

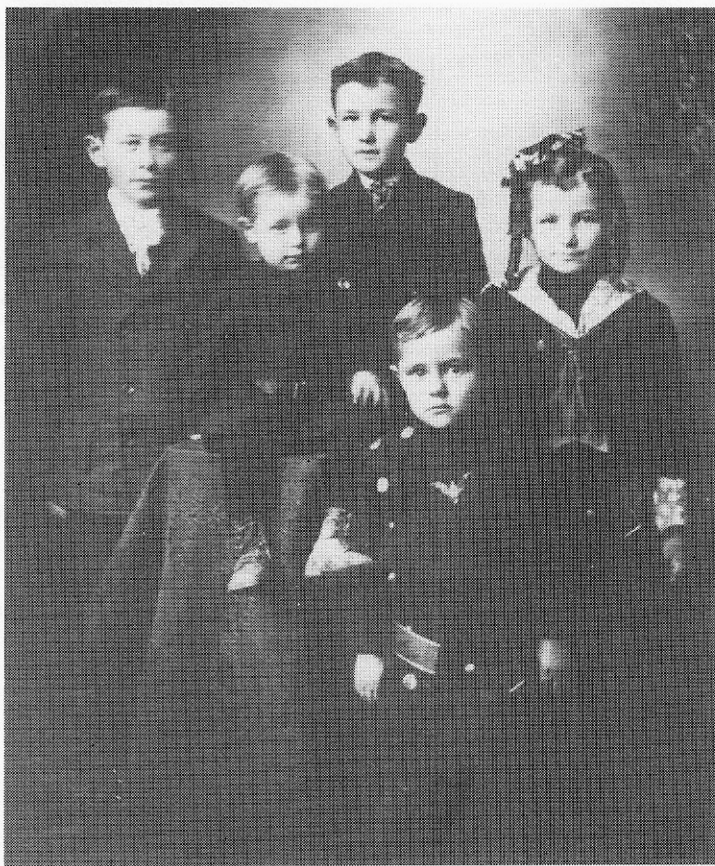
# Bunchgrass Historian

Whitman County Historical Society Quarterly

Volume 11, No. 4

Colfax, Washington

Winter 1983



*The Germans From Russia*

# Table of Contents

A Word of Thanks by Fred C. Bohm .....	3
Germans from Russia: Pioneers on the Palouse Frontier by Richard D. Scheuerman .....	4
Coming to the Land of Milk and Honey by Richard Hamm .....	24
Publications of Note .....	32

## About the Authors

**Richard Scheuerman** is a native of Endicott, a member of the Germans from Russia Community, and is an active historian. He is the author of numerous works on the Germans from Russia, including *Pilgrims on the Earth*. He is an administrator with the Wenatchee School District.

**Richard Hamm** is a resident of Palouse and an active member of the Whitman County Historical Society. He is, at present, Chairman of the organization's Oral History Program.

## The Cover

*The Peter Kleweno children. One of th early Volga German immigrant families, the Kleweno's ran the general store in Endicott.* Photograph courtesy of Washington State University Libraries, the Hutchison collection.

---

**The Bunchgrass Historian** is published in March, June, September, and December by the Whitman County Historical Society, Post Office Box 67, Colfax, Washington 99111. Its purpose is to further interest in the rich past of Whitman County. Produced by Colfax Publishing Co.

### PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

Editor ..... Fred C. Bohm  
Associate Editor ..... Suzanne Myklebust  
Editorial Consultants ..... Roy Chatters  
William F. Wilbert  
Subscriptions ..... Gwenlee Riedel  
Lawrence R. Stark  
Circulation Editor ..... Margo Balzarini  
Back Issues ..... Susan Bohm

### OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

President ..... Edwin Garretson  
Vice President ..... Walter Nelson  
Secretary ..... Sara Chatters  
Treasurer ..... Barbara Jean Collins

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscription-member rates are:

\$6 per year (individual)  
\$12 per year (family)  
\$15 per year (sustaining)  
\$25 per year (business)

Subscription requests should be sent to:

Gwenlee Riedel  
S. W. 220 Blaine  
Pullman, Washington 99163

### CURRENT AND BACK ISSUES

Current and back issues of **The Bunchgrass Historian** may be obtained by sending a check or money order in the amount of \$2.00 for each issue requested to:

Fred C. Bohm, Editor  
**The Bunchgrass Historian**  
S. W. 405 State Street  
Pullman, Washington 99163

### ARTICLES FOR PUBLICATION

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.

## A Word of Thanks

Nearly four years have slipped by since I became editor of the *Bunchgrass Historian*. I take this opportunity to say thank you to the readers, to those who send letters of encouragement, criticism, and suggestions. As you read this issue keep in mind that, like the previous forty-three numbers of the *Bunchgrass Historian*, it was planned, written, edited, laid out, and mailed by volunteer labor. The Whitman County Historical Society, an organization with nearly 700 members and two major pieces of real estate, has no paid employees. We all donate our time. Our only satisfaction is that you, the reader, enjoy what you see. We strive always to make the *Bunchgrass Historian* a better local history journal.



This issue contains two fine articles that explore the history of some of the most industrious people to migrate to the Palouse Country—the Germans from Russia. Previously we have featured the stories of other Whitman County ethnic groups: the Palouse Indians (Volume 8 Number 3), the Chinese (Volume 10 Number 1), and the Norwegians (Volume 10 Number 4). The Germans from Russia, as you shall soon see, are a special category of people; they got here the hard way. In a sense, they began their long trek to eastern Washington in the 1760's when they left Germany for Russia. They are probably more conscious of their cultural heritage than are the descendants of most ethnic groups; this is underscored by the fact that the Germans from Russia will be holding another in a series of cultural heritage conferences (this one sponsored by WSU's Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections) in October 1984. In the meantime, we are certain you will enjoy what Richard Scheuerman and Richard Hamm have to say about this, sometimes misunderstood, ethnic group.

—Fred C. Bohm, Editor



*Courtesy of the Frankfurt am Main Historical Museum*

*City of Bidingen. Many Germans from Russia originally came from this city in Germany.*

## **Germans from Russia: Pioneers on the Palouse Frontier**

by  
**Richard D. Scheuerman**

*The Russian Germans were the first European colonist group with which the Northern Pacific Railroad attempted to populate its vast lands in the Palouse through its subsidiary, the Oregon Improvement Company. No Russian Germans lived in the Palouse prior to the construction of the Northern Pacific's Palouse and Columbia line in 1882, but by the end of the century the Russian Germans were the second largest European group in Whitman County (327 individuals). They never settled in large numbers in either Latah or Spokane Counties, preferring the hilly prairies of Whitman County where by 1920 they were by far the largest single ethnic group (798 Russian-born or 29.8% of the total foreign born).<sup>1</sup>*



The Russian Germans who settled in the Palouse Country were from two German colonial enclaves in Russia, one on the lower Volga River and the other on the northwest coast of the Black Sea. The vast majority of those immigrating to the Palouse came from the Volga region although a group of Black Sea Germans settled in the Palouse in 1905. Germans first established colonies on the lower Volga in the 1760's during the reign of the Russian Empress, Catherine the Great. Catherine, herself an ethnic German, was determined to develop the untamed southwest portion of her country, but, having little success with local migration, turned to her native Germany where the independent states, principalities, and free cities in the late eighteenth century numbered in the hundreds. After a century of continental warfare many were bankrupt with poverty and famine endemic; with the outbreak of the Seven Years War in 1756, many Germans sought to emigrate. The area comprising present Hesse was the scene of repeated disasters during the war and while many Germans died in the strife or fled to America, others looked in the opposite direction to Russia.

Amid the despair and destruction in Hesse, many peasants learned of an unusual document, Catherine the Great's manifesto of 1763, in which she invited colonists to populate the fertile areas of the lower Volga region under liberal terms including immunity from all taxes, draft exemption and land possession "for eternal time."<sup>2</sup> In an overwhelming response, approximately 27,000 Germans made the long trek to Russia between 1763 and 1766. Once there, they founded 104 colonies along the lower Volga River in the region surrounding Saratov.

Among those emigrating from Hesse during the summer of 1766 was a group of eighty families who had come from thirty-seven villages in the hilly Vogelsberg and other neighboring districts. From this group the majority of Volga Germans in the Palouse descended.<sup>3</sup> After a year-long journey to the Volga, they founded the village of Jagodnaja Poljana (Berry Meadow) on the hilly, western side of the Volga River. Since nothing on the vast uninhabited steppe had been prepared for their arrival, they were forced to dig earth homes (*zemlyanki*) in the ground; these were covered with wood from their wagons. The new settlers lived in these earth dwellings until the village could be planned and built. Following a difficult period of adjustment, the colonists prospered and expanded their domain to the drier districts east of the river where a number of "daughter colonies," like New Jagodnaja, were founded in the late 1850's.

Following the example of Catherine, Tsar Alexander I inaugurated a campaign to colonize the northern Black Sea region which he had wrested from Turkish control early in the nineteenth century. Similar promises were made to induce settlers to emigrate from Germany and thousands responded between 1803 and 1857, establishing 153 colonies in the Black Sea region. Among those were the villages of Guldendorf, Neuburg and Gross-Liebental, founded between 1804 and 1806 mainly by Germans from Wurtesburg. It was from these Black Sea colonies that Germans immigrated to the Palouse.<sup>4</sup>

As did the Volga Germans, the Black Sea Germans constructed small, well planned villages surrounded by large communally-owned fields. Plots of land were regularly distributed among the males through the local democratic assembly, the village *mir*. However, by 1860 there were over 200,000 Volga and Black Sea Germans and the individual family acreages of the prolific colonists had been severely reduced, despite the opening of new districts to their settlement. In addition to this problem was a dispute among the Protestant clergy in the colonies. The growth of a pietistic movement called the Brotherhood, led to antagonisms among the official Lutheran clergy in Russia



—WSU Library

*Tsar Alexander II abrogated all of Catherine the Great's privileges of settlement given to German colonists in 1871. Soon thousands of Russian Germans began emigrating to the American frontier.*

against Brotherhood members who emphasized a personal religion based on piety and prayer. Although this division never led to the formation of a new denomination among the German colonists in Russia, the dispute was transplanted in America where German Congregationalism was born. It sprouted first among the Volga Germans in the Palouse Country as the pietists were the first to arrive there.

## **Another New Land**

The main reason for Russian German emigration to America proved to be another Tsarist decree—This one by Alexander II. In 1871 Alexander abrogated all of Catherine's privileges of settlement given to the German colonists. Particularly troublesome to the Tsar was the fact that they maintained their German identity through the many decades of life in Russia. When a temporary grace period extending exemption from military service was annulled in 1874, thousands of Russian Germans reacted to increasing discrimination against them by emigrating to the West.

They left Russia in three major waves. The first in the 1870's, followed by others between 1887 and 1893 and 1903 to 1913,<sup>5</sup> so by 1920 there were 116,535 persons in the United States who were born in Russia but who considered German to be their mother tongue. Most had settled in the Dakotas, Kansas, Nebraska and Colorado where they engaged in farming.<sup>6</sup> Others, however, continued to move west.

# COLONIST RATES to Washington and the Great Northwest

The management of the Oregon Railroad & Navigation Co. takes great pleasure in announcing that the low rates from Eastern cities, which have done so much in the past seasons to stimulate travel to and settlement in Washington will prevail again this Spring DAILY from March 1 to April 15, inclusive.

## PEOPLE OF WASHINGTON

The railroads have done their part; now it's up to you. The colonist rate is the greatest of all home-builders. Do all you can to let Eastern people know about it, and encourage them to come here, where land is cheap and home building easy and attractive.

**Fares can be prepaid** at home if desired. Any agent of the road is authorized to receive the required deposit and telegraph ticket to any point in the East.

**Remember the rates**—From Chicago, \$33; from St. Louis, \$32; Kansas City, \$25. This reduction is proportionate from other cities.

WM McMURRAY  
General Passenger Agent  
Portland, Oregon.

F. B. MOORE  
Agent  
La Crosse, Wash.

—Richard Scheuerman

*Special emigrant fares were advertised by the Union Pacific Railroad and the Oregon Steam Navigation Company to attract colonists to the Northwest.*



—WSU Library

*Railroad magnate Henry Villard, (left) was responsible for acquiring vast acreage in the Palouse. He placed retired Civil War General, Thomas R. Tannatt, (right) in charge of development.*

---

The first Russian Germans in the American West, about seventeen families, arrived in Portland in 1881 after spending several years on the dry, grasshopper infested Kansas plains. They had first immigrated to Rush and Barton Counties in Kansas between 1875 and 1878. Most were natives of the villages New Jagodnaja, Schontal and Schonfeld which were daughter colonies of Jagodnaja Poljana and Pobotschnoje. The group obtained special emigrant fares through the Union Pacific Railroad and Oregon Steam Navigation Company to travel to Portland where they had heard good farmland was available.

After their arrival in Oregon, however, they were disappointed to find that the best lands had already been taken and what ground was available was unfit for cultivation. The frustrated immigrants turned to work at a local lumber mill and for the railroad which was then grading the huge Albina fill in present Portland. They then learned that the railroad was offering to sell 150,000 acres of "the finest agricultural lands in the northwest," and they would be accessible by rail in 1882. When approached by the Volga Germans about settlement opportunities in the region, railroad officials saw a chance to implement their new strategy for colonization in the Palouse. Railroad magnate Henry Villard was responsible for acquiring the vast acreage in the Palouse Hills and he placed retired Civil War general, Thomas R. Tannatt in charge of its development. Both men played preminent roles in the history of the region. Volga German settlement in Whitman County can be best viewed in the context of Villard and Tannatt's overall strategy for colonization of the Palouse.

Henry Villard, a native of Bavaria, came to the United States in 1853 and labored for several years at various occupations before studying law in Carlisle, Illinois. He then worked in the offices of several influential United States senators from the Midwest. Having a talent for journalism, he reported on various political campaigns for several newspapers; these experiences led to personal acquaintanceships with Abraham Lincoln, Horace Greeley and men in the highest circles of American and European business. He became interested in the subject of railroad securities and finance and, in 1873 joined a German protective committee which had heavily invested in Ben Holliday's troubled Oregon and California Railroad, as well as the Oregon Central and the Oregon Steamship Company. In 1874 Villard journeyed to Oregon as a representative of a committee to investigate the situation. He noted that the trip changed the course of his life: "I felt that I had reached a chosen land, certain of great prosperity and seemingly holding out better promise to my constituents than I had hoped for."<sup>7</sup>

To bolster the region's developing transportation industry, he was supplied with the distinction of "Oregon Commissioner of Immigration" and by 1875 had established offices in Boston, Topeka, and Omaha that cooperated with the main Northwest Immigration Bureau in Portland in directing immigrants to the Pacific Northwest. It was the duty of railroad officials there to provide these new arrivals with employment on construction crews, or sell them railroad land on which to settle. Special displays were circulated of Northwest grains, fruits and vegetables; large advertisements regularly appeared in English, German, and Scandinavian newspapers throughout the country and thousands of circulars extolled the Pacific Northwest as containing the "best wheat, farming and grazing lands in the world."<sup>8</sup>

Villard observed that geographically the central artery of transportation throughout the entire Northwest was the Columbia River and assumed that whoever navigated the great river and controlled the railways along its course, would virtually monopolize transportation east of the Cascades. He journeyed into that region for the first time in May, 1876 and stated later, "It was at that early date that a plan arose distinctly in my mind which remained ever present with me until it was carried out through the organization of the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company."<sup>9</sup> Within a year, Villard's clever manipulation of several indebted concerns led him to the presidency of all three Northwest transportation lines previously operated by Holliday.<sup>10</sup> In 1878 Villard formed the Oregon Improvement Company to facilitate the construction of his network and to arrange for the orderly settlement and exploitation of his holdings in the region.

The man selected by Villard to be the general agent of the new company was Thomas R. Tannatt, who later arranged for colonization in the Palouse by Volga Germans and other immigrants. Ultimately, Tannatt acquired a large estate in the Palouse near Farmington for himself. Tannatt, a native of Manchester, Massachusetts, was a prominent New England figure and retired brigadier general who had commanded Union forces south of the Potomac in 1862. During the defense of the capital he became acquainted personally with President Lincoln. After the war he became interested in developing railroad land grants in the Pacific Northwest.<sup>11</sup> He wrote a letter to Villard in 1877 in which he offered several suggestions to aid in the westward settlement of immigrants. Impressed with the advice, Villard appointed Tannatt the eastern agent for the Oregon Steamship Company in 1877. In the following year he



began directing the immigration program for Villard's other Northwest transportation companies. After the formation of the Oregon Improvement Company in 1878 Tannatt was elevated to the position of its general agent and his offices were transferred to Portland.

Encouraged by the confidence expressed by his European backers, Villard continued with his ambitious scheme to monopolize transportation in the inland Northwest so in the spring of 1879 he bought the Oregon Steam Navigation Company which operated a fleet of steamers on the Columbia and Snake Rivers and owned the portage railroads at the Cascades, The Dalles and Celilo Falls. (At the same time he negotiated the purchase of Dr. Dorsey Baker's "Rawhide Railroad," the Walla Walla and Columbia River, which operated between Walla Walla and Wallula.) The Oregon Steam Navigation Company constituted a major prize for Villard. It was the final link in Frederick Billings's Northern Pacific Railroad that had been lost by that company following the financial panic of 1873. Thus, Villard's short line from Portland to Ainsworth (present day Pasco) now was a small but vital foothold in the northern transcontinental network. Combining the Oregon Steamship Company and the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, he renamed the concern the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company. He then entered into traffic agreements with Billings in 1880 to furnish the Northern Pacific with building materials on its Pend Oreille division from Ainsworth through Spokane to Lake Pend Oreille.<sup>12</sup> At the same time Villard began building a line down the left bank of the Columbia River between Ainsworth and Portland, allowing the Villard empire now to control traffic from San Francisco to Walla Walla.

The agreement reached between Villard and Billings stipulated a division of interest between the two companies with the Columbia and Snake Rivers forming the boundary line. An important exception was made in deference to Villard's insistence on a detached Columbia and Palouse line, construction of which was being planned from Palouse Junction (Connell) eastward through the heart of the Palouse Hills to Endicott and Colfax, leading eventually to the Coeur d'Alene mining district. The extensive land grants given by Congress to the Northern Pacific Railroad amounted to 25,000 acres of adjacent land per mile of track in alternate sections. This immense band paralleled the line in a diagonal swath through eastern Washington and Northern Idaho and covered virtually all of the Palouse with the exception of the South Palouse River watershed east of present Pullman.

Realizing the vast untapped agricultural potential of this region, Villard's Oregon Improvement Company purchased 150,000 acres (the odd sections in fourteen townships) from the Northern Pacific in the center of present Whitman County. These lands were carefully selected and Villard intended to build his Palouse line directly through this district and populate it with dependable colonist farmers. The lands varied in price from \$5 to \$10 per acre and sold on a six-year installment plan at seven percent interest.<sup>13</sup>

In March 1881, General Tannatt relocated his office to Walla Walla in order to be closer to the Oregon Improvement Company's operations in Eastern Washington. He made frequent trips to the company lands in the Palouse and began arranging for their settlement. Villard took a personal interest in this program of colonization which he outlined in the following 1881 stockholders report:

A regular land and emigration department has been organized, the lands fully surveyed and appraised, 5,000 acres are now being broken up. The plan is to divide the lands into farms not exceeding 160 acres, to fence





—Richard Scheuerman

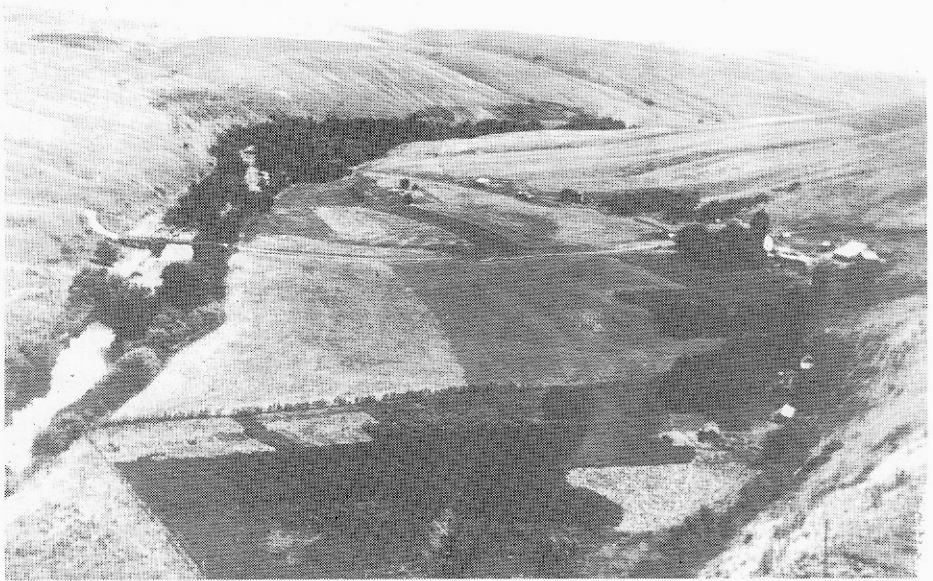
*An "Immigrant train" in the Palouse around 1900.*

---

and improve no more than 40 acres upon each quarter section, erecting thereon plain but substantial dwellings and the necessary outbuildings, so as to be able to offer farms ready for immediate occupancy at reasonable rates to incoming settlers. The Oregon Railway and Navigation Company is extending its system of roads right through these lands, and there is every assurance that our land operations will be successful and will result in a large profit to the company.<sup>13</sup>

In 1881, Tannatt began developing these properties with the assistance of A. A. Newberry, the Oregon Improvement Company's Colfax agent. Their crews methodically traveled from section to section in a special train of "six wagons heavily loaded with agricultural implements, tents, commissary stores, etc., forming the best outfit of the kind" that had ever entered the Palouse.<sup>14</sup> Local farmers also found temporary employment by leasing their teams, and a new market for their produce; the new work force turned to plowing and seeding 20,000 acres of company lands under Tannatt's capable management. For fencing and construction in the area, three million feet of lumber was stored at the company flume at Dayton and delivered to the Palouse in the spring.<sup>15</sup>

Villard's massive investment in the region resulted in the virtual economic transformation of the central Palouse from grazing to farming. In addition, the marketing potential of the entire region was enhanced, since the railroad allowed Palouse farmers to capitalize on growing European demands for Northwest grain exports. Exporting of Palouse wheat had begun as early as 1868, but had been limited to



—Richard Scheuerman

*The Volga Germans purchased a quarter section of land north of Endicott which was divided equally, reflecting the method of land tenure to which they had been accustomed in Russia. The colony maintained a herd of livestock, planted gardens, and grew wheat, barley, and oats. The early photo above corresponds to the 1884 map of the Palouse Colony.*

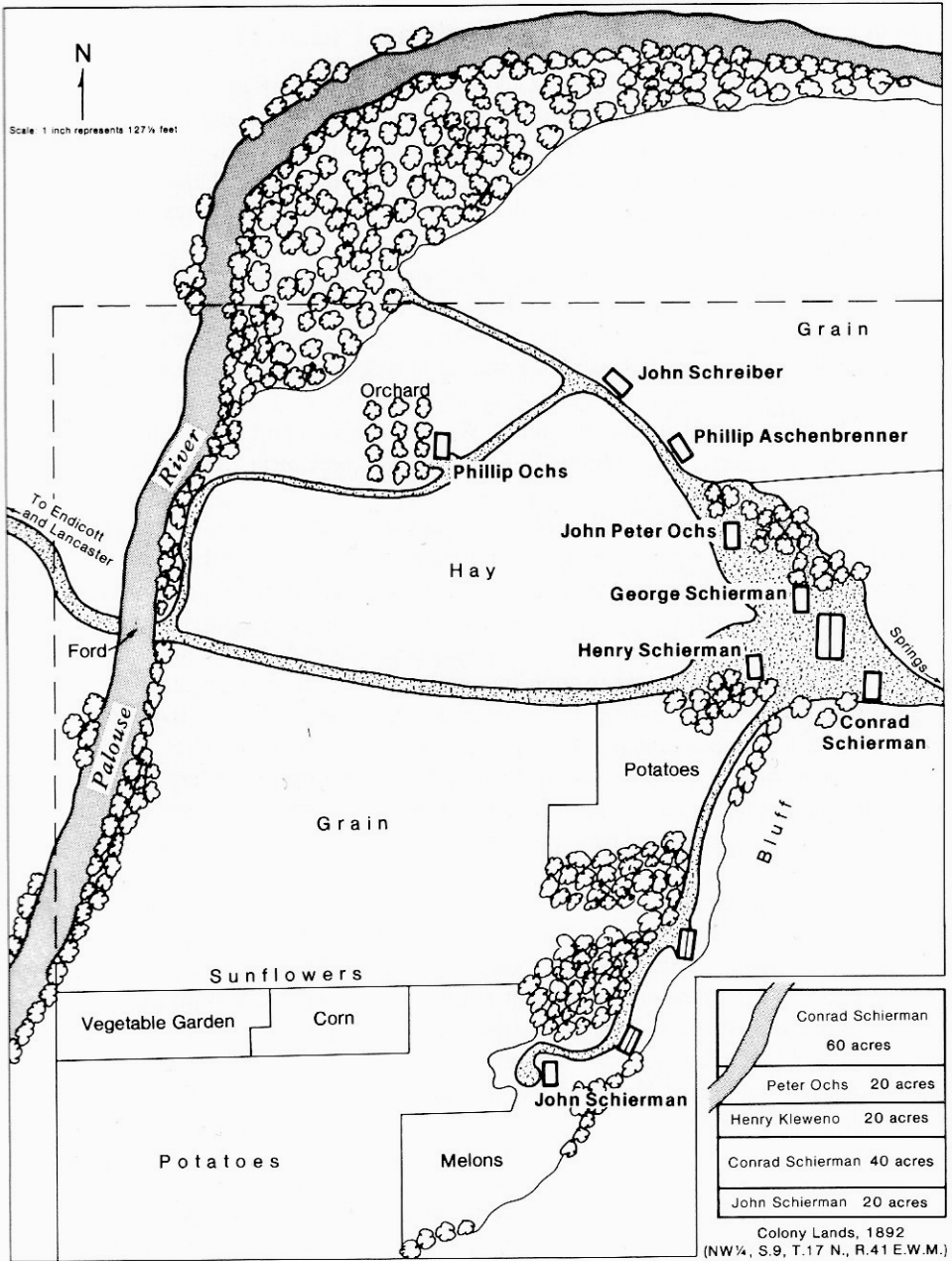
---

that which could be transported on the Oregon Steam Navigation Company down the Snake and Columbia Rivers. In 1879 only half the crop was shipped before navigation closed in December for the winter. Railroad transportation would thus insure a more dependable system of grain delivery throughout the year to both foreign and domestic markets.

The *Palouse Gazette* in November, 1881 astutely observed that,

A few not engaged in agriculture will dislike to see so large an area of grazing country broken up; but this is a narrow consideration, compared with the standing it will give our farming lands and the stimulus it will bring to our country.<sup>16</sup>

It was also reported that to begin populating the sparsely settled area with immigrants, the company had hired a number of writers “to go over every section of the country and give its true merits to the world, in newspapers, pamphlets, (and) magazines . . . .”<sup>17</sup>



**Palouse Colony, 1884**

## The Trek To The Palouse

The Volga German "Kansas Colony" families in Portland inquired about the company's new lands in the Palouse in the spring of 1881 and an inspection tour was arranged for several representatives of the group—Phillip Green, Peter Ochs and the three Schierman brothers; Conrad, Henry and John. The *Walla Walla Weekly Statesman* printed a letter received by R. W. Mitchell, a Colfax agent for the company's land department:

Five locating agents of the Kansas colony, composed of about 70 families, passed through here Thursday on their way to inspect lands of the O.I. Co. Col. Tustin is in charge of the party. They look like solid, progressive farmers, such as we are willing to welcome to our broad acres. One of them remarked, 'If the land is anything like what we've seen around Dayton, I guess we can be suited. We are surprised and delighted at what we have seen.' Mr. Mitchell of the O.I. Co. will meet this party in the Palouse Country next week.<sup>18</sup>

Writing from Dayton to Villard's office, Tannatt relayed his intentions for dealing with the group in a note on May 10. "I want to sell them a township and will on Mr. Oakes' return if there is any trade with them."<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the vanguard returned favorably impressed with the land's fertility and the hilly topography reminded them of the Volga *Bergseite*. Tannatt planned to meet them in Portland to arrange the sale but he found them reluctant to enter into such a massive deal on behalf of the others in Kansas. The village *mir* system in Russia had conditioned them to farm communally small fields, not entire townships, so after considering the possibilities, it was decided by several families to move to the Palouse the following year when the men could secure employment on Villard's Palouse line which was to be built through the Palouse. They would have time then to select company lands on which to establish a small colony.

During the same year, 1881, Villard's grandiose scheme for his railroad empire reached fruition. He had come to the realization that direct railway connections to the East were imperative if the Pacific Northwest was ever to be actively involved in the commerce of the nation and settlement of European immigrants. With this in mind, he had embarked secretly in December 1880, on collecting an unprecedented \$8,000,000 "blind pool" from his financial supporters in order to purchase the controlling interest in Billings's stalemated Northern Pacific Railroad. In less than a year his request was actually oversubscribed and on September 15, 1881, he was elected president of Northern Pacific. Work on both ends of the line again resumed and his dream of a northern transcontinental under his personal control rapidly approached reality.

General Tannatt continued to work in the Palouse and, on his return from a visit to "Endicott and Palouse lands" in April, 1882, he reported that both hillsides and level land were being plowed and seeded.<sup>20</sup> Endicott, a company town platted on the Palouse line in January, 1881,<sup>21</sup> was described by Tannatt as a "Boarding house, Company building, Smithshop, tool shed and three cottages."<sup>22</sup> Other towns platted in 1882 as the Columbia and Palouse line progressed along Rebel Flat were Diamond and Plainsville (the present Whitman County Fairgrounds); Colfax was reached the following year.

In the fall of 1882 the Volga Germans in Portland began their journey to the new Canaan. Their approach to the Palouse country was announced in the *Walla Walla Statesman* in September: some were coming by wagon while Tannatt arranged for others to travel over the lines of the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company to its terminus at Texas Ferry on the Snake River.<sup>23</sup>

They arrived there in October and some of the men walked twenty miles to Endicott to procure wagons to transport their families and belongings to Endicott the following day.<sup>24</sup> One of the spokesmen for the colony, Phillip Green, stated that "he had written home setting forth the fact that the land, climate and general outlook of this (Palouse) country, was all that could be desired." He also communicated to Tannatt that, "Three other Kansas colonies have sent inspectors or agents with the present party, who are to locate land for other coming immigrants. There is to be an exodus from Kansas this fall."<sup>25</sup>

Some of the families lived in tents and company houses in Endicott while others who first settled on lands in the country fashioned crude earth pits similar to the *zemlyanki* dug by their ancestors on the Volga. In the following spring lumber was obtained from Colfax to build wooden houses. Many of the Volga Germans went to work extending the Columbia and Palouse line to Colfax, which was reached the following year. In October, 1882, a local paper reported on the progress of the colony:

Delegation for the Palouse Country—Calling at the office of O.I. Co. on Monday to introduce gentlemen for the East we found quite a delegation to whom Gen. Tannatt was explaining the Palouse Country and arranging for settlement. Some weeks since a portion of the the Kansas Colony now here, with their own teams will be met by additional teams at Texas Ferry, to carry out household goods sent by train. Gen. Tannatt will meet them in Endicott, to complete contracts and outer houses built for their use. This organized method of handling immigrants is doing much for the Palouse Country, directly and indirectly for all of eastern Washington. The ample capital of O.I. Co. and their simple method of dealing promptly with new comers, upon an easily understood plan, is most proper—Mr. Greene who is with those who left on Saturday says twenty-four families are on the way hither and those now at Endicott are much pleased with the county and their reception.<sup>26</sup>

Adding new impetus to regional development was the long awaited completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad on September 8, 1883, when the final gap was closed on the transcontinental line at Gold Creek, Montana. More Volga Germans streamed into the area with other immigrant groups as the long, grueling wagon journeys were shortened to two weeks by relatively inexpensive rail transit.

## Villard's Demise

Villard's overextended empire fell victim to increasing financial pressures, and in December, 1883 he was forced to relinquish control of the Northern Pacific Railroad and the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company; both of which reverted to separate private control. Under new management the Palouse and Columbia branch pushed on in April, 1885 from Colfax to Pullman and Moscow. In the following year a second line from Colfax stretched through Northeast Washington to Farmington, Garfield and Tekoa. Tannatt retired to his large farm near Farmington in 1888. Through his

recommendation many Volga Germans found temporary employment with the railroad or at his farm.<sup>27</sup> In the summer of 1888 a spectacular bridge was built spanning the Snake River at Riparia which allowed the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company to reach its detached Columbia and Palouse line at La Crosse. Spokane was reached in 1889 from Tekoa, and the central Washington Palouse was encircled that year when a feeder line from Winona to Farmington by way of Oakesdale and St. John was completed.<sup>28</sup>

## In The New Land

The scenic rolling landscape reminded the Kansas Volga Germans of their homeland. They collectively purchased a quarter section of land five miles north of Endicott which was divided equally, reflecting the method of land tenure to which they had been accustomed in Russia.<sup>29</sup> The colony consisted of the families of Peter and Henry Ochs and those of Conrad, Henry, George and John Schierman. They were joined by the John Schreiber and Phillip Aschenbrenner families and all worked together in the building of the first eight homes which were simple three-room structures. A small herd of livestock was maintained and they planted large gardens of potatoes, melons, corn and sunflowers. They found that wheat and barley grew particularly well on the chestnut brown soil as well as oats, which were planted on the higher areas bordering the bluffs.

It soon became apparent that with the abundance of prime farmland and mechanized methods of cultivation, an individual could acquire and manage larger estates in relative self-sufficiency unlike the small plots they had tended on the slopes in Russia. This led other early Volga Germans, immigrants like the Kammerzells, Fishers, Klaveanos, Greens, Repps, and Litzenbergers, to settle in neighboring areas where they purchased their own farms. In the Palouse they learned by experience, as did other farmers, that contour farming was a necessity.<sup>30</sup>

Some families chose to pursue business ventures in neighboring towns that served the interests of the agrarian populace. Early Volga German businesses in Endicott included: H.P. Kleweno's general store, Youngman and Langlitz's harness shop, and saloons operated by Henry Litzenberger and P.H. Green.<sup>31</sup> Still, the original Palouse Colony remained as a clearing house for newly arriving Volga Germans, serving as their temporary residence until they could locate nearby. By 1885 there were about a dozen Volga German families in the Palouse; all had come through Kansas. About 1890 the first large groups began arriving in the Palouse direct from the mother colony of Jagodnaja Poljana and lesser numbers from other villages. In that year first-generation Volga Germans in Whitman County numbered about 100, but this number grew to 327 in 1900.

Disposing of most of their possessions in Russia, the Volga German immigrants brought little more with them to the Palouse than their distinctive clothing (felt boots, Russian peasant shirts and beautifully embroidered head scarves), wooden soup spoons, and German Bibles and songbooks. In preparing the children for the long journey from Russia to the Northwest, Volga German parents would often tell them enchanting stories about their future homes on the other side of the world: "We are going to America, the land where milk and honey flows . . ." After their arrival in the area, the children could steal the wild honey from hollow trees along the Palouse River and herd the cows home each evening, their udders spurting out milk after grazing in



the thick bunch grass pastures. Then the parents reminded them, "Look—See, you have the milk flowing from the cows and the honey flowing from the trees, just like we said it would be like here when we were in Russia."<sup>32</sup>

There was little conflict between the Volga German colonist farmers and the American stockmen in the central Palouse.<sup>33</sup> The small fenced fields of the farmers in the early 1880s were no threat to the stockmen, many of whom maintained enormous herds. Excluding small herds of less than fifteen head of cattle, Tannatt estimated in 1885 that within a radius of twelve miles of Endicott there were 3,562 cattle, 5,395 horses, 75,250 head of sheep but only 8,175 acres of land under cultivation. An additional 1,510 acres was in hay.<sup>34</sup>

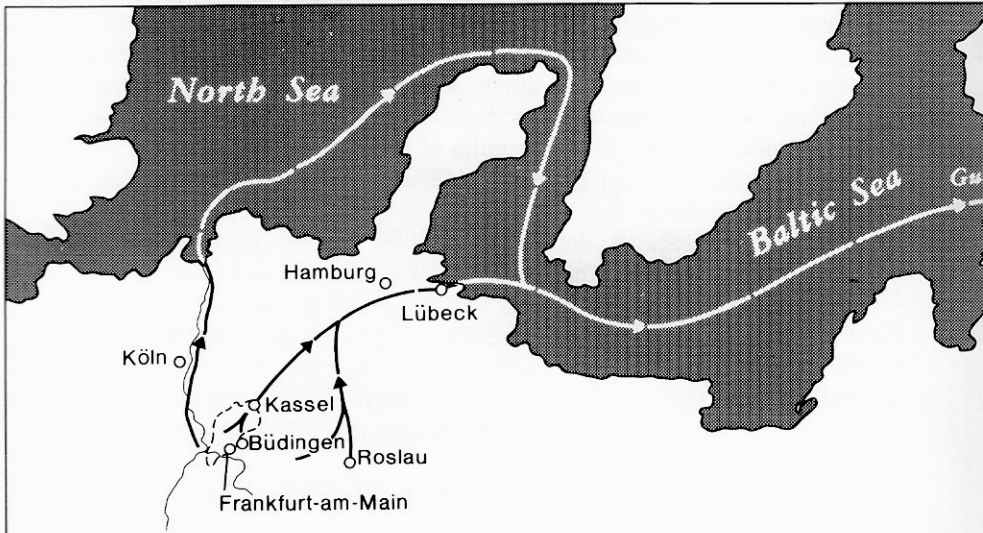
Mechanical broadcasters and self-rake reapers were introduced to the region about 1884, both of which allowed the operator to cover a significantly larger area in the long work day.<sup>35</sup> Fall seeding by broadcast and harrowing was not an effective practice in the drier central Palouse since the seed often laid for weeks in the dry chernozem soil before seasonal rains induced germination. The appearance of the mechanical shoe drill by 1890 and the later disc drill marked important advancements in agricultural mechanization as the seed could then be deposited in uniform rows nearer the moisture level below the surface.

By the early 1890s, stockmen were increasingly turning to farming,<sup>36</sup> along with the newly arriving Volga Germans who began expanding into the St. John, Dusty and Colfax areas. In the first decade of the twentieth century Volga German immigration to the Palouse continued despite the fact that most of the farmland had already been taken. Many new immigrants found employment at various Colfax businesses, as the town enjoyed an unprecedented period of prosperity. The major trade center and county seat for Whitman County, its population had risen from 1,649 in 1890 to 2,783 in 1910. At the same time the population of the county reached its highest point, 33,280 persons.<sup>37</sup>

The Volga Germans in Colfax congregated in the city's northeast section along First Street in what became known as "Russian Town" although they hated being labelled as "Russians." By 1910 the number of Russian-born Germans of the county reached 557 and this increased to 798 in 1920. This number also reflected a group of Black Sea Germans who came to the Palouse in 1905. In Endicott the local paper, the *Index* for years had a column written in German for the new Americans. After the 1930s "The German's Corner," as it was called, disappeared.




The influx of Black Sea Germans to the Palouse began in 1904 when the Volga Germans of the Endicott Congregational Church extended a call to the Reverend Henry Vogler of Eureka, South Dakota. Reverend Vogler was serving the German Congregational parish in Eureka which was composed of Black Sea Germans who had settled heavily in that region.<sup>38</sup> He married one of the daughters of Peter Uhl, a Black Sea German who had immigrated to Eureka in 1887 from Gross-Liebental, Russia. Uhl's three other daughters had married Black Sea Germans who had settled in the Eureka area. Barbara and Rosina married two brothers, Jacob and John Stueckle, respectively (both natives of Guldendorf, Russia), while Magdalene had married Philip Broeckel.<sup>39</sup>

Following Reverend Vogler's arrival in Endicott early in 1904, he and his wife settled on a farm about two miles east of present Dusty and continued his ministry. In the fall of the year the Voglers were joined by his wife's parents, the Peter Uhls. The Voglers and Uhls enjoyed their new life in the Palouse while the rest of their relatives in South Dakota disliked the cold climate and disappointing crop yields. After reading

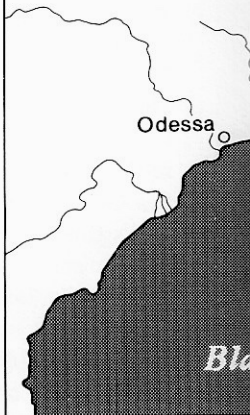


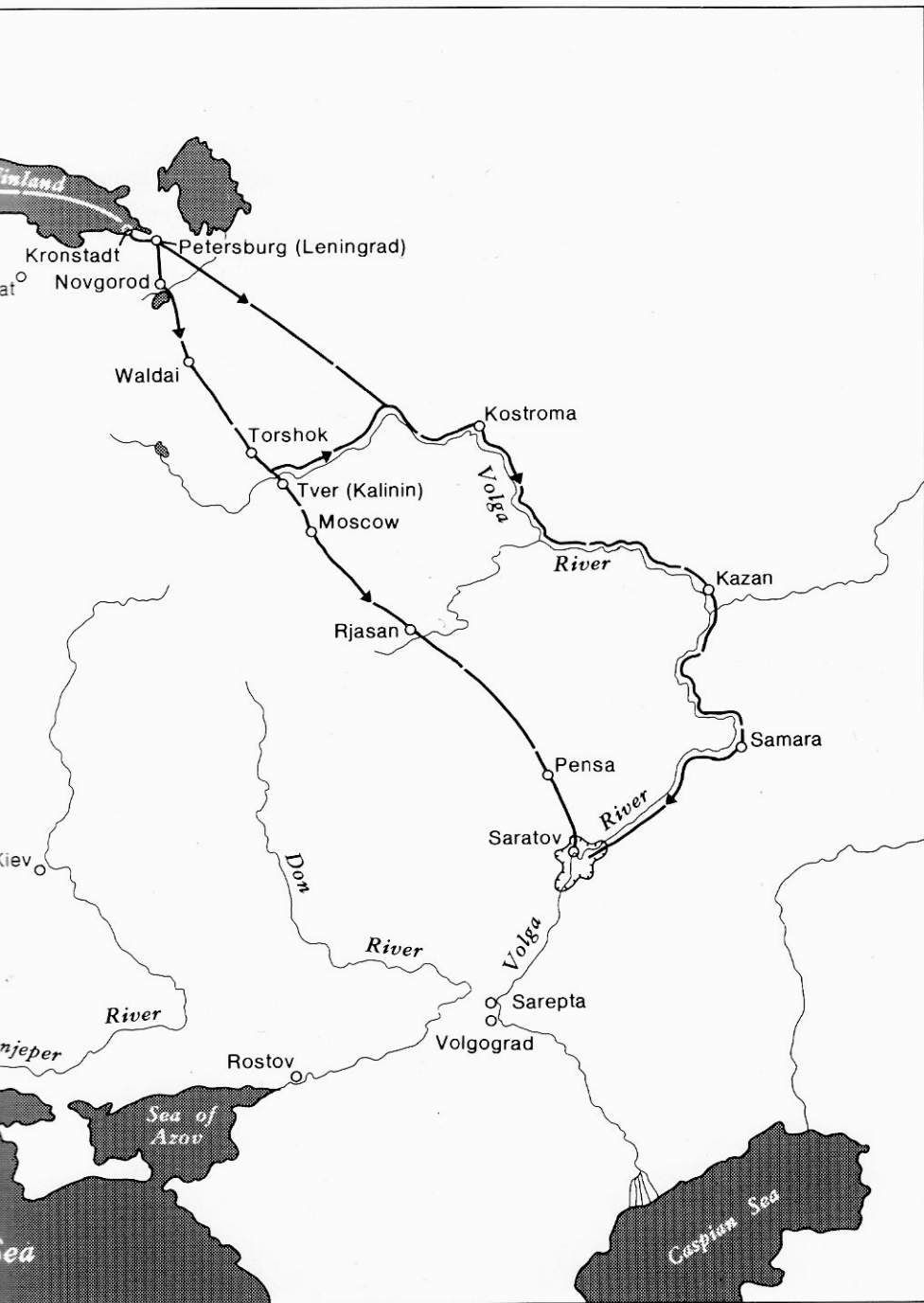
## German Migration Routes to Russia (1763-69)

(after Dr. K. Stumpp)

-  Hesse, Germany
-  Volga German Colonial Boundary
-  Migration Routes

0 100 200 300  
Miles





favorable reports on the land and climate in the Northwest, the three brothers-in-law and John's son-in-law, Fred Steiger, decided in 1905 to journey over the Northern Pacific line to Washington.<sup>40</sup>

In preparation for their new farming venture, a freight car was chartered to transport the group's seven draft horses, hack and twelve-foot Hodge header. (They later found the header to be too light for the hillsides and purchased a heavier fourteen-foot McCormick). Steiger and Broeckel were selected to accompany the freight car and were followed a few days later by the other nine adults and their twenty-six children from whom an entire passenger coach was chartered. The group arrived in Endicott on Sunday morning, March 5, 1905.<sup>41</sup>

The families lived through the spring near Dusty while the men worked and scouted in eastern Washington and Oregon for suitable farms. In July the group purchased nine quarter-sections (1,440 acres) of land about two miles east of present Dusty on Alkalai Flat Creek from the Barrell Land Company in Colfax for \$30 per acre. Lots were cast to fairly divide the land among the heads of the families who then turned to the task of building homes and barns.<sup>42</sup> Though each farm was privately owned they cooperated in many farming operations and later joined together to establish St. John's German Congregational Church in 1926.

## The Churches

The German Department of the Congregational Churches in America began in 1846 among German immigrants who had settled along the Iowa frontier and by the 1860s had grown into a leading German Protestant denomination in the United States.<sup>43</sup> Its origins on the West Coast can be traced to the arrival of the Volga Germans in the Palouse country in 1882 since the Endicott Congregational Church was



—Richard Scheuerman

*The Lutheran Church and Belfry located in Jagodnaja Poljana, Russia.*

organized by some of these immigrants in 1883. Reverend Thomas W. Walters, resident pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church in Colfax first ministered to this group in 1883 until a traveling German from Ritzville, Reverend Frucht, learned of their need. In a meeting held in Endicott in 1888, this congregation and others in Ritzville and Walla Walla were the first West Coast congregations formally accepted into the German Congregational Church. Other Russian German churches of this denomination were later established near La Crosse (1895) and in Colfax (1897).

Volga German Lutherans in the Palouse country were without a minister until 1887 when the pioneer missionary, Reverend Henry Rieke of the Ohio Synod, located their colony on the Palouse River. He organized Trinity Lutheran Church in Endicott among some of these families in 1890 and the founding of other Volga German Churches followed in Farmington (Christ Lutheran, 1896) and Colfax (Peace Lutheran, 1902).<sup>44</sup> The split within the Russina German religious community into Congregational and Lutheran churches was an outgrowth of the earlier dispute in Russia between the pietistic Lutherans and those who more liturgically oriented.

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Russian German emigration from Russia was severely curtailed and after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia it virtually ended. Unfortunately for those who had immigrated to the Palouse, as elsewhere in America, the Russian Germans found themselves identified with two very unpopular European countries. It became common during World War I for many of them to begin church services in English although German services did continue among many first-generation Russian Germans in the Palouse until the 1960s.

The number of native-born Russian Germans in the Palouse began to decline after 1920, even though their birthrate remained high. By 1930 there were 1,879 first and second-generation Russian Germans in Palouse country. These colonist farmers came at a critical time in the history of the region and witnessed its transition into the area producing the highest yielding dryland crops in the world.



—Richard Scheuerman

*The Christ Lutheran Church founded in 1896 by the Russian German congregation in Farmington.*



—WSU Library

Once in the new land, the Germans from Russia found that technology and innovation would change their lives in ways they never imagined. Here, the first shipment of Model “Ts”, fresh off Henry Ford’s mass production assembly lines in Dearborn, Michigan, arrived in Endicott in 1910.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Populations, Twelfth and Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1900 and 1920*. Census records show only the numbers of Russian-born residents in the counties and do not distinguish between Russian Germans and ethnic Russians. However, since research has failed to find evidence of any settlement in the Palouse by Slavic peoples, the census entries for Russian-born are assumed to indicate the approximate number of Russian Germans. The original of this manuscript was edited by Dixie Ehrenreich.

<sup>2</sup>Richard D. Scheuerman “From Wagon Trails to Iron Rails: Russian-German Immigration to the Pacific Northwest.” *Journal of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Fall, 1979), pp. 37-40. A more detailed study of the Russian Germans of the Palouse is in Richard D. Scheuerman and Clifford E. Trafzer, *The Volga Germans: Northwest Pioneers* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1980).

<sup>3</sup>Pissarevskii, Grigorii G. *Iz istorii inostrannoi kolonizatsii v rossii v XVIII v.* (Moskva: A.I. Snegirevii, 1909), p. 52.

<sup>4</sup>Rosa Stueckle and Louisa Stueckle, oral interview, La Crosse, Washington, July 17, 1980.

<sup>5</sup>George Eisenach, *Pietism and the Russian Germans* (Berne, Indiana: The Berne Publishers, 1949), p. 92.

<sup>6</sup>Richard Sallet, *Russian-German Settlements in the United States* (Fargo, North Dakota: Institute for Regional Studies, 1974), p. 17.

<sup>7</sup>Henry Villard, *The Early History of Transportation in Oregon* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1944), p. 43. Selected papers from the Henry Villard Collection of Yale University are on microfilm at Holland Library at Washington State University in Pullman. Many of these documents relate to Villard’s plans for the development of the Palouse Country.

<sup>8</sup>James B. Hedges, *Henry Villard and the Railways of the Northwest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), p. 127.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 65.



<sup>10</sup>Enoch H. Bryan, *Orient Meets Occident: The Advent of the Railways to the Pacific Northwest* (Pullman, Washington: The Student Book Corporation, 1936), p. 141.

<sup>11</sup>*Forty-fifth Annual Reunion of the Association of the Graduates of the United States Military Academy* (Saginaw, Michigan: Seemans and Peters, Inc., 1914), pp. 105-110 and Mrs. Hazel (Tannatt) Engelland interview, Lacy, Washington, April 20, 1978.

<sup>12</sup>Bryan, *Orient Meets Occident*, p. 148.

<sup>13</sup>Henry Villard, *Report to the Stockholders of the Oregon Improvement Company, 1881* (Microfilm copy, Holland Library Archives, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington).

<sup>14</sup>*Palouse Gazette*, November 18, 1881.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>R.W. Mitchell, Colfax, W.T. to T.R. Tannatt, Portland, Oregon, letter, May 10, 1881.

<sup>19</sup>T.R. Tannatt, Dayton, W.T. to Henry Villard, Portland, Oregon, letter, May 10, 1881.

<sup>20</sup>T.R. Tannatt to C.H. Prescott, Portland, Oregon, letter, April 27, 1882.

<sup>21</sup>Anna B. Weitz file, page 158, Holland Library Archives, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington.

<sup>22</sup>Tannatt to Prescott, letter, April 27, 1882.

<sup>23</sup>*Walla Walla Statesman*, September 30, 1882.

<sup>24</sup>*Endicott Index*, August 16, 1935 and Henry Litzenberger, oral interview transcript in the J.O. Oliphant Collection, Holland Library Archives, Washington State University, Pullman.

<sup>25</sup>*Walla Walla Statesman*, September 30, 1882.

<sup>26</sup>*Walla Walla Statesman*, October 21, 1882.

<sup>27</sup>Jacob Alder, oral interview, Tekoa, Washington, January 2, 1973.

<sup>28</sup>Donald W. Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain: A Historical Geography, 1805-1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), p. 272.

<sup>29</sup>Dave Schierman, oral interview, College Place, Washington, July 9, 1972.

<sup>30</sup>Conrad Blumenschein, oral interview, St. John, Washington, May 6, 1980.

<sup>31</sup>*Endicott Index*, July 28, 1905.

<sup>32</sup>Conrad G. Schmick, oral interview, Colfax, Washington, April 14, 1969.

<sup>33</sup>Gordon L. Lindeen, "Settlement and Development of Endicott, Washington to 1930" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Washington State University, Pullman, 1960), pp. 75-76.

<sup>34</sup>*Palouse Gazette*, April 24, 1885.

<sup>35</sup>Lindeen, "Settlement and Development of Endicott, Washington to 1930," p. 80.

<sup>36</sup>Joe Smith, "Bunchgrass Pioneer" (Unpublished typescript, in the possession of Verle Kaiser, Spokane, Washington, 1943), p. 47.

<sup>37</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Populations, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*.

<sup>38</sup>George J. Eisenach, *A History of the German Congregational Churches in the United States* (Yankton, South Dakota: The Pioneer Press, 1938), p. 301.

<sup>39</sup>Family histories for this group can be found in J.A. Stueckle, *History and Record of the Stueckle Stueckle Family* (by the author, 1962).

<sup>40</sup>Rosina Stueckle and-Louisa Stueckle interview.

<sup>41</sup>Mr. J.A. Stueckle, oral interview, La Crosse, Washington, July 17, 1980.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>An extensive history of the German Congregational movement can be found in Eisenach, *A History of the German Congregational Churches in the United States*.

<sup>44</sup>The history of individual German Ohio Synod congregations in the Palouse country can be found in Reverend A. Krause and others, *Denkschrift zum Silber-Jubiläum des Washington Distrikts der Ev. Luth. Ohio Synod, 1891-1916* (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1916).



# Coming to the Land of Milk and Honey: The Story of C. G. Schmick

by Richard Hamm

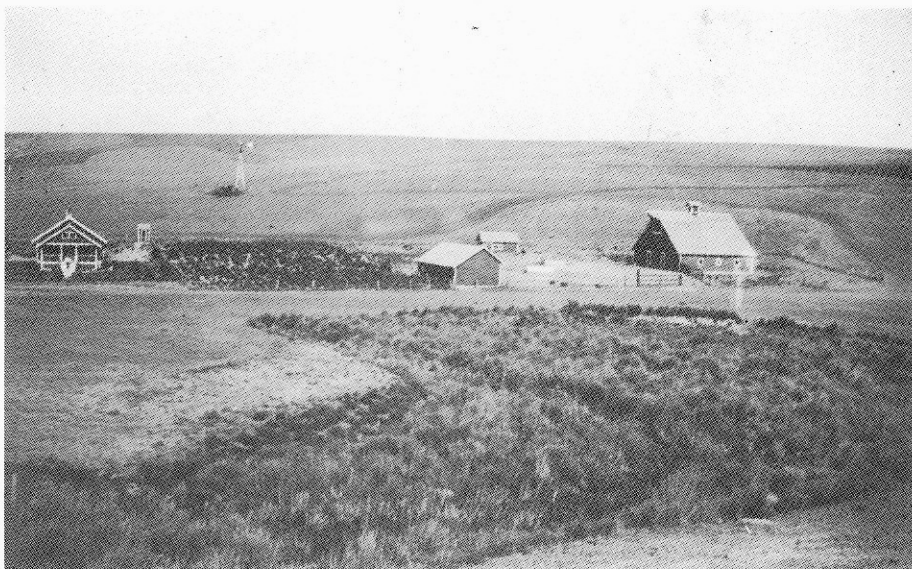
*This story is edited from two interviews with C. G. Schmick: one with Don Kackman on April 6, 1981, and the other with Richard Hamm on June 14, 1983. The interviews are part of the Society's Oral History collection, and anyone who is interested, may listen to them in their entirety.*

*We are fortunate to have this first-hand account of the German-Russian immigration at the turn of the century. Mr. Schmick, who has been a resident of Whitman County for over eighty years now, is retired from farming, and lives in Colfax.*

## Life in Russia

I was born in the village, Jagodnaja Poljana. The town was just an ordinary big village. It increased up to about 15,000 to 16,000 inhabitants; ninety percent or better was poor people, poor peasants. We kids didn't get to go very far. Oh, we went with our parents into Saratov, the big city about the size of Spokane, and there we seen the trains and the different things we didn't see in this village. Most of the people didn't get out very much.

There was in the village, a certain time when the kids would get out and play a kind of a ball game, that is different than here, of course. That was just a kind of a little block, and we'd knock it around back. If it got out of the pen, we'd have to put it back—just like soccer or something like that. Of course in soccer here, you don't use no club; but there, you use a club. And then I remember "hide-and-go-seek." Just home-made entertainment's what it was. A youngster—I happened to be the oldest one—had to be kind of a baby sitter while the folks went out and worked.



—C.G. Schmick

*“The land of milk and honey,” the Schmick Farm—1920*

My parents were born in Russia. They raised wheat and barley, and mostly rye, lots of rye for dark bread—rye bread. It was slow work for the folks to put in a little crop. There was no machinery to speak of. In the spring of the year, you sowed it by hand. And (they) probably had one or two horses at the most to harrow. When harvest came, all those who were able to work, had to cut their crops, say several acres, by hand with a sickle. Then they hauled it up and stacked it, flailed it out with flails, and used Mother Nature, the wind, to separate the chaff from the wheat or grain, whatever it was. Straight hand labor.

They knew how to cook and it was very good, too. The people had mostly pork, and they knew how to make that sausage! Different kinds and different mixtures. And, they had pork roast. It was good, but then that was on special holidays. Of course, we were accustomed to rye bread—that was our main bread. Getting white bread was kind of a treat, that only came on different occasions. And then they had sauerkraut soup and bean soup. Out in the old country, you were glad to fill your little stomach on most anything.

Most of (the people) had woolen clothes out there because they had sheep, and they would receive that wool and make it into thread. Most of the mothers had one of these spin wheels, that they (used to) make their thread. And then they’d knit and make you a shirt or whatever you needed. In the wintertime, they had these woolen shoes up to about the knees, you know. Also, the stocking was made out of wool. It was a cold country there. There were cobblers. They made these boots, kind of high, just like the regular rubber boots you used to have, up to your knees on account of the snow out there. Deep snow, that’s the way it was. After the winter was over, then you went into leather shoes. You didn’t go to Saratov or a big city and buy. The best working man would get about fifty to sixty dollars. That was his annual wage out there, and that man had to support his family with that sixty dollars.



—WSU Library

*“In those days (1900’s) that country down west of Endicott was over half in sod. We walked out from Endicott . . . and every foot we went, we walked on virgin soil.”*

---

## The Trip to Endicott

Every year, usually it was a custom in the Spring of the year and the Fall of the year, to migrate from there to whatever country they went. When my folks left there, in 1900, I was in lack of two or three months of being eight years old. Well, (the boat trip) was a big experience for a kid like me. I can remember when we hit the high seas and a storm overtook us and just swept over the main deck. They give out the alarm that everybody’s supposed to duck down on second deck, you know. There was a storm coming up. There happened to be an Austrian fellow just coming back from the kitchen, who had a big bunch of boiled potatoes. A wind come along and blew his hat off and he dropped his pan of boiled potatoes, and they rolled all over. This shipmate, he got after him: why didn’t he get off the deck? So, he went and got him and took him by the neck and downed him under the second (deck)—just give him kind of a rough deal there. He come back to see that everybody’s off the deck. There was three or four of us boys there, watching the rudder that drove the boat. It was very interesting. We heard the noise of somebody speaking, but we didn’t understand it. Boy, we got quite a tongue lashing! We was innocent, but nevertheless, the law was the law with them fellows. After that, we never showed up above while the storm was on.



—WSU Library

*A street scene in Endicott after 1910.*

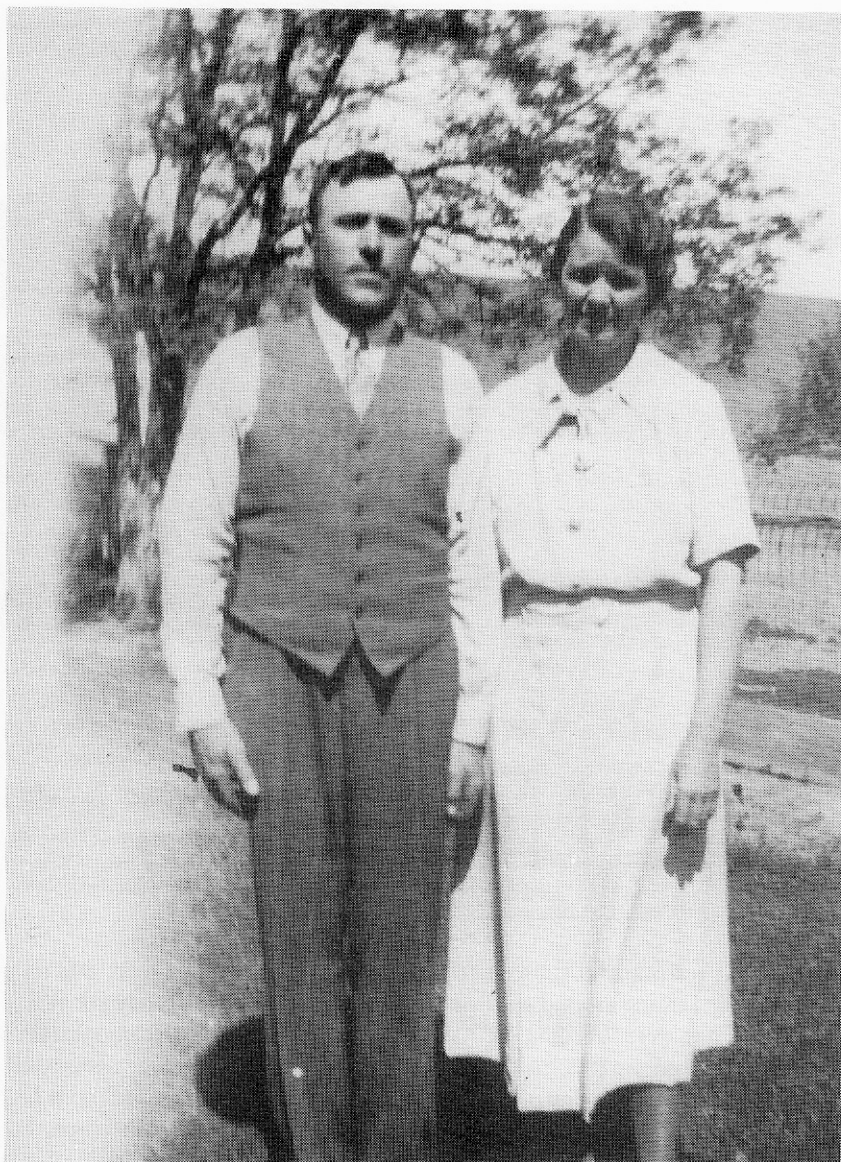
---

This storm and some of those lasted for days, you know. The folks was on there about thirty days, riding around on the high seas. Pretty near everybody got sick. That was terrible! They were “feeding the fish.” I never got sick a bit. Us youngsters done pretty good, so we got up to the kitchen and get the cook to have mercy on us kids, and we took a lot of those eats down to our folks. That was our chore.

This boat was supposed to (have been) a passenger boat, though it was mixed: livestock and passengers. The livestock was down, right in the same (area.). We could see them hollering and moving and all this. In place of having a first class ticket, you know, you got a second or third, whatever you could get. Us youngsters could sneak around and look what was going on. The top deck was mostly for first class passengers. They had their class of music, and they had some dancing to keep people up with their spirits, and great exercise where you couldn’t walk very far, just on the deck there.

From New York to Kansas, I think it took two or three days. The locomotives were just like it was back in the old passenger ship: it was very slow. Our destination was to come to Endicott. We made it to Kansas, and the folks run out of money. They had some friends that came there several years before, and that’s where they stayed for a week or two. My folks wrote to some of their friends at Endicott, and they sent them enough money whereby they could get to Endicott. And that’s the way they helped one another.





*C.G. and Hattie (Memke) Schmick*

—C.G. Schmick

---

## **Settling in Whitman County**

They went into the land of milk and honey, where the milk flowed and the honey flowed. It was a new land. The things we seen, we didn't see out in the old country. We seen horses and teams with wagons. But, here it was different. It was a little further advanced—nicer wagons and hacks, or democratic wagons. The kids were the same, but they were dressed better. You could tell we were immigrants because the way we were dressed.





—C.G. Schmick

*C.G. Schmick, his sons Byron and Don with their combine in 1931.*

---

In those days, that country down west of Endicott was over half in sod. We walked out from Endicott, over to where John Schmick had a ranch next to the Advent colony, and every foot we went, we walked out on virgin soil. That was one of the early colonies that was organized down there, on the Palouse River. They had the Advent religion. Of course, Dad and Mother were both Lutheran, like most of our people. But, they were glad to be together. They were invited in, and my folks stayed there that summer. Dad got a job up here at Farmington; at that time, they were raising sugar beets. He went to work there for a dollar a day, from daylight to dark. He thought he was getting wonderful pay! And he got meals, that was important. That fall of 1900, the folks came into Colfax so I would be ready to enter the schools here.

As young kids, we were called “Russians,” and would fight one another just like kids do, you know. We were not truly named or called right, because we weren’t Russian-blooded people. We were just *from* Russia. But that was what we were called, where we lived: “Russian Town,” in Colfax. They nicknamed each part of the town. Down over in the flat was a section they called “Poverty Flat,” a poor man’s district. And ours was “Russian.” As I said, there was no Russian blood there.

The younger fellows thought it was kind of a disgrace to talk the German language; many of them neglected their mother tongue. I adopted the American language, but there was some of them that didn’t. Sort of a disgrace to talk German if the rest of the kids couldn’t understand. Now, everybody, they’ve intermarried, and we’re just like one big family.

Our people was very religious. When they left Russia, they had faith, and their Bible, and what they called a “Wolgagesang Buch.”<sup>1</sup> And that (faith) today, is still with our people. Most of them has clinged to what they’ve been taught by their parents. My parents were very strict, and we were disciplined. I don’t say they were any better, but we knew what it was all about.

I was eight years old when I first entered the public schools, down at Martha Washington. I was very fortunate to have a teacher, Miss Schreiber, that was graduated from Cheney, after two years up there at normal school. She was my first grade teacher, and that was the only thing that saved me. (There were) very few words that I could talk in English, you know. She could talk German—she was German. She give me that instruction, and I had a little better chance than the average kid, that way. She gave me the first firm step on the ladder. Her father had a ranch out here at Moconema, and I went out there and worked for that summer. I got four bits a day, and the three meals were very important—worth more than the four bits!

I did not get much time to go to school. I went in the wintertime when there was nothing else to do, and in the spring, I went to work as a laborer. The next job I got when I was about eleven years old. I got a dollar a day (at the) John Turner ranch, about four or five miles out of Colfax. We had to milk from fifteen to twenty-some cows, twice a day, and were busy all day taking care of the chores around—taking care of the porkers and taking care of the calves. You know, when you have a hundred and some cows, you got a lot of calves to take care of. When it came springtime, we had to take care of the garden. I got plenty of milk and cream to drink there, and I think that’s what built the good bones in me.

After I got done working out at the dairy there for two years, I went out as a boy thirteen years old. And I worked out there for Dan Lust’s dad and drove header box. They stacked their grain and pitched it off the header box by hand. And then after everybody had cut their harvest, they’d have a big steam rig come along and do custom threshing. In those days, you didn’t have no threshing machine of your own. It was just a big outfit going through the country and doing this work, you know.

When I got to be about nineteen years of age, I left the folks down there at the old homestead.<sup>2</sup> Being a young man, I looked for a mate. I happened to be fortunate to run into my first wife,<sup>3</sup> and we got married. We then went and leased a ranch out of Endicott about a mile, which is now owned and occupied by Carl Repp. We farmed there for about two years, and then we were fortunate to get our present ranch,<sup>4</sup> a section of “school land.” I leased it from the state and there’s where I spent all my younger days until my retirement.

I broke up most of that sod; it was very hard work. The plows, what they called in those days, the modern “Flying Dutchman” plow, was not a very husky plow, so I tried to work that ground into sod and couldn’t do it. So John Deere came out with a brand new plow, which I bought, and I broke this sod. That was two kinds of sod. One was called “bunch grass” sod; it wasn’t too hard to break. The other was the “nigger wool,”<sup>5</sup> they called it, or, in Montana, they called it the “buffalo grass.” But it was

---

<sup>1</sup>A songbook.

<sup>2</sup>At Sutton Siding, between Winona and La Crosse.

<sup>3</sup>Kathryn Weitz.

<sup>4</sup>Near Union Flat Creek. (Endicott)

<sup>5</sup>Carex, a Sedge plant which commonly grew in the lowlands.

tough like a Negro's hair. It was curly and black and tough. I had plowed that with the new plow, and it took eight horses. It was good humus in that "nigger wool" didn't work up until maybe twenty-thirty years afterwards, no longer. It would plow so hard that it would just roll over. It was hard to develop—it took time and years. Today, after forty to fifty years, still I could go out and show you the "nigger wool" grass there, which was a great thing.

And that's the way it was, you know. Just like any new country you come into, it's the people that have to develop it. The thing was . . . to have the ambition, roll up your sleeves and go to work. If you did, and watched yourself, you had an opportunity to get somewheres.



—C.G. Schmick

*C.G. Schmick—1916. "Just like any new country you come into, it's the people that have to develop it. The thing was . . . to have the ambition, roll up your sleeves and go to work."*

## •Publications of Note•

### **David T. Mason: Forestry Advocate**

by *Elmo Richardson*

*Forest History Society, 1983, 125 pp. \$5.00 plus \$1.00 shipping, and handling, paperback*

Members of the Whitman County Historical Society may remember Elmo Richardson as a Washington State University faculty member and as the author of volumes that deal with the theme of conservation. He produced the present book, a biography of David T. Mason, with funds provided by the Forest History Society, an organization supported by memberships and grants from those interested in preservation of the history of America's forest industry. *David T. Mason: Forestry Advocate* is dedicated to a former member of the Whitman County Historical Society, Herman Deutsch, and another colleague, Max Savelle, who taught at the University of Washington.

When David T. Mason graduated from Yale University in 1907 with training in forestry, The U.S. Forest Service was the major employer in his field. His seven years with the agency were spent in its Washington, D.C., headquarters and in national forests located in Colorado, Montana, Idaho, and Washington. During that time he became familiar with those who were to manage federal forest lands for the next forty years. Mason also lectured at the University of Montana and at Yale, thus becoming known in academic circles as well. The concept of promoting cooperative efforts between the federal government and private enterprise began to germinate during those years. His study of the utilization of lodgepole pine, for example, became a basic text in the Forest Service and in the nation's forestry schools.

Mason's abilities as a researcher and teacher were recognized when he joined the University of California's new Division of Forestry in 1915. There, he taught classes in the finance and administration of commercial forests and continued his research and writing. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, Mason joined the 10th Engineer Regiment—Forestry, and left the army at the end of the war with the rank of major.

While technically on the faculty at Berkeley in 1919-1920, Mason took leave of absence to do project work on timber taxation procedures and other research. He found that his experiences with leaders of industry and government were more satisfying than teaching. So in 1921, he resigned his position to establish his own consulting firm. Earlier, when he left the Forest Service to teach, some of his colleagues criticized him; now when he left academe for private business, many former friends accused him of "becoming one of *them*"—of joining the ranks of those who were raping America's forests. But for the next fifty years Mason worked to convince all segments of the forestry industry to adopt and practice techniques that would: a) provide a fair return on investment; b) utilize forest resources in such a way as to retain their ability to provide for the future. Richardson devotes over ninety pages to chronicling Mason's efforts to get his profession, the forest industry, and the federal government to establish and maintain a working relationship based upon cooperation and trust. Such steps, Mason believed, were essential to maintaining a viable forest economy. As Richardson points out, this task required more than mere technical expertise. It meant gaining the support of such "personalities" as Herbert Hoover, Senator Charles McNary, Wilson Compton, J.P. Weyerhauser, Jr., Harold L. Ickes, William Greely, and George F. Jewett.

An even greater challenge was the goal of getting the cooperation and understanding of the American Forestry Association, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, West Coast Lumbermen's Association, and the Western Forestry and Conservation Association. Each political leader, each industry executive, and each political group had to be convinced to give up something in order to obtain some common goals. Included among these were the development of 2.5 million acres of forest land in western Oregon and obtaining changes in state and federal tax structures applying to forest land.

One of Mason's major accomplishments of his later years was to assist the passage of Public Law 273 in 1944. This legislation provided for federal-industry cooperation in the development of sustained yield plans. The Shelton (Washington) Cooperative Sustained Yield Unit is a prime example of this legislation in operation.

To produce this work, Richardson used a variety of sources, ranging from oral history tapes in the Forest History Society, to material found in several manuscript depositories, to federal and state archives, to personal interviews with those involved. His previous experience with these same resources enabled Richardson to utilize them effectively. The Forest History Society is to be congratulated on its choice of author for this publication, as well as its continuing efforts to produce useful and readable works in the area of forest history.

—Bruce Harding

### **Forest History Museums of the World**

*Kathryn Fahl, compiler*

*Forest History Society, 1983, 75 pp, \$7.50 plus \$1.00 postage and handling, paperback*

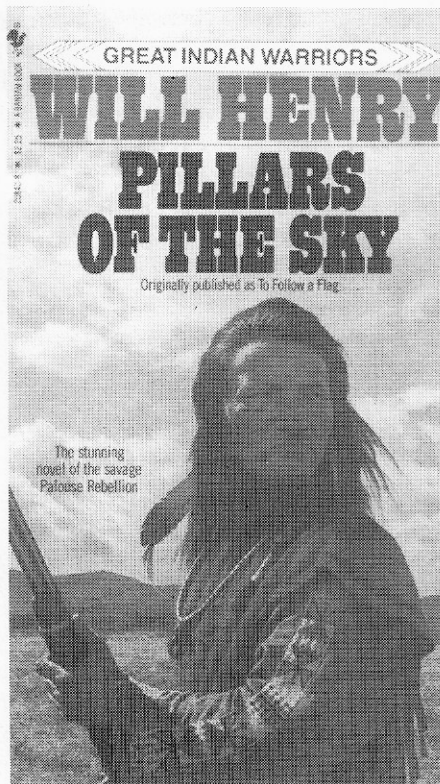
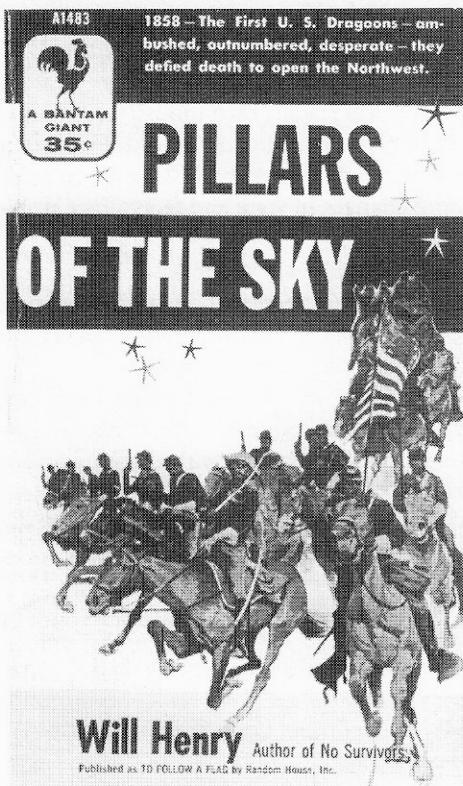
For those who travel and enjoy visiting museums, this fine volume is indispensable. Although information contained in some entries relies upon other published sources, most contain the essential data: location, mailing address, telephone number, open hours, and a description of the collection. Other information is also included. For example, some museums operate eating establishments or have picnic areas; others maintain gift shops where one might find unique handmade items. Although this publication is not a guide to manuscript or archival material in the various museums, mention is made of such collections.

Photographs and drawings included in the work will enable many museum-goers better to understand what they are seeing when they view exhibits. Although most listings in the work are in the United States and Canada, Fahl has included a number of museums in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and South America. One wonders if there are any forestry museums in the Soviet Union, or if there was simply no data available.

The 8½x11 inch format is not suitable for carrying on a trip, but one can always copy needed pages and fold them to pocket size. As with most works of this nature, entries do tend to become dated as years pass. So before going to a museum it would be a good idea to make inquiries about the current situation. Finally, the Forest History Society would welcome information on potentially new citations for future editions of this fine work.

—Bruce Harding





The cover of Bantam's 1952 edition of *Pillars of the Sky* (left) contrasts sharply with the image that the company seeks to portray on the cover of the 1983 version (right). Notice also that the Bantam editors have tried to "Cash in" on the series market by including *Pillars of the Sky* in their "Great Indian Warriors" series.



## **Pillars of the Sky**

by Will Henry

Bantam Books, 1983, 165 pp., \$2.25 (paperback)

*Pillars of the Sky*, a portrayal of Lieutenant Colonel Edward J. Steptoe's near fatal encounter with united bands of hostile Palouse, Spokane, Coeur d'Alene and Yakima Indians near Rosalia, Washington, has been reissued by Bantam Books as a major entry in a series of Will Henry novels entitled "Great Indian Warriors." Henry, who won the Western Writers' Spur Award for the estimable *From Where the Sun Now Stands* (1960), is often a competent historical novelist capable of real sympathy for the Native American point of view. Since much of *Pillars of the Sky* (the title refers to Indian

smoke signals) is set in Whitman County, it would be gratifying to report that it is a literary triumph. Unfortunately this is not the case. The novel is one of Henry's weakest offerings, a potboiler western that is dramatically unconvincing and historically garbled.

First published in 1952 in *Zane Grey's Western Magazine* under the title "Frontier Fury," Henry's actioner conforms to the Zane Grey formula—it is a David Belasco plot masquerading as gritty western realism and spiced with lots of local-color description. The sensationalized caption on the back cover of the new and handsomely designed Batam edition explains that the novel relates "the powerful story of the bitter war in the Northwest Territory and the one Nez Perce peace chief, Timothy, who tested his faith against the burning Indian fury" of a "Palouse Rebellion" ostensibly led by Chief Kamiakin. We are led to believe that this is a true story.

Henry thinly fictionalizes Steptoe by calling him Edson Stedloe, perhaps to justify historical distortions necessary to the plot, but the central character of this cavalry romance is really First Sergeant Emmett D. Bell. Bell is a brawny rough-and-ready "noncom" who drinks bourbon by the quart out of his company canteen, has a special understanding of the "quirky red man," and is trying to live down a secret past. Bell, despite his bad attitude and almost constant drinking, is clearly the only first-rate soldier in H Company, caught between commanding officers who are thickwitted West Pointers and inexperienced troops who are "no beard boys; first hitch bottle babies." Timothy, a real Nez Perce chief who actually accompanied Steptoe's troops, is Bell's faithful Indian companion. Together they participate in death-defying adventures, daring covert missions, and last-minute rescues.

Bell, as it turns out, has fled to remote frontier service in order to escape a botched military career and a disturbing love affair. Before growing a beard and assuming his new identity our working class hero graduated from West Point while hopelessly in love with Miss Calla Lee Rainsford, a general's daughter from Lynchburg, Virginia. Lieutenant Wilcey Gaxton, who coincidentally is an officer in H Company, also loves Calla and knows Bell's true identity. When Calla follows her rival suitors to the frontier she arrives by wagon train that is raided by "that mad dog, Kamiakin." As the events of the "Palouse Rebellion" unfold Calla is rescued by Bell and Timothy, Gaxton is slain in battle, and the valiant and faithful Nez Perce tribe under Chief Lawyer come to the aid of their beleaguered white brothers.

It is sometimes difficult to tell just how serious Henry is about this slight, stereotypical story written very early in his career. H Company has more in common with Second World War infantry than an actual territorial cavalry. Bell thinks of his troops as "dogfaces" and the enemy as sinister aliens with "slant eyes." And the plot is sometimes so artificial that even the central character finds himself musing: "the whole thing had all at once assumed the atmosphere of a gaudy, almost gay adventure; something lifted, whole-skein, from one of Mr. Buntline's yellow-backed penny dreadfuls."

But once committed to this "gut-busting" saga Henry regales his readers with extended passages of purple, pulp fiction prose. The Palouse country is "as easy to read as a hardshell Baptist prayer book." H Company rides "unexpectedly up on the rumps of a thousand of Kamiakin's hostiles." Later these same hostiles "swarm in on the white soldiers like bottle flies at a bull-gutting." Kamiakin, in reality a Yakima chief

not present at the Steptoe battle, is portrayed as an almost dashing villain. But Malkapsi, a Coeur d'Alene, is "a real bad Indian," so bad that he files his upper teeth to sharp points like a South Seas cannibal, thereby sporting a "dog wolf mouth."

Henry abandons all restraint when describing the torrid love between Bell and Miss Rainsford. Calla is "twenty-two, tall, full figured and graceful as a willow wand in moving water." Her hair is "night-black, soft and summery as an August wind." She has ivory skin, "an oddly pagan look," and "nowhere, unless it could be read in the moisture of the parted lips, was there a trace of low breeding in her features." Just before Bell impulsively clutches her to his hirsute bosom we are told why he finds this sensuous virgin so appealing: "Calla moves a step away from the tent, partly raising her arms toward the soldier, her lips parted in that Mona Lisa smile that has invited men to madness since the Year One." (Leonardo, of course, completed the Mona Lisa in 1507.)

The story of Colonel Steptoe and the assistance he received from such treaty Nez Perce as Timothy and Lawyer deserves better treatment. Timothy, as he is portrayed in *Pillars of the Sky*, is merely a pale copy of Fenimore Cooper's more complex Chingachgook. Henry would have us believe that Timothy is inspired by patriotism, somehow mesmerized by the American Flag: "If you ever saw it [the flag] and got it into your heart, then you follow it. That was all." Only at the very end of the novel does he add that for many Native Americans the choice between remaining free and accepting white ways was often motivated by dire necessity. As Timothy's cynical Nez Perce friend Lucas puts it: "The food is there. Where the flag is."

According to Alvin Josephy's classic *The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest* the historical Timothy led an interesting, perhaps even tragic life. In addition to his adventures with Steptoe in 1858, he and old Chief Joseph were the first major converts of the Reverend Henry Spalding at the Lapwai Mission in 1836. During the Cayuse War following the Whitman massacre, Timothy counselled the Nez Perce to remain at peace and soon became known as a leader of a large Christianized faction of the tribe. In 1855 Lawyer and Timothy signed a treaty with Governor Isaac Stevens that defined the boundaries of the Nez Perce reservation and later caused intratribal disputes which eventually led to the Nez Perce War of 1877. (This war and the character of Chief Joseph the Younger are effectively documented in Henry's *From Where the Sun Now Stands*.) In his later years Timothy was given special status among Indians. He was permitted to own a farm at Alpowa, given money to build a new house, and even allowed to travel to Washington, D.C. where he received some concessions for his people. He died in 1891, still reportedly "reverent and good." By that time most of the Nez Perce reservation had been reclaimed by his callous or forgetful white friends and it was evident that following the flag offered no lasting rewards for Native Americans.

—William F. Wilbert