

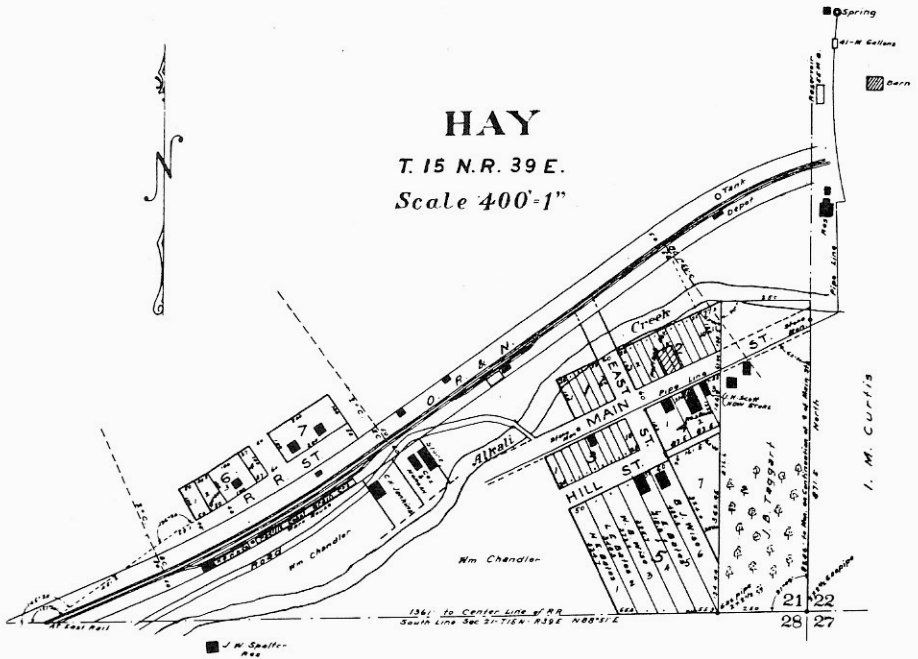
Bunchgrass Historian

Whitman County Historical Society Quarterly

Volume 15, No. 4

Colfax, Washington

Winter 1987



- Hay, Washington
- The Hay Baptist Church
- Riparia Memoirs of Chas. A. Ray

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Ruth Nervig is a resident of Hay and was the Clerk of the church featured in her article.

Chas. Ray's reminiscences were taken down in 1940 by Lon Leeper for use in historical research projects on southwestern Whitman County.

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

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HAY, WASHINGTON

The people who settled around the Hay area were those who had migrated from the Atlantic seaboard. The newcomers were quick to see the possibilities and wrote home for other family members to join them. Three families, two from North Carolina and one from Virginia, were the first to locate in Hay. Mrs. John Splater was one of those early settlers. Her brother, Henry Riddle, was an earlier resident of the area. Mrs. Splater, her husband and children built a house near the train stop and as a result found themselves mailing many letters for their neighbors. She soon applied for the postmastership and it was granted by President Grover Cleveland July 10, 1893. Mrs. Splater held the post for seven years. During that time she started stocking canned goods supplied by Mr. Hyatt of Lacrosse. The goods were sold on a commission basis from her home. She continued to run this business until J.H. Buff, the new postmaster, built the first store in Hay.

According to Mrs. Splater, the origin of the name Hay was traced back to the days when men working on the railroad needed hay to feed their animals. One day, during the late 80s, there was no hay for the animals and some men cried out, "Hay, Hay!" just about the time a train appeared with a load of hay. From that time on the siding became known as Hay Station or Hay.

Early residents raised mainly cattle and produced corn and rye as crops. Part of southwestern Whitman County near Hay was better suited for grazing than crops as the land was too rocky and rough for grain. The McGregor family raised sheep in this area and R.D. Smith, an early cattleman, had the largest cattle ranch in the Hay community. In the northeastern corner of Hay were some farmers interested in dairying. The Shafers



Hay, about 1940

were one family who had a small herd of dairy cows. North of Hay, a turkey farm owned by the Stephensons was a minor enterprise for a number of years. But by 1904-05 wheat had become the main crop as farmers discovered they could make more money raising wheat.

Changes in agricultural practices were also on the way. The first demonstration of mechanized farming was made on the Carlson Ranch March, 1930. The event was covered by the local press and was well attended by the area farmers. By 1936 most farmers were buying and using power machines; animal power diminished along with the large harvest crews and workers.

The weather in the area was mild for the most part. But there were a few years when the weather was extreme. A late frost in June of 1920 did considerable damage to gardens, fruit and field crops. The Lacrosse Clipper reported that the winters of 1922 and 1923 were two of the worst in the century. During 1922, snow was more than 12 inches deep and the temperature a minus 13° F.

By the early 1920s Hay had become a real town. The community put in a waterline in 1920 and by 1921 could boast of a graveled main street. A branch of the Lacrosse bank had come to town as well as Taggart's store, Jenkins and Son's shop, a lunch room and a Lutheran Church by 1927-28. These businesses joined an already prosperous community

consisting of Scott's Hardware, a barber shop, Post Office, lumber yard, two churches (Baptist and Pentecostal), three warehouses, a blacksmith shop, Buff's store, and a school. Development and economic prosperity reached a peak during the period from 1925 to 1929.

There was no high school for a number of years in Hay. In 1922, the citizens began to operate an unaccredited secondary school. School enrollment was: 1920-none, 1925 - 15, 1930 - 19, 1935 - 30, and 1940 - 23. There was one graduate in 1923, none in 1939, and four in 1940. Most of the students were from Hay although a few were from the surrounding area. Subject matter for classes was very limited because of the small enrollment. Teachers salaries were low so most teachers were recent college graduates seeking experience. The state minimum was \$200.00 per year, while the Superintendent received a few \$100.00 more plus a nice cottage rent free. The community was very supportive of its schools and very proud of its basketball team during the 20s and 30s. A squad of 5 or 6 boys was able to defeat most opponents for several seasons.

There were not many social activities outside of school and church socials. Most leisure time was spent attending meetings, going for automobile rides, or visiting friends and relatives. Along with supporting the high school basketball team, the town also turned out for the annual winter basketball contest between the Norwegians and the Tarheels. The Norwegians had migrated to the area in the early 1900s and there was a good natured rivalry between the two groups.

At one time Hay sponsored weekend rodeos and two day picnics were very popular until they were discontinued in 1929. The picnic was held on the John Knox farm and the chief attractions were horse races, athletic events, dance pavillion, and food concessions. Usually 750-800 people paid admission with the profits being used for prize money for the contestants. The rodeos and picnics brought outsiders into town and helped the economy of Hay.

The literary clubs played an active part in the lives of some people. Plays as well as readings were a part of the clubs. Sometimes debates were held that proved very interesting and often heated. The events were looked forward to as a time to wear, "our split tailed coat and plug hat, if, such we had," according to Omer Fleming, an early resident of the Hay area. Other social clubs included card clubs, Fan club, and Ladies aid, which sponsored showers for the newly married.

The Grange organization played an important role in many rural small towns. It provided social contact and an opportunity for farmers to discuss problems of common interest such as weed control, plowing techniques, and soil conservation. Hay's Grange was established in 1934 with a membership sufficient to obtain a charter. By 1936 the membership in-

creased by 80%. The organization was just as much social as professional giving people an opportunity for entertainment in many homes during the winter months. The group also contributed money for scholarships to aid boys interested in furthering their education.

The Grain Grower's Association in Hay worked for the welfare of farmers both individually and as a group in securing the best price for grain. One of the greatest services rendered was that of supplying the farmers with ready cash during the weeks preceding harvest when working capital was needed. Closely affiliated with this group was the Farmers Co-operative Association located in Dusty. During the late 30s and early 40s this coop succeeded in reducing the price of oil and gas to the farmers. They also paid dividends on purchases through their store.

Road improvement contributed to the decline of Hay as did the railroads. At one time Hay was serviced by seven passenger trains, many freights and a substantial income from the large crews needed for maintenance of the rail lines. These crews helped to supply many of the businesses in town. When the Union Pacific shifted its main lines to the west this income was lost to the town of Hay. By 1940 only three passenger trains daily ran through town and the freight was limited to two per week.

Both the highways and railways made it possible for people of Hay and the surrounding area to travel for many of their needs. It also changed the social pattern as young people were able to travel and not be confined to the "horse and buggy" days of their parents. With their horizons expanded they were able to attend shows in Lacrosse and Colfax, dances at Winona and Riparia, and picnics held around the area.

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HISTORY OF THE HAY BAPTIST CHURCH

by
Ruth Nervig

The Hay Baptist Church was organized September 19, 1901, with eight adults as charter members. Several settlers had arrived at about the turn of the century from western North Carolina and the following from that group, almost all relatives, formed the church organization.

I.M. Curtis

Mrs. I.M. Curtis

I.L. Moore

Mrs. N.E. Wilkie

Brentie Wilkie

Mrs. George Marshall

H.G. Coffey

By the end of that first year the membership had increased to fourteen with the addition of: D.J. Whitlach, Pheba Whitlach, Lily Whitlach, Arthur Whitlach, Mrs. R.W. Moore, and Mrs. J.B. Taggart.

During the first year, this enterprising small band built a church building. The land was donated to the church by Mr. and Mrs. I.M. Curtis, who guided the young peoples group for many years. Later, during the 20s all the church property was deeded to the Washington Baptist Convention.

The Reverend M.B. Lanning was called as the first pastor. He served the congregation from December 1, 1901 to March, 1902, just long enough to organize the members and help them in the planning of their church building.

A Sunday school was organized in January, 1902 with Mrs. J.B. Taggart as Superintendent. The number enrolled was twenty-six with twenty the average attendance. Expenses for the year amounted to \$13.00, with a \$5.00 contribution to missions.

It is noteworthy that this early group was missionary minded. As early as 1913 they voted \$60.00 to the State Missions. Throughout the years from 1901 to 1954, with seventeen years not recorded, the church at Hay has contributed around \$8,000.00 to Missions and Benevolences. During that same time they have spent \$17,909.00 in local expenditures making approximately one-third of the budget going to missions. During this period the highest membership ever recorded at any one time was



eighty-three. Through the years there have been two pastors and their families who have gone as missionaries to other lands; Robert and Erma Welch served in French West Africa and John and Lydia Rhoades were in China.

After the first year of operation the Hay Baptist Church listed their property value at \$900.00 and a total expenditure of \$113.00. To climax the years activity they sent delegates to the Palouse Baptist Association with this inspiring letter of greeting:

Dear Brethren:

We have organized ourselves for the purpose of worshipping God and teaching his truth into a regular Baptist Church upon the New Testament basis and desire to be united with you in associational life and effort. We bear record of the blessing of God upon us not only in organization but in our success in building a house for worship. In spite of the weakness of our membership, we have been able to complete a church building which cost about \$700, all of which expense has been provided for. We send as messengers to sit with you Brethren I.M. Curtis and H.G. Coffey.

(signed) H.G. Coffey, Church Clerk

Early records show that the congregation was led by part-time pastors until 1906 when a parsonage was built at the cost of \$1600.00 in prepa-

ration for the pastorate of R.B. Shoun. Twenty-two men have served as pastors throughout its history; the shortest tenure of service being that of Reverend M.B. Lanning, who was on the field four months, and the longest, that of Reverend L.M. Darnell, who served almost five years.

The old records of the church reveal many interesting happenings down through the years. On April 6, 1913, the church met in a called session to rent the parsonage to, "one Mr. Daniels at a rental of six dollars per month." That fall Mr. Daniels was asked to, "repair the church roof, putting in three iron rods and drawing walls together so as to make the building secure from spreading for two months rent of the parsonage."

Apparently the word "budget" was not in vogue in those early days. In 1913, R.W. Moore was appointed to "continue as collector of Pastor's salary." Certain sums were collected for coal and other specific items. Each time a new minister came on the field a committee was appointed to raise his salary and the congregation had a very effective way of asking the current pastor to resign; they simply failed to pay his salary and he was forced to leave. The earliest record of amount of salary paid was 1915, when a Reverend W.M. Love of Oakesdale was offered \$300.00 and a parsonage for half-time service. He declined the invitation and the next year the Reverend P.J. Shell accepted the same proposition.

A few years later in the 1920s the salary was raised to \$1500.00 but later dropped to \$1200.00 during the depression years and was never raised higher until 1952. Over the years it had become the custom for the pastor to drive the school bus for part of his income. This plan seemed to work well since the congregation felt the time for pastoral duties need not be more than part-time.

Another interesting item from 1916 indicates the Hay church was called upon to contribute the cost of printing the minutes of the association; the sum being \$3.00. This was a far cry from the expense of arranging the association meeting in 1951 when the bill was over \$30.00 and was paid by the general session of Mount Pleasant Palouse Association. In 1916 J.V. McCall, one of the Hay members, was Moderator of the Palouse Association and likely it was easier to get the money from his own group than from the association at large!

During one of the early years the church enrollment was renewed. The minutes of the meeting included: "Then the church withdrew fellowship from Mr. _____ and wife for disorderly conduct (non-attendance and separation). The church then sang a hymn and went out." One can imagine the electric atmosphere while that hymn was sung.

Back in 1914, and probably continuing for some years, deacons were ordained during a special service of separation and laying on of hands by the pastor. At that time, Reverend Collins ordained the following

Board of Deacons: I.M. Curtis, J.V. McCall, A.E. Henley, L.F. Bates, and Ralph Taggart. The ordination service was held before the church since Mr. Taggart could not be present at the morning service. He was the depot agent and apparently the train came in at that time.

The church grew gradually as time went on. In December 1919, the church gave I.M. Curtis a contract to remodel the building for the sum of \$1500.00. The next month, however, they reconsidered and invited a Mr. Skow to look over the church and submit plans and specifications. Luther Henley was elected to solicit funds to pay for remodeling. At that time the building was raised and a basement put under it.

A Ladies Aid was organized in December 1923 at the parsonage. Charter members were: Mrs. Chris Bennett, Mrs. George Stone, Mrs. R.W. Moore, Mrs. A.E. Henley, and Mrs. McClure. Through the years this missionary society nurtured the cause of Christ through missionary study and giving and rendering any community aid necessary. The society was also known for its outreach to non-church women of the area.

The Hay Baptist Church always served as a community center and was the site of several weddings, anniversary celebration, and memorial services. The first wedding occurred in 1923 when Sam Pollard and Martha McCall were married by the Reverend Osgood of the Colfax Baptist Church. Just before the flower girl and the ringbearer of the wedding party entered the church an extra neighbor child was snatched from the procession. She had innocently joined the group to see what was going on and decided to march in with them.

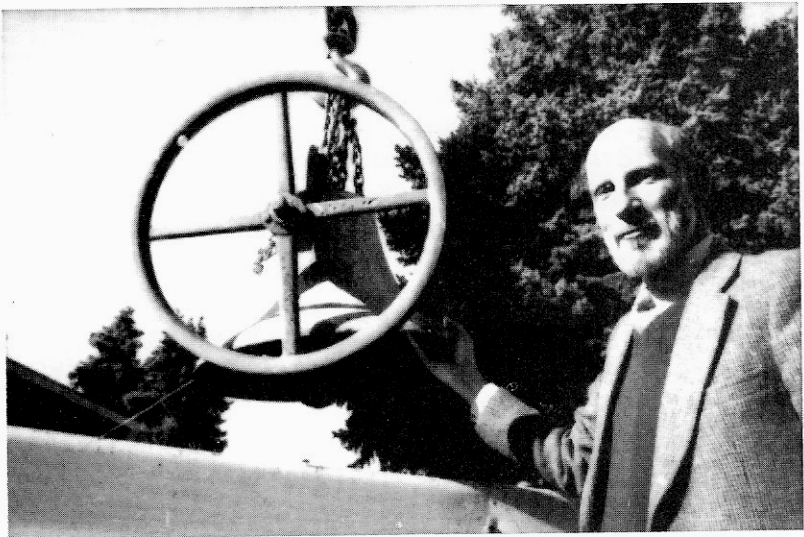
In December 1939 a Golden Wedding Service was held when Mr. and Mrs. J.V. McCall repeated their vows to an over-flowing house. The Reverend Sanford read the rites and Reverend S.P. Benson of White Temple Walla Walla was master-of-ceremonies at the reception.

Two impressive memorial services have been observed in the church; the first in 1950 when an electric cross was presented and dedicated to the beloved memory of Mrs. L.M. Darnell, the wife of Reverend L.M. Darnell, and in 1953 when the family of Mr. and Mrs. J.V. McCall presented a wine velvet Dossil drapery to the church. At the same time an old pulpit Bible was given by Mrs. R.W. Moore and a pair of brass taper holders by Mrs. William Chandler of Walla Walla. An interesting note was that in early pioneer days, William Chandler had deeded land to the builders of Hay with the stipulation that no liquor should ever be sold on the property. Mrs. Chandler continued to have an interest in the welfare of Hay and the congregation was happy to receive her gift. The sanctuary was redecorated and a new aisle rug purchased in May 1953.

1971 saw the doors closed on the Hay Baptist Church. The last formal business meeting was held March 23, 1975. Still owned by the Baptist Convention, today the church building is used as a community center.



The church bell from the Hay Baptist Church is Whitman County's contribution to the state's Centennial Bell Garden at the Convention and Trade Center in Seattle. The bell will join other county bells to be rung in celebration of our state Centennial September, 1989. More than fifty people gathered in Hay as the bell was rung one last time October 20, 1987. Bonnie Bigsby from the Lacrosse Grain Growers provided a boom truck to lift the bell from the tower. Assisting in the removal were Scott Filan and Larry Dodge.



Pastors who have served at Hay Baptist Church

M.B. Lanning - December 1901 to March 1902
E.F. Jones - May 1903 to March 1905
C.F. Collins - served three different terms
R.B. Shoun - May 1906 to October 1908
J.W. Slaten - March 1911 to March 1912
W.J. Wilborn - April 1912 to October 1912
P.J. Shell - January 1916 to September 1918
C.V. Overman - September 1919 to May 1921
D.J. McClure - March 1922 to June 1925
W.R. Storms - June 1926 to August 1927
J.P. Fenwick - April 1928 to April 1932
L.W. Ross - November 1932 to September 1936
J.M. Bennett - October 1936 to August 1939
L.R. Sanford - September 1939 to May 1942
Harry Johnson - October 1942 to June 1943
John Rhoads - May 1943 to July 1943
Robert Welch - May 1944 to September 1945
C.M. Cobb - October 1945 to August 1946
L.M. Darnell - February 1947 to May 1953
Wallace Russell - May 1952 to May 1953
Chester A. Sager - July 1953 to 1958

Pastors not listed in the register but served the church until its closure:

William Wells - June 1959 to February 1962
George Nye - June 1962 to February 1965
Asa Argo - September 1965 to November 1968
Donald Jacobson - March 1970 to July 1971

According to Mrs. Splater, an early settler of Hay:

"I became a member of the Methodist Church quite early in life and have taken an active part in church work most all my life. My family organized the first Sunday School that was ever held in Hay. For a time we had our meeting in the section house which was unoccupied but later we moved to the school house because of increased interest. Our group was some divided as to belief, but we agreed to make it a union service. However, when the new church was built in 1902, the Baptist gained control and thus this structure was designated the Baptist Church."

MEMOIRS OR REMINISCENCES

OF

Chas. E. Ray

I helped move the dirt that made the fill for the present depot sight, and for more than two years supplied the contractors, Erickson and Peterson, who built the Camas Prairies Railroad. My own herd was quite insufficient to supply the needs as I only had about 800 head, many of which were not suited for beef as two year olds were what they wanted. Therefore it was necessary that the surrounding country be canvassed for livestock. In as much as my cash was limited to about \$800.00 to begin with I had to do much business on credit. This was not much of a handicap but after I received my first check of \$7,000 from the contractors, cashed it and paid up those I owed for cattle, the market came to me as it was much closer than taking the cattle to Spokane.

I recall going over to the bank at Starbuck and cashing the \$7,000 check and getting about \$1,400 in gold to pay a Mr. Gordon up in the region of what is now Lacrosse for some cattle that I had taken from his herd some months before. He had no idea as to the amount I owed him. I had been told to select what I wanted and keep track; this is an example of how we trusted each other. The \$1,400 looked big to him and how proud he was of that huge pile, which came from young cattle at \$12.00 per head.

When my wife and I moved to this community there was a small shipyard on the other side of the river, as well as an ice house, depot, and a few other buildings. The shipyard had one carpenter and two working men to help keep the boats up. There was no railroad siding here of any kind, but a ferry to transfer the goods from one road to the other.

When the Camas Prairie Railroad was built we had some foreigners in our midst, who must have been Turks as they had an elaborate head dress and conducted themselves quite differently than the others who were Americans. These Turks cooked all their food in one pot, except of course the bread. When the, let us say hash or stew, was done, it was dipped out in large bowls from which four men sat around in tailor fashion and ate with a large spoon. The bread they had was without any shortening of any kind and was as hard as a brick after it had been cooked in the outdoor oven.

When this railroad was completed the center of trade shifted to the Whitman County side of the river and some new houses sprang up. I operated a saloon here for many years and made some good money, and later owned and operated a store. Following is a record of my deposit in the bank at Starbuck for January 1919, from this same store:

Jan. 2	\$210.00
3	436.00
4	386.00
6	219.40
13	171.34
16	337.00
22	1018.73
26	719.62
29	100.39

Men came here from far and near during those days to get paychecks cashed and of course we in turn got part of the money for one thing or another.

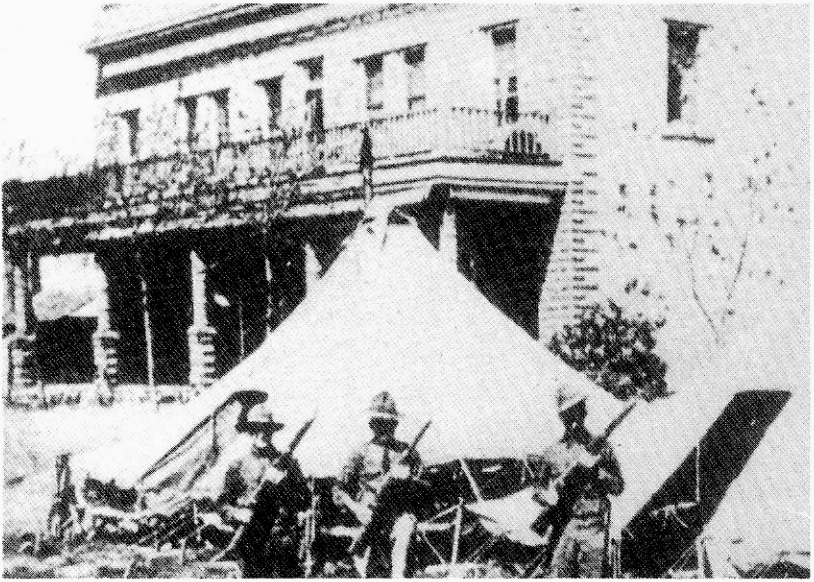
We boasted of a hotel with some 16 to 20 rooms, which was operated by Mr. Stuart who built it in 1908. He also had a blacksmith shop that any one might use to repair any break he might have, providing of course the individual could do his own work. The shop was merely a convenience.

There were seven mail trains daily in those good old days and a freight train about each two hours in the day but of course it would take several of those freights to equal one of today. The men employed to care for this business consisted of: three operators, an agent, car checker, clerk, two transfer men, car wackers, pumper, and one to sweep out the cars.

It was not unusual to see three engines on one passenger train of six or eight coaches as the grades were steep and engines none too powerful. Then of course we had the river boats that plied back and forth from Lewiston daily. The *Spokane* and *Lewiston* were the passenger boats and the *Norma*, the freighter. It took them about twelve hours to make the run one way and the fare was about the same as the rail rate today.

There was a store and post office up at Canyon from 1912 to about 1920 but it sold out to the store here and the two consolidated into the general store which operated in this town until some four years ago, or 1937.

I have served this community in many ways during the many years that we have lived here. It was my privilege to be postmaster for thirty years and at one time was the oldest one between Spokane and Pendleton, Oregon. Likewise, I owned and operated a store here for more than twenty years but the depression of the thirties was too much for me to survive.



*Riparia Hotel, 1917, with National Guard encamped.
From Bunchgrass Historian, 1977*

We in the West have always had an abundance of faith in our neighbor and I have been no exception. It was very common for me to carry some of the farmers here for several hundred dollars during the season and when hard times hit us these fellows just could not meet their obligations. Some one else had to loose and I did. It would be conservative to state that I have more than \$12,000 on my old books that have been marked off as frozen assets.

During those years my community saw fit to have me as an active school man, and was instrumental in building the present building that houses our school. For four years, I was a deputy sheriff for this end of the county, acted for the national government as a member of the first selective service board of examiners, and have been the local notary. All those years of course brought their many changes. The closing up of the open range was very evident in 1902 and wheat raising began to replace that of livestock.

Today we have paper money and use checks to care for large accounts, while in my early days we used gold. How well I recall carrying as much as \$5,000 of the yellow metal in shot sacks from the bank at Starbuck to Riparia and one time slept with \$3,000 by my side in the trainsheds at Starbuck because of a washout that made it impossible to return to this town.

I never raised any family to enjoy those great picnics that we used to have here but have often discussed the same with my wife who passed

on in 1932. Those were the days that the young folks had a good time and did not seem to harm any one. Here in Riparia we had racing, dancing, speaking, and many other types of entertainment. One night the boys came into my saloon and began to shoot their revolvers, and by morning my place of business was without windows or doors. Nor was it uncommon for them to ride their horses inside. Just recently while doing some repair work on the roof of this building, we found some of the bullets as reminders of those early days that are now but fond remembrances.

The only major tragedy that we have had in this little community was the time a Mexican section hand shot and killed his foreman because the former did not care to work with some of his same national kinsmen on a given task. The foreman told him to aid in a certain job and the Mexican refused, and as a result was fired from the crew. However he reported back for work the next morning and was ordered off the motor car the men used to ride to work on - the result was he shot the foreman. He, himself, was shot by a fellow railway employee before he surrendered, but he recovered from his wounds only to be hanged at the state penitentiary in Walla Walla a few months later.

The I.W.W.'s caused us a great deal of trouble during the first World War by burning some of the machines in the fields and destroying the fields of grain, but these fellows soon passed on. They lasted a little longer than the Klu Klux who were here only for the one election; after it was over they faded from the picture.

I recall very well the first store in this part of the country which was at Pampa and a Mr. Swindle who had the blacksmith shop there, also. Mr. J. F. Buff was the first one to have a regular store in Hay, but these towns have been something like Riparia. The first is gone and the other is gradually fading away.

The coming of the High Line Railroad which shifted most of the traffic to that road has been the major factor in the decline of Riparia. What was once a main line through here is now just a branch road. Where we once had seven mails a day we now have but two, and the crew for caring for the trains has been reduced to such an extent until today we have just the one agent and he is not very busy. Yes, the changing conditions have ushered in a new period.

Farming is different, transportation is faster and different, and the young people have an altogether different conception of life than our generation. We established a state for the younger ones and our hope is that they carry on with more success than have we.