



# Bunchgrass Historian

Volume 2, No. 1

SPRING, 1974

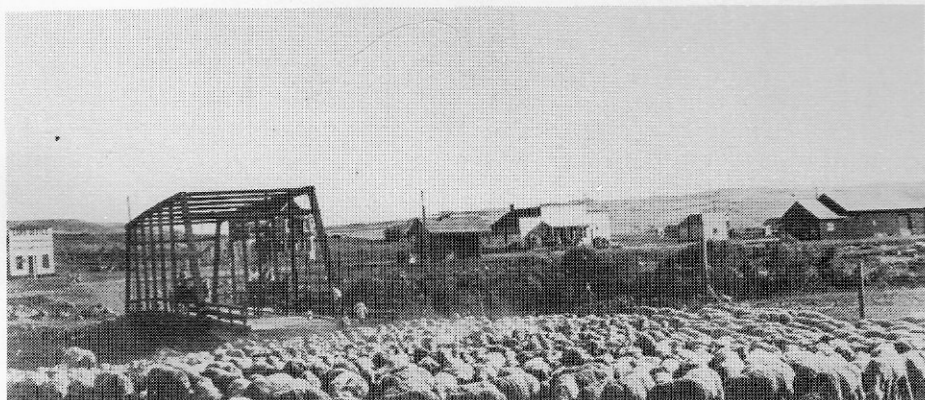
## Boom Days in the Sheep Business 1905-1920

By Alex McGregor

The prairie grassland and sagebrush tracts of western Whitman county had the same promise that early settlers saw in arid alkali stretches of eastern Oregon:

The land, by some mysterious impulse . . . was going to raise ton lots of everything—cattle, hogs, sheep, chickens, turkeys, geese, silver foxes, strawberries, gooseberries, apples, peaches, plums, garden truck, flax, cut flowers. The climate would cure asthma, tuberculosis, rickets, melancholia, goiter. It was going to be a remarkable region.

Land near Hooper was said to be excellent for the growing of potatoes, peaches, kaffir corn, melons, grapes, peanuts, sweet potatoes, walnuts, apricots, hops, strawberries and alfalfa. An influx of 80,000 people was imminent and population in Whitman county could and would reach 500,000. The discovery that wheat could be grown in western Whitman and Adams counties and the building of two additional rail lines (the original one reached Hooper in 1886) caused an influx of population. Hooper, according to a detailed



**McGregor Sheep at Hooper in 1910**

Excerpted from material collected by Alex McGregor for inclusion in his Masters thesis in History at the University of Washington where he is a graduate student.



## Bunchgrass Historian

Published quarterly in March, June, September and December during the calendar year by the Whitman County Historical Society, at P.O. Box 447, Pullman, Washington 99163 to further an interest in a rich and wonderful heritage by sharing memories of those days of early settlement in the bunchgrass country. Subscription rates are three dollars the calendar year. One dollar an issue.

### PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

June Crithfield .....Editor  
R. M. Chatters .....Layout  
Beryl G. Jorstad, Bonnie J. Smith  
B. LeRoy Davidson

### Officers

President .....Norma McGregor  
Vice Pres. ....E. N. Klemgard  
Secretary .....Evelyn Hickman  
Treasurer .....Roy M. Chatters

expectations of its optimistic promoters. Wheat, not kaffir corn or grapes, was an important crop grown on the land. A fifteen mile long irrigation ditch was constructed and apple trees were grown on what had been a sagebrush flat. Real estate was a booming business; prices of farm and grazing lands increased rapidly, and brisk trading was done in city lots for places such as Palouse Falls and North Hooper.

The sheep and cattle businesses remained important because of favorable prices for those commodities, and because most of the land within the main body of the channeled scablands lacked sufficient topsoil for farming purposes.

The sheep industry went through a wide array of changes during the years 1905-1920. Many of the changes had begun in the 1890's and were now accelerated.

John, Peter, Alex, and Archie McGregor incorporated their holdings in July, 1905 and formed the McGregor Land and Livestock Company, which consisted of more than 33,000 acres of land, 15,000 sheep, almost 600 head of cattle, horses and farm equipment at the time. In so doing, the McGregor brothers were joining several of the large-scale livestockmen of the Pacific Northwest who were in the process of incorporating their holdings. Just as partnerships had been the popular institution a decade before, now corporations were increasingly prominent. The Coffin Sheep Company, formed by H. Stanley, Arthur, and Lester Coffin, was another group to be organized in such a fashion. Like the McGregors, the Coffin brothers had been merchants and sheepmen during the open range days and had been able to struggle through the Panic of 1893 and its aftermath. Coffins used an ingenious method for survival—when the price of wool dropped disastrously they had their fleeces made into Indian blankets which they sold at the Yakima Indian Reservation and other reservations throughout the West. F. M. Rothrock was another man to incorporate his livestock interests at this time. Rothrock ran a meat market in

article about the town by Peter McGregor in the **Coast** magazine (1907) "has advanced . . . from a mere flag station on the OR & N to the dignity of a rural metropolis." The town of Hooper boasted (if only temporarily) two meat markets, two restaurants, a general store, two barbers, two hotels, an ice cream parlor, a men's clothing store, a blacksmith, a contractor, and six saloons. Because Hooper occupied "a strategic point on a water grade," it had the largest machine shops south of Spokane. The treeless scablands and the rolling prairie did not look barren to local residents all of whom were "enthusiastic in their faith in Hooper's bright future."

The bunchgrass pasture land of the lower Palouse, part of which had been purchased by the McGregor brothers a few years before at \$.75-\$1.25, lived up to some of the

northern Idaho in the 1890's and acquired enough money to enter the livestock business when a rich body of ore was found in the Hercules mine, in which he had invested a portion of his earnings. In 1905 he and another man formed Rothrock and Anderson, five years later Rothrock Land and Livestock Company was initiated, and in 1914 his earlier efforts were abandoned in favor of the Day and Rothrock Cattle Company.

All traces of the open range sheep business of prior decades had disappeared in Washington. T. J. Drumheller, a pioneer sheepman, commented in the 1916 **National Wool Grower** that: "a state law requiring the owner of a flock to control lands on which to run it has put the coyote sheepman out of business. Like the coyote he was a vagrant and his extinction will not be regretted."

In other states the transient sheepman had not yet been put out of business by 1905, but his existence was becoming increasingly perilous. Cattlemen were warring on "woolies" "all over the West."

One day in 1905, ten masked men rode into Louis Gantz' camp in the Big Horn Valley, Wyoming, shot or clubbed to death 4000 sheep, burned the herders' and campenders' wagons, destroyed all camp equipment, grain, and provisions, and tied the sheep dogs to the wagon wheels, where they were roasted to death. The feeble excuse was that the flock, headed for summer pasture in the Big Horn, had dawdled on their way through the domain claimed by the cowman and had consumed all the feed.

Other favorite tricks were throwing dynamite charges into corralled bands of sheep and driving sheep over a precipice. Sheepmen sometimes retaliated by having their bands eat all the grass on cattle ranges or by showering their opponents and beeves with bullets.

A more important change to established sheepmen in the West was a tremendous increase in the demand for lamb and mutton. C. H. Shurte, a pioneer sheep buyer, stated in 1916 that: "A few years have literally revolutionized the sheep industry. It is but a short time since western stock was a novelty at Chicago (markets) . . . the decadence of the eastern sheep industry was an opportunity of which the West took prompt advantage (by shipping lamb eastward)."

Also evident was the increasing capital necessary to operate a sheep ranch as land was purchased and sheepmen "became better acquainted with the benefits of good breeding stock, better equipage, and the best of care."

The McGregor brothers ran 12,000-20,000 sheep during the years 1905-1920. Employees totaled almost 60 at lambing time, a similarly high figure during shearing, and from 15-40 men the rest of the year. The seasonal nature of employment on the Western sheep ranges had not changed. In addition to such temporary help, the McGregor Land and Livestock Company was fortunate in having a crew of capable permanent men with knowledge and love for the sheep business. The foreman of the sheep operations was John D. "Jock" Macrae, a Scotsman who was first employed by the McGregors in 1898. "Jock" was a colorful individual who had a habit of reciting "Bobbie" Burns, talking Gaelic, drinking great amounts of Scotch, and having girlfriends at each of the areas through which McGregor sheep passed, even when in his 80's.

Salaries for the McGregor sheepmen increased dramatically during the period 1905-1920 because of the good prices prevailing for lamb, wool, and other farm products. Average wages for farm workers in the state jumped from \$31 a month in 1910 to \$63 in 1918. In 1906, the usual pay for McGregor herders was \$1 a day. In 1913 and 1914 salaries varied from \$20 a month for the first year of employment to \$50 for the more experienced help. Base salary for beginning shepherders was further increased in 1919 to \$100 per month.

A 1911 report noted that "The McGregor Brothers prefer and usually secure French herders, of whom there are quite a colony in the vicinity of Walla Walla, Washington." Most of these men were from Haute-Alpes, a province of eastern France where sheepherding was a common occupation. Maurice Morod, one of the French immigrants employed by the McGregor brothers, came to work for them in Hooper in 1898.



**Above: Sheep in the Channeled Scablands. McGregor sheep on the winter range near Palouse Falls. Photo courtesy Mr. and Mrs. Joe Crowther**

The McGregor sheepmen spent winter months with their bands of sheep in the scablands along the lower Palouse and Snake Rivers. "An open wagon pulled by two horses, carried the food supplies, a small tent and the few cooking utensils needed." More frequently used were small sheepherders' cabins located at Pete's, Archie's, and John's camps, Winn Lake, Stuart's Canyon, Indian Springs, Wildcat Lake, and elsewhere. The cabins usually contained a stove, a bed, and a few shelves with dishes and utensils. Herders in other regions were beginning to use sheep wagons, vehicles similar in appearance to old Conestoga wagons, but shortened and widened, with two layers of canvas pulled taut over the top, a small window in the back, and a door at the front with two independently swinging halves. A stove was located near the front of such wagons, and a stovepipe stuck up through the canvas. Above the stove was a dish cupboard in which the tin utensils and plates were kept. Across each side were benches, with a trap door in the middle of each bench leading to the grub boxes. Hinged to the bed and jutting forward was the table.

Sheep dogs were a necessity during the winter months, as well as most other times of the year. A well-trained dog can greatly aid a single herder in keeping control of a band of sheep. Each sheepman had a personal preference

(Continued on page 13)



An 1868 ad for farm machinery copied from a waybill of the E. A. Hawley Co. Farmers in the Palouse country were becoming more interested in equipment as the bunchgrass

began to give way to commercial crops. Machinery deliveries were made via the river--note steamboats in background.

# Wheat Was Not Always King

By Roy M. Chatters

"E. W. Burch recently presented the Gazette with a cigar made at the Spokane Exhibition from tobacco grown near Rosalia, this county. This is evidence of the possibilities of tobacco culture in this vicinity." I was rather startled when I first read this report from an 1890 issue of the **Colfax Gazette** because, like many another newcomer to the Palouse country, I had assumed that wheat and peas had always been the only crops grown here. As far as I knew, wheat had always been king.

So, I began searching the literature for further evidence relating to the growing of tobacco. As yet, I have not succeeded in finding out who near Rosalia raised the tobacco, displayed and made cigars at the 1890 Northwestern Industrial Exposition in Spokane. I did, however, run across reports on a number of other unexpected crop plants.

When first settled, present-day Whitman county farming was devoted primarily to stock raising because of the abundance of bunchgrass (illustrated at left). Between 1870-1880, only a small amount of wheat was being grown but flax was in evidence everywhere. Nearly every rancher had a field of from ten to thirty acres of this slender, blue-flowered fiber-plant. It was more profitable than wheat at that time as inadequate transportation facilities, coupled with low prices kept down the production of grain. Almota was the closest shipping point for this district, two days being required to haul a load of grain from Colfax, fourteen miles distant, to this point. Consequently, flax seed being much lighter than wheat was preferred to that grain. Moreover, the farmers received on an average a dollar a bushel for the flax and only 38 to 40 cents for wheat. The yield of flax at this time was between ten and 25 bushels per acre, that of wheat about forty bushels. The flax was shipped to a mill at Salem where it was made into linseed oil. In addition, the oil and the seed were of considerable medicinal value, internally and externally.

Prior to 1882, the production of flax and cereals was comparatively unimportant; however, in 1882 McConnell and Company of Moscow contracted for 200,000 bushels of flax seed delivered at Wawawai by Nov. 1, at \$7.00 per bushel. A strip of Whitman county lying between Union Flat and Moscow and extending a few miles north was the principal flax producing section.

On Aug. 2, 1889, the **Colfax Gazette** published the following item, "The department of agriculture is intending to make experimental tests in order to determine if the flax raised in this country is suitable for the production of linen equal in quality to that produced in Europe. In the western states, particularly Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Dakota Territory, flax is raised for cordage, and some coarse fabrics, but the supply is not equal to the demand.

In the western states the straw is usually fed to cattle. The seed is used for linseed oil. Means ought to be taken to ascertain whether the establishment of linen factories would be profitable or not. Holland, Ireland and Germany furnish the supply of the world. Flax is well suited to the soil and climate of the north-western states. It is a crop that bring quick returns, requiring only



about ninety days from the time of seeding to harvest. The experiments of the department of agriculture will be looked for with interest by those persons who reside in the flax belt."

Further, on September 26, 1890, the **Gazette** reported that about 20 cars each of flax and wheat had just been shipped from Pullman warehouses. Actually, shortly after this glowing report there was a fear that due to the fine yields of wheat the market would soon be glutted and the price depressed. Wheat farming might well become too uneconomical to continue!

Glenn James, a rancher living near the city of Palouse, recently told me that his father was raising a few acres of flax as late as the Korean War. He said that because the straw was so slow to decompose in the ground it was necessary to burn it.

Another plant of economic importance grown in the county was broomcorn, a sorghum-type grass related to the syrup-producing sorghum. This sorghum was suited for making brooms merely by tying a bunch of the dry, much-branched floral heads to a stick. B. LeRoy Davidson, who formerly lived at the top of the Wawawai grade, recently sent the following note. "My granddad A. D. P. Keith, had a machine that held and shaped the material to a flat form while a wire was wrapped tightly to secure it to a handle.

"The climate of the high Palouse prairie hardly seems ideal for the growth of broomcorn; the longer season on the river would have made a more likely place to grow it. Probably there were many others producing a little and manufacturing brooms in the county in early days."

Broomcorn was exhibited by Whitman county farmers at the 1890 Spokane Exposition where its stalks "towered above the visitors to a height of twelve feet."

Although broomcorn is no longer of commercial importance in Whitman county, a report published within the last few days by the U.S. Department of Agriculture states that 19,300 acres are devoted to this grass in four southwestern states.

According to the Oct. 7, 1890 issue of **The Chronicle** in its report on the Spokane Exposition, "The ability of the Northwest to raise cotton has been successfully demonstrated and cotton raised by C. W. Bean, near Wawawai, is on exhibiton. Cotton experts pronounce the lint better than the middling of the Louisiana crop."

By 1900, the growing of sugar beets had interested a number of Whitman county farmers. In 1901, there were twelve growers with a total of 333 acres planted to this root crop. The pioneers raising this crop were T. R. Tannett, J. Ott, C. Smith, H. Harms, F. Dennis and others. Because of their high (22.5%) content of "saccharine matter," beets from Whitman county were held in high regard. The dry refuse, or pulp, was a valuable by-product used to fatten cattle and to increase milk yield.

In an earlier day it was found that the soils of this county would grow, in addition to the above crops, oats, barley, rye, peas, mangelwurzels, carrots, rutabagas, potatoes and corn for ensilage. Of course, fruit orchards of great economic importance were developed in due time and will be the subject of a later **Bunchgrass Historian** report, I expect.

No doubt, other crop plants were experimented with by the pioneers even though they were grown from a few seeds brought West and planted to give them "a bit of home" in a strange land.

---

Pen and ink sketch of the bunchgrass made by B. LeRoy Davidson, Seattle.

# Some Plants Unique to Our Area

By B. LeRoy Davidson

In our recent conscious efforts to assess the impact of Man on his World, we have become aware of "endangered species". To most of us this means animals, particularly birds. The building of impoundments along major waterways will affect in addition—and in far more marked ways—the local or total destruction of a number of plant species.

One of the unique ecological stations along our section of the Snake river about 24 miles below its confluence with the Clearwater is at the place long known as Granite Point. Here the river has cut down through almost two thousand feet of basalt to expose underlying granite, and at this point in the sheltered canyon, at a mere 700 ft. elevation, a number of species unique to the region have found conditions suited to their establishment, survival and success. Among these were several small ferns, found also in the Columbia Gorge, but not between these two areas, as **Pityrogramma**, the gold-back fern.

It will not be only the flooding behind Lower Granite Dam that will have destroyed these; any such small micro-habitat is precarious at best; the collection of botanical specimens alone probably wiped out the ferns. The disturbance to Granite Point in the years since the stone was first quarried for building purposes (ca. 1880) and later blasted away for railroad rip-rap, has had far greater destructive results, yet the general conditions remained for re-establishment of these same things, given enough time.

Granite Point was also known to certain of us as the site of a single almond tree "growing wild". How it got there is of course unknown, but its presence indicates the mildness of the narrow climate belt along the river bottom. How impoundments of the waters into a series of calm "lakes" from the wild river state will affect the total biota is unknown as yet, but we cannot escape the inevitable: when a natural cover of plants is disturbed, or removed, the lost elements are quickly replaced, but by weedy and usually worthless, even noxious weeds. Thus Jimson weed, cheat grass, a horde of mustards, and several kinds of tumbleweed have gained irreversible footholds, to spread into and compete with the plants of value we would encourage.

Some few plant elements are certain to be depleted or destroyed, within the county at least, for their attachment to conditions in the narrow river corridor. These are spoken of as "Sondran" for their typical association with these specific conditions, and they reach their northern limits hereabouts or upstream. **Mirabilis** (Four-o'clock), in gardens, was found in Hells Canyon as recently as the thirties. The hackberry [**Celtis occidentalis**] is wantonly destroyed as "just brush"; it is one of the few tree species native to the canyon and affords shelter to many animals and plants native to the canyon alike (i.e. **Tonella**, a Californian genus otherwise) and nesting sites to many birds.

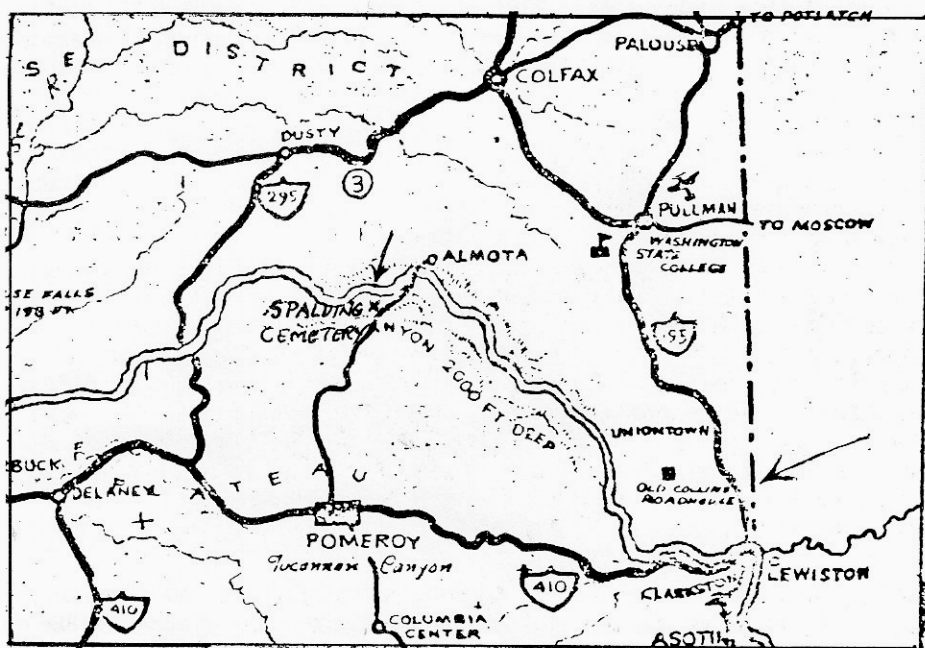
In shaded basalt caves across the river from Truax Siding near Granite Point was the type station for a rather pretty little columbine of a pale carrot-orange color. This was named **Aquiligia formosa**, (meaning beautiful) var. **wawawensis**, commemorative of the place of that name downstream. Just how far it extends above high-water is unknown, but the original or type station will be submerged. The cool crevices full of accumulated humus in shaded situations in fallen rock tallus are full in early spring of Dutchman's Breeches [**Dicentra cucullaria**] otherwise found only in the northeastern USA.



# Two Historic Sites Recommended for State and National Registers

As passers-by we often take for granted the house, the crossroads, the cemetery or some other fixture of the landscape which makes up our everyday scene.

They have always been there, each with the background of history associated with the gradual growth of the county. Such landmarks as these are the Perkins house in Colfax and the old Administration building on the Washington State University campus in Pullman. Because of the significant background of each of these buildings they have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.



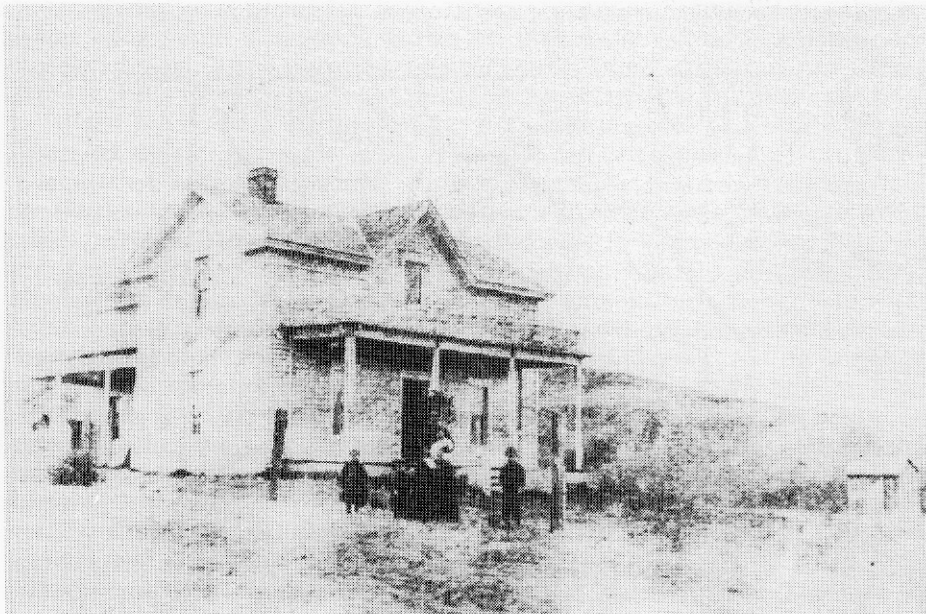
More recently the Collins' Stagecoach Way Station house, just off the highway to Lewiston near the Genesee cut-off, was nominated by the Washington State Commission on Historic Preservation for placement on the National Register; and the Spalding Cemetery overlooking the Snake River near Almota, was nominated for placement on the State Register.

The Whitman County Historical Society has made every effort to compile a list of county historic sites for consideration in such placements.

The following information on the Collins' house and the Spalding Cemetery by Douglas C. Moore, Washington State University history student, was prepared in support of the application for registration as an historic site.

## The Collins' Stagecoach Way Station

Michael Ruddy (sometimes misspelled "Reddy") built the main unit of the Ruddy-Collins House in 1870-71. In some way he may have included in the structure a combination inn and roadhouse which had been erected at or near this location in the late 1860's by W. A. Caldwell, pioneer northern Idaho cattleman of the Caldwell and Hall cattle ranch. The main unit, which is now the two-story front section of the house, consisted of two rooms on the ground floor and two more rooms above. Undistinguished in architectural style, the gable-roofed structure was built with square nails and rough, hand-sawn lumber from nearby trees. On the inside of a present downstairs closet where the old wall is exposed, one can see that each of the rough-hewn planks varies in width from one end to the other. It is not known when a more refined clapboard exterior (shown in photograph of the 1880's) was added. Some time after his



family joined him 1871, Ruddy built a ground floor addition of two rooms on the back of the house. Orville M. Collins purchased the property in 1884. In 1888 he constructed two more rooms on the rear to accommodate his growing family. Although general repairs and improvements have been made over the years, there have been no major alterations since this second addition was completed.

The Ruddy-Collins House is believed to be the oldest house still standing in Whitman County, and one of the oldest buildings in southeastern Washington, having been built in 1870-71. It is located just inside the Washington state line at the head of Hatwai Canyon. For several years the Ruddy home also served as a station for the stagecoaches of the Northwestern Stage Company on their way from Lewiston to Colfax, Spokane, and other points north. Travelers could obtain lodging and meals there, and mail was also left at the home to be called for by the settlers.

Orville M. Collins purchased the Ruddy property in 1884. A native of Iowa, Collins had crossed the northern plains to the Pacific Northwest as a young man of 21, driving horse and mule teams in a company of fortune seekers.

The house is still occupied as a farm home by a Collins grandson and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Collins, and barns and outbuildings are still in use. As a reminder of the days when it was a way station for stagecoaches and travelers, the 100-year-old structure overlooks busy U.S. Highway 95 where it comes up the "Lewiston Grade" from the Clearwater-Snake depression and forms a fork with U.S. Highway 195.

## The Spalding Cemetery

The Spalding Cemetery is situated on a hillside overlooking the former townsite of Almota, Washington, and a bend in the Snake River.

A barbed wire fence with gate surrounds the cemetery. The tombstones of the Spalding family are further enclosed by a wrought iron fence.

There are approximately ten markers still standing in the entire cemetery. The tombstone of Henry Hart Spalding is the largest, being over four feet tall. The tombstone of his second wife, Mary Catherine Warren Spalding, has a covered wagon carved on it. Mrs. Spalding came from Missouri to Washington Territory in this type of conveyance in 1865. The headstone of George F. Sampson is marked with a compass needle to signify his occupation as a steamboat pilot on the Snake River during the 19th century.



The grave of Henry Hart Spalding at Almota, Washington, marks the burial place of the first white American male born west of the Rocky Mountains. His parents, the Reverend Henry Harmon Spalding and Eliza Hart Spalding, had come overland from western New York in 1836 with Dr. Marcus Whitman and his wife, Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, to begin American Protestant mission work among the Indians of the interior Oregon country. Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spalding were the first American white women to cross the Rocky Mountains, and subsequently the first to cross the North American continent. After visiting Dr. John McLoughlin, chief factor of the British-owned Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Vancouver, the Whitmans established a mission among the Cayuse Indians at Waiilatpu (near present-day Walla Walla) and the Spaldings started the Lapwai mission in Nez Perce lands, ninety miles to the northeast near today's Lewiston, Idaho.

Henry Hart Spalding was born at Lapwai on November 24, 1839. His father did not seem to regard the birth as a great historical event. In his diary entry for that day he mentioned it, but he seemed just as interested that the day's worship service for the Indians was well attended and that he baptized six Nez Perce children.

In 1872 Henry Hart Spalding moved to Almota, Washington Territory, a promising port on the Snake River and adjoining the agriculturally rich Palouse country of eastern Washington. He acquired over 1200 acres of land in the Almota vicinity and also became the owner of a flour mill and a warehouse. He later converted the blacksmith shop he owned into a school. Spalding was one of the first persons to raise fruit on land bordering the Snake river at Almota, which became the center of extensive orchards. He became prominent in local Republican party politics and served as Almota's postmaster for twenty years, being first appointed in 1878.

Spalding died at Almota on March 22, 1898. His second wife died in 1941 and was buried in the Almota Cemetery alongside her husband. The graves of two of their children, Effie Edith and Harry, both of whom died in infancy, are also located in the family plot.



Apparently the last person to be buried in the cemetery was Henry Hart Spalding's second wife, who passed away in 1941.

#### —NOTICES—

If you have back issues that you aren't interested in keeping please send them to the Whitman County Historical Society. Some issues are now in short supply and we are getting frequent requests for back issues.

The publications committee is trying to locate all remaining log cabins in Whitman county. We have located cabins at Belmont and St. John, which are in excellent condition after restoration, the Perkins' cabin in Colfax, one at Palouse and one at Uniontown. Do you know of others?

## BOOM DAYS IN SHEEP (Continued from page 4)

as to the breed of dog he favored. Because sheep frighten easily, dogs have to be used selectively or sheep will lose weight from running. The devotion of sheep dogs to their herder is legendary. Archer Gilfillen, a South Dakota herder, tells of leaving for Christmas one year and taking his dog to ranch headquarters. His dog somehow "got the idea that I was in the wagon and decided to return to it. So for three days and three nights he lay in the snow beside the wagon tongue" even though the temperature was below zero.

Another form of canine, the coyote, was the herder's constant enemy, following the sheep from wintering grounds to summer pasture. On the McGregor winter range, if a group of sheep was lost or left out "You figure next morning, there would be half a dozen tore up." These reddish-gray predators, about the size of a collie, but with a tail like a fox and long pointed nose and ears, usually operated at night on the open winter rangeland. Emile Morod, 50 years a McGregor sheepman, recalled one occasion when a coyote had the nerve to strike in broad daylight a band of sheep he was watching. Emile "had a big band, 2400 and some . . . when I went around 'em here was a God damned coyote and he had one of 'em tore up and was eatin' his belly out." Coyotes worked with deadly precision in isolating and killing their ovine prey. Hi Davis describes one favorite method of the early morning hours.

The sheep were jammed together on account of the chill . . . the strays bored their way into the herd, which settled into drowsiness, with only one old ewe left moving around them at a worried sort of amble. She raised her gait to a jog, glanced down at her side, and then put on still more speed, like an old lady being pursued by a cheap pitchman in the street. As she circled the herd she drew further away from it . . . An old he-coyote was trotting beside her, his shoulder pressed against hers, holding a little back so she would keep trying to get ahead and rubbing her close so her shrinking from him would carry her out of range of the herd that she was working her best lick to get back to. He made no effort to hurry or hurt her, she was so close to (the) . . . guard-fire that he didn't dare to. If she had blatted or turned on him and started a rumpus, she would have been saved. But she was too scared to do anything but avoid him and try to outrun him. She trotted faster, and he let out another hitch of speed as if to remind her that he was still there. When they rounded the fire a second time, he had worked her a quarter of a mile away from it . . . The sheep and the coyote trotted their round solemnly, pressed close like a pair of small town lovers on Sunday afternoon . . . (The ewe finally stopped) and stood with her legs spraddled and her head dropped so it almost touched the ground, and the coyote stood watching and waiting for her to look up . . . As ceremonious as the preparation had been, the slaughter happened with no ceremony at all. The sheep lifted her head and the coyote trotted close and cut her throat with one swift open-fanged swipe.

Coyotes traveling in packs sometimes use another ploy. A few of the predators go to the far side of a band and commence a tremendous yelping to lure the sheep dogs in their direction. The remainder of the pack meanwhile cuts in from the other side and silently makes a kill. The yelping of the coyotes is a distinctive "series of sharp staccato barks, merging into a long and dying wail."

To guard against coyotes while on their winter range, the men corralled their sheep at night whenever possible. When sheep were on the range at lambing time, "we had scarecrows. We'd pack three or four scarecrows and a

lantern and before we'd leave them that night we lit up the lanterns and put the scarecrows up so the coyotes wouldn't get 'em that night." During spare time in the winter, herders would sometimes build rock piles atop steep hills for use as guideposts in the scabrock rangeland. At other times reservoirs would be built by damming up springs or by erecting earthen dams to catch winter runoff.

An important key to the success of a sheep raiser was one factor over which he had no control—weather. The scablands, approximately 1000 feet in elevation, had cold winter weather but seldom had deep snow cover for prolonged periods as did higher country to the east. Phil Cox, a neighbor of McGregors and a pioneer sheep raiser, did not return his sheep to the winter ranges of western Whitman county in the winter of 1906-1907, but wintered them in eastern Montana. He found the winter "unusually severe" and lost one-third to one-half of his stock due to the weather. McGregor brothers again used the scablands in the winter and had less difficulty.

Winter weather was not always so benevolent for sheepmen. Large amounts of feed were sometimes required. The winter of 1915-1916 was "very severe" and K. O. Kohler of Ellensburg reported to the **National Wool Grower** that the weather was the "hardest . . . on stock in the Northwest that I have seen in 28 years" with a blanket of two feet of snow covering the Columbia Basin much of the time. Most of the state's sheepmen used alfalfa hay for a major portion of the roughage of the sheep's ration. The amount of hay used varied markedly with the severity of the weather.

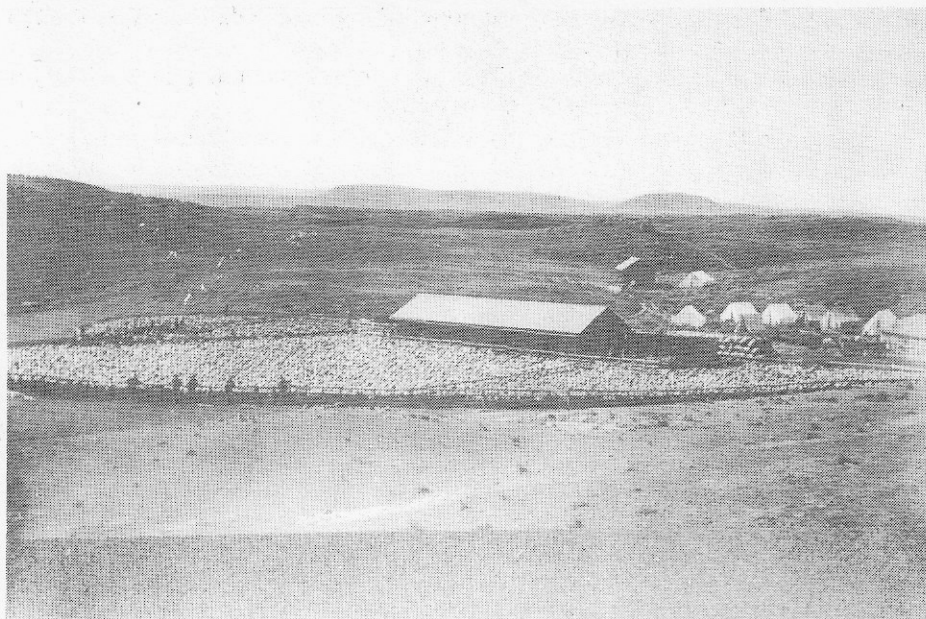
Springtime was the most hectic season for sheepmen throughout the West. Sheep used to dry feed were difficult to control when green grass began to shoot up, for they would move from place to place, certain that forage would be even more abundant over the next hill. Herders sometimes found the pastoral life less than idyllic.

Sheep sometimes would do totally unpredictable things as in 1904 when a band of Jacob Harder's sheep was grazing near Washtucna (Kahlotus) Lake "and for some reason became excited and a few of the leaders jumped over a cliff. The French shepherd, Pierre Rambeau, tried to stop the sheep from following the leaders, but before he could succeed over 2000 sheep had jumped over the cliff" to their deaths on the rocks below.

Life of sheepmen on the McGregor ranch became especially hectic during a period of several weeks beginning between March 10 and 20, namely lambing season. Lambing began for sheep bred to black face rams about the tenth, and for white faces about a week later. About 3500 lambs would be born at Pete's and John's camps during the first week of lambing. Lambing crews throughout the West put in their own sort of eight hour day—"eight hours before dinner and eight hours after."

This has one single advantage. It gives the herder time mentally to reshape his future life, so that he will never under any circumstances herd through another spring.

Sheep find numerous ways to die, especially during lambing. Ewes are a rarity in the animal kingdom in their dislike for family matters. Besides not knowing her lamb from the others by sight, the ewe will often refuse to suckle the newly born lamb. Unless rescued by an alert sheepman, the lamb will die. Two sorts of employees are required—herders and "drop pickers" (sometimes called lambers or wranglers). Herders held the "drop" band, sorting out new arrivals and seeing that each is "mothered up." If a lamb was not claimed, the drop pickers' job was to catch the mother and the lamb, place them in a small pen or tent just big enough for the two, and allow the two to get used to each other. Each lambing camp also had a cook. She had the responsibility of



**Six thousand McGregor sheep in a corral near Archie's Camp. Tents were for the sheep-shearing crew. Note wool sacks to the right of the long shed. Location is three miles south of Hooper.**

**Photo courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Darrah, Calgary, Alberta**

slaughtering and butchering the livestock and making food for 15 or more men and received \$1 per day for her efforts.

The McGregor Company had several lambing camps, three major ones and several of a smaller nature. On the first day of lambing, the drop band was moved into the freshly plowed, enclosed corral. At daylight, herders and drop-pickers sorted out the newly born lambs and their mothers, and made sure the sheep were faring all right. At night, the sheep were brought to a fenced area around the camp sheds. Any lambs born at night were sorted out by the "night picker" and taken with their mothers into a long shed where mother and offspring were isolated in small pens. Lambs born in the day were not taken into the sheds, but remained on the range.

Keeping the parent and offspring in such a small group was important, because the ewe initially knows her lamb only by smell, not by sound, and will search for it by smelling every lamb she sees until she gets tired of looking. The next morning, the one-day-old lambs and their mothers were taken in groups of 20-50 to a source of water at Donald's Well and thence to Clear Lake, where Maurice Vasher superintended their care, and where they were watered and fed hay. The drop picker then returned to Wildcat Lake and assisted his fellow workers in further lambing operations. The lambs and ewes were put into larger and larger groups every day until the ewe could recognize the bleat of its offspring. Once that occurred, ewe and lamb could pick each other out of 2000 other sheep. "Bummer" lambs, those with a mother that could not produce milk or would not claim her offspring, were sometimes given to ewes whose lambs were still born. Because such a ewe would not claim a strange lamb, the skin of the dead lamb was removed and tied to the one to be adopted. "Getting a whiff

of familiar hide usually works, if not some of her own milk is squirted on the lamb, whereupon the ewe thinks it is her very own."

Shed lambing, the use of long rows of sheltered lambing pens of varying sizes, was instituted between 1915 and 1920.

Despite a 1902 report stating that returns of over 100% lambs marketed to ewes on hand was seldom possible, in the state of Washington such figures were commonplace during the years 1905-1920. On the McGregor ranch figures as high as 140% lambs/ewes might be recorded at lambing, and in a good year lambs sold might equal 130% of the ewes on hand. The usual percentage of lambs marketed/ewes was 115%.

Shearing was another busy time on Western sheep ranches. Migratory crews of shearers began early in the spring in the Southwest, and moved northward as the season progressed. A spirited competition emerged between these migratory shearers who used hand clippers and local men "most of them greenhorns at handling animals" who used machine clippers. "The well-organized Mexican hand shearers of California, dominated by their "capitans" resented the competition." During most of the period 1905-1920, McGregors had their sheep shorn by a crew of Mexicans headed by Joe Lopez of San Francisco and including 16 or 17 shearers. The shearers were a capable crew but McGregor men who challenged them at cards lived to regret doing so. In addition to those doing the shearing two men were required to herd sheep into the shearing pens. A "wool stamper" was also necessary to load the sacks and fill them with as many fleeces as possible.

Shearing was backbreaking work, and pay for such crews reflected the difficulty of the endeavor. In the early years of the 1900's pay throughout the West was fairly uniform—nine cents per head of sheep sheared. A similar price prevailed on the McGregor ranch until 1915. One top wage earner in two weeks of shearing at Hooper clipped 1003 sheep and was paid \$90.25 for his efforts. In 1915 the McGregor Land and Livestock Company raised pay to 15c per sheep. Four years later the Sheep Shearers Union had devised a sliding scale of pay: 12c when the price of wool was less than 35c a pound, 15c when it was 35-50c, and 20c if above that price. Because an expert shearer could clip over 100 sheep in a day, pay was enough to provide a good salary.

The **National Wool Grower** reported in 1915 that "There can be no doubt that it is desirable to use machine shears whenever the climate will permit it." The McGregor brothers decided to give the machines a try in the 1911 season. A visitor reported: Eleven thousand sheep are now being sheared at the ranch of the McGregor Land and Livestock Company by power, a horse clipper operated by a three horsepower gasoline engine being used . . . The man who owns the gasoline engine and machinery, H. Hill of Klickitat, Wash., gets 12 cents a head and the men who run the clippers get 9 cents a head . . . 1000 head for six men is counted a good day's work.

The close shearing of sheep by the machine method had a severe drawback—for a few days after being clipped the naked sheep would be defenseless if cold weather struck. After the McGregors machine sheared, inhospitable weather occurred and the shorn sheep were unable to endure the cold temperatures. In an effort to get the sheep out of the cold the McGregors put up big circus tents and "everybody in town (went) with teams and wagons . . . bringing them and puttin' them in the tents, and they all die." Four hundred old ewes were killed by the cold.

(Concluded in Summer Issue)