- <sup>42</sup>*Palouse Republic*, January 17, 1913, January 3, 1913, February 21, 1913, May 1, 1914.
- <sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup>*Palouse Republic*, October 30, 1914.
- <sup>45</sup>*Palouse Republic*, December 11, 1914.
- <sup>46</sup>*Palouse Republic*, April 25, 1919, February 7, 1919.
- <sup>47</sup>U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*: VI 295.
- <sup>48</sup>*Palouse Republic*, April 25, 1919.
- <sup>49</sup>*Palouse Republic*, May 28, 1920, August 12, 1920, October 1, 1920, December 7, 1920 and Harold Underwood Faulkner, *American Economic History*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 626.
- <sup>50</sup>Edward A. Taylor, *Rural Social Organization in Whitman County—1926*, (Master's Thesis, Washington State College, 1926), p. 44.

## Publication of Note

### Indians of the Pacific Northwest

by Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown

University of Oklahoma Press, 1981, 294 pp., \$24.95

This work, a part of the University of Oklahoma's "Civilization of the American Indian Series," is a well-written and spirited account of the past of Northwest Indians. Utilizing both primary and secondary sources in their research, Ruby and Brown have brought to life the stories, traditions, and history of the many tribes of the region. The narrative is enhanced by excellent photo selection based on extensive photo research. In fact, the pictures, whether candid or posed, give an outstanding view of many aspects of early tribal life. *Indians of the Pacific Northwest* offers a good historical overview of the Cayuse, Walla Walla, Nez Perce, and other area tribes. In addition, the book contains an excellent discussion of intertribal relations; this is, in fact, one of its great strengths. The Ruby-Brown account of Indian relations with the Whitman Mission is especially revealing. I highly recommend this work; it is very readable and will almost certainly become an important reference source on the Indians of the Pacific Northwest.

—Colleen Deasy

## Staff Changes

Deborah Gallacci will be leaving the staff of the *Bunchgrass Historian* with the publication of this issue. Deborah served as Associate Editor for the past two years and has written a number of fine articles for the publication. She was recently awarded the 1982 Joel E. Ferris Prize for the writing of Eastern Washington History by the Eastern Washington Historical Society. Debbie will be leaving the open spaces of Whitman County for the strictured confines of Boston University where she received a fellowship to pursue her Ph.D. in history. In the two years she has been with us Debbie has made important contributions to the writing of the region's history and has been a major factor in keeping the *Bunchgrass Historian* a high quality publication. We wish her the best in her studies in "bean town."

Taking Ms. Gallacci's place as Associate Editor will be long-time Pullman resident, Suzanne Myklebust. Suzanne has had formal historical training at Washington State University and possesses a strong interest in Whitman County's past. She is active in Whitman County Historical Society affairs and has contributed to the *Bunchgrass Historian* in the past. We welcome Suzanne to the staff.



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