

Bunchgrass Historian



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- **The Monument at the Steptoe Battlefield**
 - **Pullman CCC Camp**
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Whitman County Historical Society

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Whitman County Historical Society

P.O. Box 67, Colfax, WA 99111

e-mail: epgjr@wsu.edu

www.wsu.edu/~sarek/wchs.html

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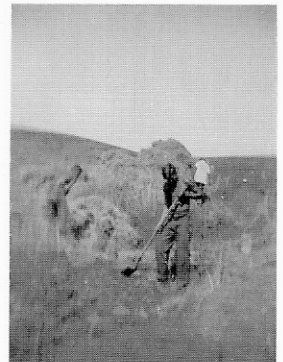
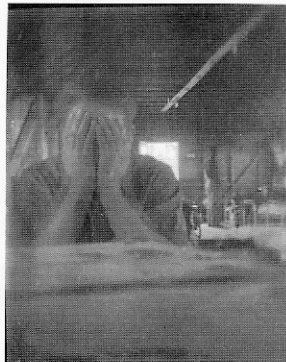
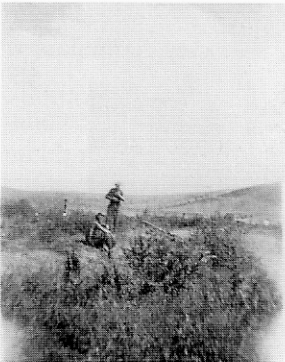
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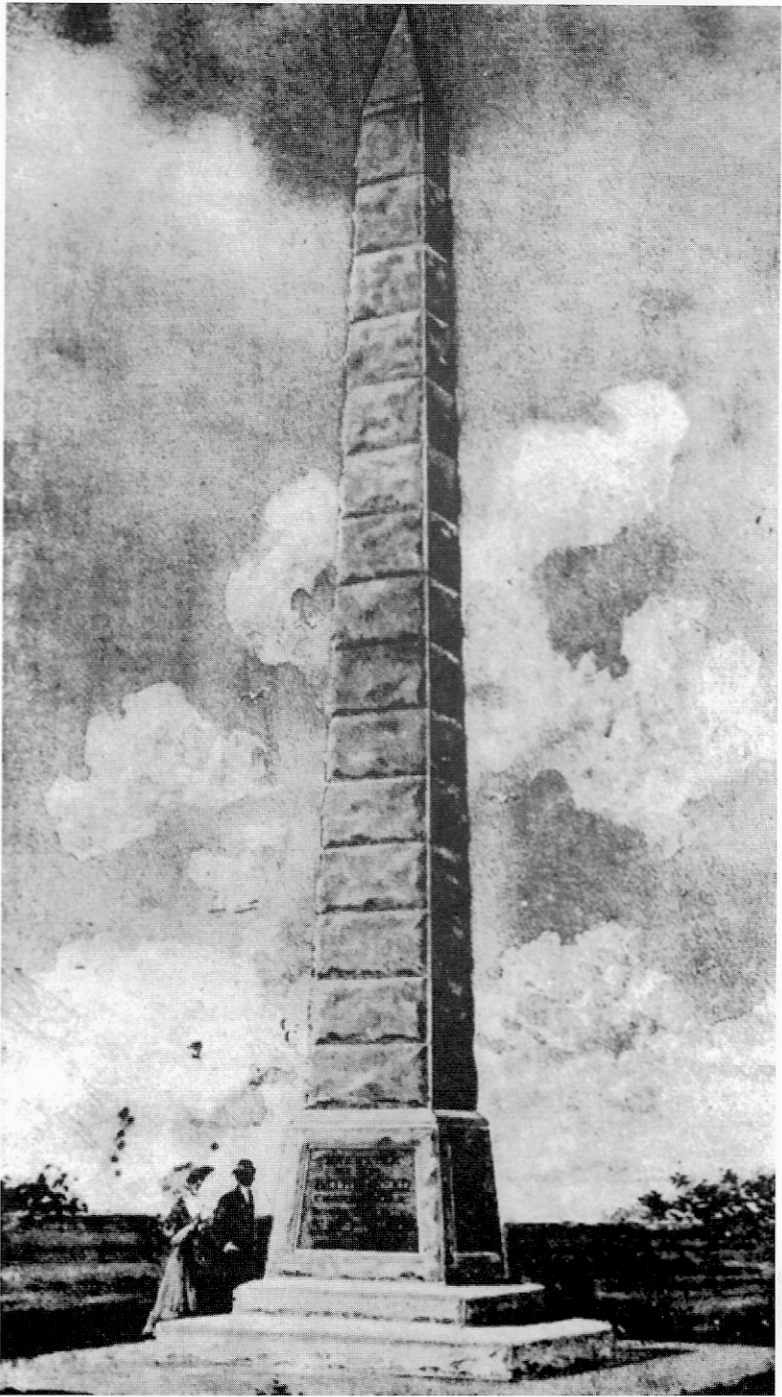
THE AUTHORS

Brenda K. Jackson received her Ph.D. in 2002 from WSU. She has taught at WSU, University of Idaho, and Gonzaga University. This fall, she will become an Assistant Professor at Belmont University, Nashville, TN. This article is drawn from her dissertation “Finding Solace After the Storm: Thomas and Elizabeth Tannatt and the Post-Civil War Inland Empire.” Brenda’s research interest continues to focus on Pacific Northwest history.

Don Clarke is a local historian familiar to our readers. Referring to the article, he says he expresses his thanks to Bud Siple for telling him about the Pullman Camp. He had been unaware there was a camp here. The article is based upon interviews with Bud in April 2002 and research in the Pullman Herald and in Don’s extensive collection of books on the Pacific Northwest.

With the exception of the Bud Siple photo on page 22, all the CCC photos in this issue, and the information on George Matson, are courtesy of the Dorothy Sevier Matson Collection, WCHS.





Original 1907 design for a proposed forty-five foot high Memorial Monument

“A LABOR OF LOVE, PATRIOTISM AND COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERISM: THE MONUMENT AT THE STEPTOE BATTLEFIELD”

Brenda K. Jackson, Ph.D.
Washington State University

On June 14, 1914, “Flag Day,” a crowd of more than five thousand gathered in Rosalia, an eastern Washington farming town, located approximately thirty miles south of Spokane. Many had traveled by train from Spokane, while others journeyed from farming communities across the Inland Empire. They assembled on that summer day to witness the unveiling of a monument commemorating the heroes of an 1858 battle between the U.S. Army and Indians of the region. The event is particularly significant as the monument was the first placed in the area, and its unveiling represented the culmination of more than a decade of diligence and perseverance by individuals and organizations across the Inland Empire; among them the Spokane chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and Thomas and Elizabeth Tannatt.

Community volunteerism, vital to the accomplishment of a feat such as that celebrated in Rosalia in 1914, spread through the American middle class during the later decades of the nineteenth century. Through newly-established organizations such as the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, and the Daughters of the American Revolution, Americans actively participated in, what historian Michael Kammen has referred to as, “an age of memory and ancestor worship by design and by desire.”¹ Through the efforts of these organizations and others like them, benevolent societies, reform movements, and commemorative efforts became an important aspect of American culture. On the eastern Washington frontier, members of the nineteenth-century middle class were often new arrivals, and used associations and community volunteerism to both shape their corner of the West, and to create their place in it.

Historian Don Harrison Doyle has suggested that the establishment of late nineteenth-early twentieth century volunteer associations in a frontier region did much more than provide a means of interaction between families and their new homes and communities. For women in particular, Doyle asserts that the periodic business meetings “offered what must have been a very welcome relief from the confinement of the family circle.” At the same time, he insists that these organizations “supplemented the extended kinship networks that supported the nuclear family and its members during a period of extraordinary mobility and change.”² This

idea of “mobility and change” defined the Inland Empire in the first decades of the twentieth century for Spokane had boomed from a small frontier settlement of just 350 individuals in 1880, to an established western town in 1910, with a population in excess of 100,000 people.³ Thus, with its large population of recent arrivals, each seeking to establish and distinguish both themselves and the region, the Inland Empire provided the stage for widespread community volunteerism.

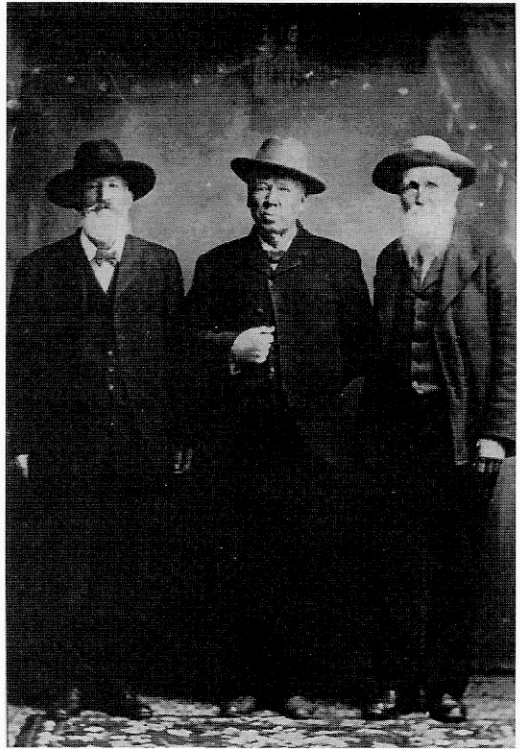
Spearheading this volunteerism in eastern Washington were The Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) The organization came early to the Inland Empire, and just ten years after the founding of its first chapter in Washington, D.C., Elizabeth Tannatt numbered among the “circle of enthusiastic patriotic women” who gathered on June 14, 1900, an earlier Flag Day, to establish Spokane’s Esther Reed Chapter.⁴ Two years later, in June of 1902 and in her capacity as Chapter Historian, Elizabeth inspired the patriotic fervor of the membership with an annual report based on the importance of the preservation of local history. “We are within 40 miles of the spot where Captain Taylor and Lieutenant Gaston, U.S.A., fell in May, 1858, in the first serious conflict in eastern Washington between the Indians and the troops of our government,” she informed those assembled. She further reminded them “the city of Spokane and surroundings is historic ground, rich in incidents that should not be allowed to escape the pen of some historian.”⁵ This determination to commemorate a minor skirmish on the Eastern Washington frontier was part of the “contagion,” so-named by Michael Kammen, that swept through the decades 1870 to 1910 and created almost a frenzy of memorialization, culminating in the erection of monuments dedicated to the nation’s heroes and their achievements.⁶ In younger regions, such as the Inland Empire, where great heroes and their deeds were relatively few, organizations intent on memorialization might embellish the significance and lasting importance of local events. This in no way detracted from their efforts, however, for through the earnest patriotism exemplified by these individuals, and their determination to commemorate their regions’ pasts, they laid the cornerstones for community involvement, activism, and celebration.

To those who knew her well, Elizabeth Tannatt’s enthusiastic report on the battle, and her insistence that its memory be preserved and commemorated, came as no surprise. Elizabeth Tappan Tannatt had been a patriot since her birth in 1838 in Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts, and she counted veterans of all of America’s wars among her relations. Her grandfather, Ebenezer Tappan, fought with George Washington’s Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War; her father, Colonel Eben Tappan, was a veteran of the War of 1812; her husband, General Thomas R. Tannatt, served with the Union forces in the American Civil War; and her son, Eben Tappan Tannatt, a member of the army’s engineering corps, was stationed in the Hawaiian Islands during the Spanish-American War.⁷ The commemoration of the Steptoe Battle became a personal endeavor for Thomas Tannatt as well. As a West Point graduate, he assumed the obligation of properly preserving

the memories and deeds of fellow alumni Edward J. Steptoe, O.H.P. Taylor and William Gaston.

The publication of Elizabeth's 1902 report in a local Spokane newspaper generated community interest in historic preservation and firmly established both Thomas and Elizabeth as active players in the project. Thomas and Elizabeth Tannatt had first arrived in the Inland Empire in 1880 as the result of Thomas' employment with Henry Villard and the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company. They soon developed a fondness for the region and this, coupled with their unflagging patriotism, served as the driving force behind the Steptoe monument campaign.⁸

Progress was slow but steady, and in 1903, in her capacity as State Vice-Regent of the Washington D.A.R., Elizabeth wrote to State Regent Blanche Burnett Parker of the Chapter's historic preservation plan, as well as early community response to their efforts. "This action aroused considerable interest and called forth favorable editorials from leading newspapers," she reported. "Early residents have been requested to write descriptive papers - thus preserving information of incalculable value which in a few years will be unattainable."⁹ By the mid-nineteenth century, American women had greatly increased their involvement in historic preservation and memorialization projects. The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, established in 1856, and the Ladies' Hermitage Association, founded in 1889, are but two of the numerous women's groups that dedicated their time and energies to preserving the past. These women, according to historian Karal Ann Marling, were "the primary custodians of the American heritage in its tangible manifestations, the keepers of the flame that burned upon the ancient hearth of the colonial past."¹⁰ Elizabeth wholeheartedly embraced the notion of women as the appropriate keepers of the past, and in her letter to Blanche Parker further remarked that "research work is adapted to women, they are quick to perceive, persevering, eager to do justice, have the natural 'historical sense' and



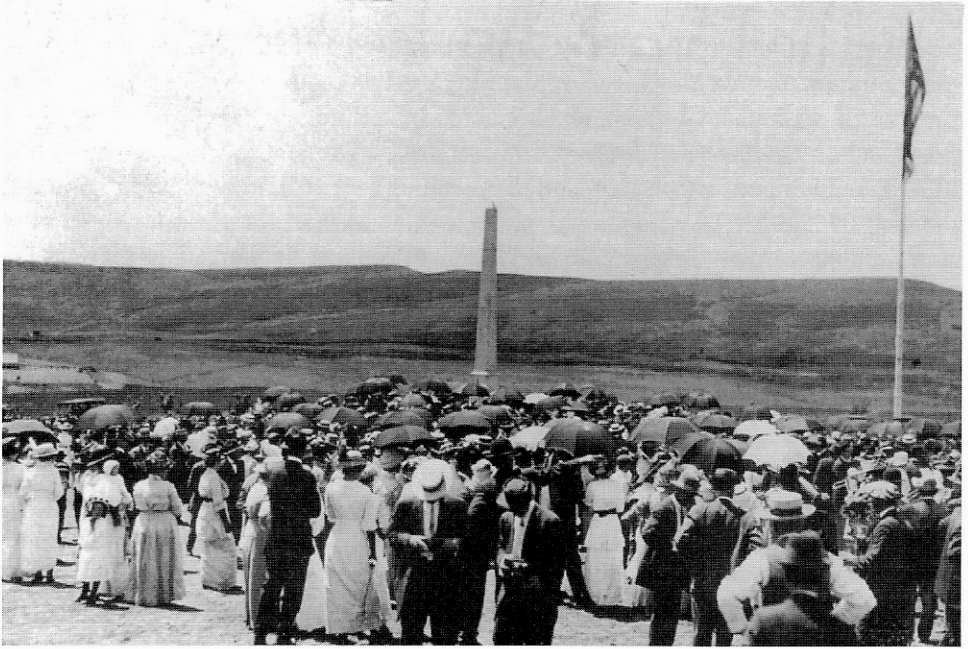
J. J. Rohn, Michael Kenny, and Thomas J. Beall, left to right, were the three survivors of the Steptoe Battle who attended the dedication of the completed Monument on June 14, 1914. These three had also come to Rosalia on May 17, 1907 to advise the DAR chapter members on the exact site of the most intense fighting and thus the appropriate spot for the Monument.

are active in educational work.”¹¹ As the collection of memorabilia continued, the battle that had inspired Elizabeth’s report remained a constant source of discussion and consideration, and by 1904 the Esther Reed Chapter had determined that the placement of a marker commemorating the event would be its first official act of community memorialization.

On the morning of May 6, 1858, Colonel Edward J. Steptoe had mustered his command for a march that took them north of their headquarters at Fort Walla Walla, Washington Territory, with orders to investigate the murders of two miners, killed while traveling in the area of present-day Colfax, Washington. Chiefs Kamiakin of the Yakima and Tilcoax of the lower Snake stood accused of these crimes, though both insisted that the guilt rested with two Palouse Indians. Tensions between the region’s Indians, white settlers and miners, and the army became more pronounced in the years following the great Walla Walla Treaty Council of 1855, as the Indians realized that treaties did not protect their lands, but instead caused much of it to be surrendered to white encroachment. The Colfax killings prompted perhaps undue interest and military action, as they followed on the heels of other homicides and an attack on a herd of Fort Walla Walla horses, also attributed to Tilcoax and the lower Snake.¹² Though charged with the task of bringing such episodes to a halt, Steptoe clearly did not anticipate serious trouble during the march, and assembled a small force of just 150 lightly-armed men.

The soldiers traveled in the company of their cadre of Indian scouts, and the Nez Perce leader, Timothy, a sworn enemy of Tilcoax, and fourteen of his warriors probably had some intelligence on the band of hostile Indians gathering north of Fort Walla Walla. On May 16, ten days into the march, and as they approached the area of present-day Rosalia, Steptoe’s command encountered this complement of mounted and armed Indians; Palouse, Coeur d’Alene, Columbia, Spokane, and Yakima among them. Estimates range from six hundred to fifteen hundred individuals assembled, though a first-hand account by one of Steptoe’s men suggests that six hundred is a better approximation.¹³ Steptoe engaged the leaders in conversation and assured them that he did not intend to engage in battle. They acknowledged his declaration, but denied the troop passage or continuation of their march. Aware of the obvious numerical disadvantage, Steptoe agreed that, at first light, he would reverse his course and march south, in the direction of Fort Walla Walla.

The dawn brought confusion for all involved, for as the soldiers prepared for their homeward trek they realized that the Indians had not dispersed during the night. An ensuing conflict among the assembled Coeur d’Alene resulted in their firing upon Steptoe’s men, who quickly sought cover. With tempers on all sides running high, the skirmish soon became a full-fledged battle that continued throughout the day, and delivered casualties to both sides. Steptoe lost two officers, Captain O.H.P. Taylor and Lt. William Gaston, five enlisted men, and three Nez Perce scouts. The number of Indian casualties remains unknown, but first-hand accounts provide



Governor Ernest Lister and Mae D. Taylor, daughter of Cap't Taylor, dedicate the Steptoe Monument on June 14, 1914, before a large crowd. "A touching feature of the unveiling and one that was entirely unexpected was the placing on the monument by Colonel Maury Nichols of the Fourteenth infantry of an immense wreath of flowers in the national colors, the tribute of the officers of the fort to the memory of the men who fell in the Steptoe expedition. The regimental band struck up "The Red, White and Blue" and the regiment "presented arms" while the crowd cheered as the floral offering was carried up the mound by the colonel." Spokesman-Review, June 16, 1914, page 3.

the most reliable estimate and report at least fourteen dead and forty wounded.¹⁴

As darkness fell on May 17, 1858, the soldiers found themselves isolated on a small hilltop and surrounded by Indians. Their ammunition all but spent, hopes of escape began to wane. Steptoe realized that if any members of his troop were to survive, they would have to use darkness as cover and make a dash for the Snake River, more than seventy miles away. According to Thomas J. Beall, one of the longest surviving members of the battle, credit for the escape rests with Timothy. Beall recalled that when the situation seemed the bleakest, Timothy "volunteered to go out and see if there might not be some gap in the ring which the Indians had drawn around us."¹⁵ The plan succeeded, and at the Snake River members of the Nez Perce met Steptoe's troop and assisted them in the crossing. Within a matter of days, the tired and bedraggled soldiers arrived at the safe confines of Fort Walla Walla.

The fact that the soldiers had run away from the Indians, in the dark and lead by their Indian scouts, did not dampen the resolve of the D.A.R. and others to commemorate the event. Research, planning, and preparation for the placement of a memorial took several years, and consumed the time and attention of countless individuals, including F.J. Wilmer, prominent Rosalia resident and businessman since 1888.¹⁶ Wilmer actively participated in the monument process from the beginning, and in 1902 and 1903 corresponded with J.J. Rohn of Walla Walla, who had served with the detachment sent by Colonel George Wright in September of 1858 to recover the remains of the fallen soldiers. "I remember well how the country looked," Rohn wrote, "Steptoos comand came in from the North . . . and crossed pine creek (not far from where Rosalia Now stands) and on the South side of the Creek the fight comenced it was what a old soldier would call a retreat under a rear gaurd fire."¹⁷ Rohn went on to describe the recovery detail and the return of remains to Fort Walla Walla. Aware that the passage of time might have affected his memory, Rohn took care to corroborate his story with another of the battle's survivors, Michael J. Kenny, also of Walla Walla. "Kinny agreed in all I have writen," he assured Wilmer, "he was with the Captain [O.H.P. Taylor] . . . when he was shot." Rohn closed by expressing his desire to meet with Wilmer, for "could tell you more in half hour than write in a week."¹⁸ Though it would take a number of years to coordinate and bring to fruition, in 1907, J.J. Rohn realized his wish for a return to the battle field, and the opportunity to talk at length about his experiences.

The discovery of survivors of the Steptoe battle was quite a stroke of luck for the monument organizers, and on May 17, 1907, Thomas and Elizabeth Tannatt, with several other members of the Esther Reed Chapter, traveled to Rosalia to meet the three survivors of the Inland Empire Indian Campaign, Rohn, Kenny and Beall, and members of the Rosalia organizing contingent. Each of the survivors walked the battle site and, by day's end, agreed on the location of the most intense fighting, and selected it as the site for placement of the memorial.¹⁹

Battle site identified, the organizers began the process of its acquisition. By this time, a number of associations and citizens' groups had become affiliated with the Steptoe project, among the most energetic, the citizens of Rosalia. This group embarked upon the campaign to raise funds for the acquisition of the battle site and, in their zealoussness, collected twice the amount necessary to purchase the three-acre plot.²⁰ The townspeople presented the land to the Esther Reed Chapter, the deed to be held in perpetuity by the Whitman County commissioners.²¹ Land secured, the next order of business called for the finalization of construction and placement plans. As originally designed, the monument measured forty-five feet in height, at a cost of ten thousand dollars. Certain that their project would generate widespread interest, the organizing committee hoped to collect these funds, in equal parts, from the state and federal governments.

At the Sixth Annual Session meeting of the Esther Reed Chapter, held June

4, 1907, Elizabeth Tannatt presented a lengthy paper on the Steptoe battle, wherein she lauded its heroic participants and their deeds. The purpose of this report was twofold: first, it served to justify, and support with historical evidence, the monetary requests to be made of state and federal entities; and second, it sought to generate enthusiasm for the legislative battles these efforts would certainly require. "During all these years, since the members of the Steptoe Expedition were delivered from peril and fed by the Nez Perces of Alpoma no recompense has ever been made by the War Department or any other Bureau of the Government," she wrote. To emphasize the importance of the project at hand, she reminded those gathered that "these matters, often referred to in our daily newspapers, will be lost to History unless some Association assumes the work of record."²² Elizabeth intended the D.A.R. to be that "Association," and both the soldiers and their Nez Perce allies the recipients of the long overdue "recompense."

The success of the project depended on wide-spread interest, and in order to raise public consciousness, the organizing committee planned an official dedication ceremony for June 14, 1907, with the erection and solemnization of the monument the following year, on May 17, 1908, the fiftieth anniversary of the battle. The community responded quite well to the 1907 dedication and newspaper accounts report that "nearly 60 visitors from Spokane and many citizens of Rosalia"²³ took part in the festivities. Thomas and Elizabeth Tannatt attended the celebration and Elizabeth recorded the day's events in her journal. "Flag Day," she printed above the date, "Dr. M. T. & self at 9:35 left for Rosalia on Inland R.R. car decorated with flag." Though Elizabeth failed to mention other members of the party by name, it is certain that the railroad car adorned with a flag carried a number of D.A.R. members and others involved in the monument project. "People in Rosalia took us to view battle-ground guided by the 3 survivors of Steptoe Expedition," Elizabeth's entry continued, "Lunch in Pythias Hall . . . speaking of the events of 50 yrs ago (next May 17) by old survivors with 5 min. speech by T.R.T."²⁴

The organizers felt confident they would meet their target date for completion of the project, and in her June 18, 1907 journal entry, Elizabeth revealed Thomas' active pursuit of the sought-after government funding. "T went to City Council meeting," she noted, and "Mr. A. wants to help toward the Rosalia monument fund."²⁵ Despite the best efforts of all involved, however, it became clear that the monument could not be funded and erected in less than a year. Determined to keep interest in the project high, the organizers planned a larger and much more elaborate ceremony than that held the previous May. On June 15, 1908, "fully 1200 people gathered . . . to do honor to his [Col Steptoe's] memory by the dedication of a site for a monument commemorating his deeds"²⁶ the Spokesman-Review reported. This time, the Rosalia festivities were attended by "the chief executive of the state, many men and women prominent in state and county, two hundred soldiers with their officers from Fort George Wright, and many D.A.R. officials and members uniting to render homage

to the memory of those who bravely gave their all - their lives - when duty called.”²⁷ Thomas Tannatt, as a former U.S. Army officer, numbered among those selected to address the assemblage. He spoke eloquently on the lives and military careers of Captain Taylor and Lieutenant Gaston, and commended the members of the D.A.R. for their dedication to the Steptoe Monument project.²⁸

While Inland Empire inhabitants responded enthusiastically to the committee’s plan, the same could not be said for the federal government. During the First Session of the 60th Congress of the United States, held between December 2, 1907 and May 30, 1908, Representative Wesley Jones of Washington introduced H.R. 21350, “to appropriate the sum of \$5,000 as a part contribution toward the erection of a monument on Steptoe Battlefield, Whitman County, Washington,” to the United States House of Representatives. The House referred the bill to the Committee on the Library, where it died without consideration.²⁹ As H.R. 21350 died, so did the hopes for federal funding and federal recognition of the importance and validity of the Steptoe monument project. This unconditional rejection of their funding request came as quite a blow to the monument organizers. They, of course, had no way of knowing that during the early decades of the twentieth century the United States Congress was inundated with requests for federal monies for monuments and other forms of civic memorialization. The first Session of the Sixtieth Congress alone received more than fifty such requests and, therefore, it is not surprising that one from the Eastern Washington frontier received no consideration.³⁰

By 1909, with no federal funds forthcoming, the organizing committee made the difficult decision to decrease the size and scope of the monument. By reducing the height of the spire from the proposed forty-five feet to twenty-five feet, the cost could be halved, to five thousand dollars. With this information in hand, the organizers shifted the focus of their fund-raising efforts to the Washington State Legislature, and Thomas Tannatt played a significant role in attempting to garner support from local members of that governing body. “‘Flag Day’ as date of dedication” began his letter to legislators and other potential benefactors, “the monument in its accepted design will cost \$5000.” Thomas went on to assure these individuals that the solicited funds were designated solely for the purchase of the monument, and that the Esther Reed Chapter had agreed to perform and pay for the road work, parking facilities, and fencing, at an estimated cost of one thousand dollars. In closing, Thomas appealed to the civic and patriotic heartstrings of each letter recipient by reminding them that “your personal influence in obtaining the above cited and needed legislation is most earnestly and respectfully solicited.”³¹

Thomas Tannatt’s involvement with the project extended beyond legislative fund-raising, and in January of 1909, while in Spokane on business, he wrote Elizabeth at their home in Farmington, Washington. “I think I will stop off at Rosalia over one train on Friday,” he wrote. “My object is to meet the Rosalia Committee, report what is decided upon, and have them follow it up with legislation. . . . After I get

wires all in operation, I shall ask Mrs. Phelps to relieve me as my time must be spent here [in Spokane] and with all I can do.³² Just weeks later, on February 12, 1909, Thomas wrote Elizabeth again, and advised her that he had “sent out 25 of the D.A.R. folders to surviving members of Col Steptoes [sic] class (7) and to those of Taylor & Gastons classes.”³³

Thomas’ military background, and his dedication to order and organization, caused him to become frustrated with the periodic episodes of disorder demonstrated by the committee organizers, and he revealed the same to Elizabeth. “Mr. Bryan of Pullman did not know he was on the committee,” Thomas wrote. “Gave him papers & he promised to work. No formal notice of appointment seems to have been sent members of committees.”³⁴ This particular lack of communication proved especially embarrassing to Thomas. From 1893 to 1901 he had served as a member of the Board of Regents for the newly-established Washington Agricultural College and School of Science located in Pullman, Washington and among the first items of business undertaken by that Board was the appointment of Enoch A. Bryan as the College’s President. Thomas personally asked Bryan to donate his time to the Steptoe monument project, and the failure of the committee to provide Bryan with necessary information and instructions caused Thomas a great deal of consternation.³⁵

The matter of the interment of the soldiers who fell during the Steptoe battle weighed heavily on Thomas’ and Elizabeth’s minds as they worked toward procurement and placement of the monument. In his official report of the battle, Steptoe recorded that once he made the decision to retreat from the hilltop, “I concluded to abandon everything that might impede our march. Accordingly I set out about 10 o’clock in perfectly good order, leaving the disabled animals and such as were not in condition to travel, and with deep pain I have to add, the two howitzers.”³⁶ Though they seem to have escaped mention in this official report, he also left behind the remains of the fallen soldiers, and in September of 1858 a detachment returned to the battlefield to begin the process of recovery. “We came upon the bones of many of our men that had lain bleaching on the prairie hills for four months,” reported the officer in command who noted that they were “scattered and dragged, in every direction by the bands of wolves that had infested the place.”³⁷ The recovery detail returned the remains to Fort Walla Walla, where they were buried in the post cemetery. Later accounts, however, reported that Taylor’s and Gaston’s remains had been re-interred in plots at the cemetery at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. The vagueness and lack of specific detail contained in these reports, and the resultant uncertainty of the final resting places of his West Point colleagues particularly concerned Thomas, and he and Elizabeth returned to the east coast for the first time in almost thirty years to conduct their own search for the two graves. Elizabeth kept careful records of the journey, and recorded that at the West Point cemetery she and Thomas took separate paths as they walked among the graves, each carefully perusing the headstones of the many soldiers buried there.

After searching for some time, Thomas called out, "Come, I have found Capt. Taylor's and Gaston's graves." Elizabeth approached and saw the tombstone to which Thomas referred, "a modest but pretty monument bearing Lt. Gaston's name." As final verification that the stone indicated Gaston's place of burial, and did not serve simply as a memorial, the Tannatts consulted with the cemetery superintendent, Albert Rhodes, who confirmed once and for all that the remains of O.H.P. Taylor and William Gaston lay beneath the West Point stones.³⁸

The West Point trip, and verification of Taylor's and Gaston's final resting places, proved to be the Tannatts' last active participation in the Steptoe monument project, for shortly after their return to Washington, Thomas' health began to fail. They remained interested and informed, however, and in a copy of letter dated May 11, 1914, tucked carefully into her journal and addressed to Captain Braden at West Point, Elizabeth wrote, "the meeting is now in session to arrange for the moving of the Memorial Monument this week, to be erected on the battle-field of To-kots-nimme, near Rosalia, by our Chapter. This we have worked to accomplish since 1902. The unveiling will be on June 14th (D.V.) 1914."³⁹

The monument project proceeded without the Tannatts from 1909 to 1914 and, despite the fact that the Washington State Legislature failed on three separate occasions to allocate funds for the monument, private fund-raising efforts succeeded in collecting the necessary amount. In a draft of the paper Elizabeth had presented to the Esther Reed Chapter in June of 1907, she wrote, and then crossed-out, "the Chapter hopes to inaugurate a movement which will result in the erection of a monument or large boulder with tablet, on the site of this Battle field."⁴⁰ Had she and the other members of the organizing committee known that no government agency would allocate funds for the project, they may well have promoted the idea of the large boulder over that of the costly monument.

Finally, on June 14, 1914, the dedication ceremony for the monument at the Steptoe battlefield took place. General Thomas Tannatt had died on December 21, 1913, and did not live to see the realization of the project for which he had worked so hard. Elizabeth Tappan Tannatt, by this time 77 years of age, was not strong enough to make the trip to Rosalia, or perhaps did not want to make the trip without Thomas. Beall, Kenny and Rohn, the three surviving veterans, attended the Rosalia dedication, as did Washington's Governor, Ernest Lister, who addressed those assembled. A unit of four hundred uniformed soldiers from Spokane's Fort George Wright was on hand, and an estimated five thousand spectators crowded the streets of the small eastern Washington town to enjoy the festivities, and witness the product of twelve years of hard work.⁴¹

At the appointed hour, Mae D. Taylor Clark, daughter of Captain O.H.P. Taylor, unveiled the monument and revealed this inscription, a portion of which is etched into each of the spire's four sides:

Sacred to the memory of Officers and Soldiers of the United States Army who lost their lives in desperate conflict with the Indians in the Battle of Te-hots-nim-me, May 17, 1858. In memory of Chief Tam-mu-tsa (Timothy) and the Christian Nez Perce Indians - rescuers of the Steptoe expedition. Erected by the Esther Reed Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, Spokane, Washington, June 14th, 1914.”⁴²

Though neither of the Tannatts was present at the dedication, they certainly were not forgotten. The Reverend Alfred Lockwood, Washington State President of the Sons of the American Revolution, paid tribute to Thomas’ memory, and Netta Phelps, chairman of the monument project and speaking on behalf of the Esther Reed Chapter, D.A.R., gave a great deal of credit for the monument to Thomas and Elizabeth. “Having its first suggestion from the loyal heart of a patriot who has recently been called to the higher life, and by his wife, the chapter’s much loved historian, . . . has this work come,”⁴³ her address read.

Placement in the early twentieth century of this Inland Empire monument represents much more than the commemoration of an 1858 battle between soldiers and Indians. At the dawning of the twentieth century, when the need to chronicle America’s past was strong, residents of the young region sought to create a history for themselves reminiscent of that found in other parts of the country. For Thomas and Elizabeth Tannatt, in whose lives the U. S. Army had played a major role, this “created history” was easily realized through the recognition of a military conflict, and they garnered support from the people, organizations, and communities of eastern Washington to bring the project to completion. The monument at the Steptoe Battlefield in Rosalia stands today not only as a memorial to the soldiers and Nez Perce who lost their lives in May of 1858, but as a testament to community volunteerism, and the determination of the D.A.R., the Tannatts, citizens of Rosalia, and other individuals and organizations who harnessed Michael Kammen’s “contagion” for historic preservation and commemoration, and in so doing succeeded in bringing a sense of “history” to the Inland Empire.

¹ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory. The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 12.

² Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community. Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 189-190.

³ John Fahey, *The Inland Empire. Unfolding Years, 1879-1929* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 40; Katherine Morrissey, *Mental Territories. Mapping the Inland Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 42-43.

⁴ Daughters of the American Revolution, “Esther Reed Chapter,” *History and Register 1924. Washington State Society Daughters of the American Revolution* (Seattle: The Washington State Society Daughters of the American Revolution, 1924), 71. The D.A.R. was organized in 1890, in response to denial of membership in the Sons of the American

Revolution, established fifteen years earlier. At the initial meeting 11 October 1890, eighteen women met, produced a constitution and the organization's objectives – historical, patriotic, and educational endeavors – and invited the First Lady of the United States, Caroline Scott Harrison, to serve as first president general. In 1895, the D.A.R. incorporated and received a charter from the United States Congress 5 May 1896.

⁵ Unidentified newspaper clipping, 1902, Tannatt Family Papers, Manuscripts, Archives and Special Collections (MASC), Holland Library, Washington State University, Pullman, WA.

⁶ Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 115.

⁷ Various documents, Tappan Family Papers, Manchester Historical Society, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts; and Various documents, Tannatt Papers, MASC.

⁸ For a detailed account on the lives of Thomas and Elizabeth Tannatt see Brenda K. Jackson, "Finding Solace After the Storm: Thomas and Elizabeth Tannatt and the Post-Civil War Inland Empire" (Ph.D. Diss., Washington State University, 2002.)

⁹ Elizabeth Tannatt, 12 June 1903, Letter to Blanche Parker, Tannatt Papers, MASC.

¹⁰ Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American culture, 1767-1986* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 44.

¹¹ Elizabeth Tannatt, 12 June 1903, Letter to Blanche Parker, Tannatt Papers, MASC.

¹² Clifford E. Trafzer, "The Palouse Indians: Interpreting the Past of a Plateau Tribe," in *Spokane & the Inland Empire. An Interior Pacific Northwest Anthology*, ed. David H. Stratton (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1991), 62-67.

¹³ "Reliable Report of the Late Indian Fight," *Weekly Oregonian*, 29 May 1858, 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁵ "Meet on Steptoe Battleground," (Spokane, WA) *Spokesman-Review* 15 June 1907, 1.

¹⁶ Various documents, Frank J. Wilmer Papers, MASC.

¹⁷ J.J. Rohn, 4 May 1902, Letter from J.J. Rohn to F.J. Wilmer, F. J. Wilmer Papers, Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture, Spokane, WA

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Elizabeth F. Tannatt, *Indian Battles in the Inland Empire in 1858* (Spokane, WA: Shaw & Borden Co., 1914), 2.

²⁰ "Dedicate Steptoe Monument Site," (Spokane, WA) *Spokesman-Review* 16 June 1908, 1. The citizens of Rosalia collected a total of \$700, \$350 of which was spent on the purchase of the land, and the remaining \$350 to the monument fund.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Elizabeth Tannatt, June 1907, Chapter Historian's Report, Presented at Sixth Annual Session, Esther Reed Chapter, D.A.R., Tannatt Papers, MASC.

²³ "Meet on Steptoe Battleground," 1.

²⁴ Elizabeth Tannatt, 14 June 1907, Journal entry, Tannatt Papers, MASC. "Dr. M" refers to her son-in-law, Dr. Cyrus Merriam. "T." and "T.R.T." refer to her husband.

²⁵ Elizabeth Tannatt, 18 June 1907, Journal entry, Tannatt Papers, MASC. "Mr. A." has not been positively identified; it is quite likely that Elizabeth refers here to John Allen, former Walla Walla district attorney and longtime Tannatt family friend.

²⁶ "Dedicate Steptoe Monument Site," 1.

²⁷ Tannatt, *Indian Battles*, 2.

²⁸ “Dedicate Steptoe Monument Site,” 1. Thomas Tannatt and William Gaston attended the United States Military Academy at West Point at approximately the same time.

²⁹ *Congressional Record Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the 60th Congress, 1st Session*, vol. XLII (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), 511, 635.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 509-511.

³¹ Thomas Tannatt, n.d., Letter to various legislators and others, Tannatt Papers, MASC.

³² Thomas Tannatt, 25 January 1909, Letter to Elizabeth Tannatt, Tannatt Papers, MASC. “Mrs. Phelps,” was Netta Phelps, chairman of the Steptoe Monument Committee, and a member of the Esther Reed Chapter, D.A.R. Netta Phelps served as the D.A.R.’s Washington State Regent from 1905-1908. Daughters of the American Revolution, *History and Register 1924*, 12.

³³ Thomas Tannatt, 12 February 1909, Letter to E. Tannatt, Tannatt Papers, MASC.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, and Miscellaneous documents, “Thomas R. Tannatt” file, n.d., Regents Papers, MASC.

³⁶ “To Visit Steptoe Battlefield,” (Spokane, WA) *Spokesman-Review* 14 June 1907, 10.

³⁷ “To Visit Steptoe Battlefield, 10. This is most likely from the report of Brevet Major W.N. Grier, commander of the recovery detail.

³⁸ Elizabeth Tannatt, n.d., Journal entry, Tannatt Family Papers, MASC.

³⁹ Elizabeth Tannatt, 11 May 1914, Letter to Captain Braden, Tannatt Papers, MASC.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Tannatt, June 1907, Chapter Historian’s Report, Presented at Sixth Annual Session, Esther Reed Chapter, D.A.R., Tannatt Family Papers, MASC.

⁴¹ “At Monument Dedication 5000 Cheer Steptoe Heroes,” (Spokane, WA) *Spokesman-Review* 16 June 1914, 3.

⁴² Tannatt, *Indian Battles*, 16.

⁴³ “At Monument Dedication 5000 Cheer Steptoe Heroes,” 3.



The Pullman CCC Camp By Don Clarke

"We Can Take It" – Motto of the Civilian Conservation Corps

In response to the Great Depression that started in 1929 and lasted through the 30's, various federal emergency work programs were started by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Congress in 1933. There were few jobs to be had during the first part of the Depression. To put people back to work several programs were voted in by Congress. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was created for men over 21 years of age. These were mainly hand labor jobs on projects in cities and towns. The National Recovery Act (NRA), which was primarily used in the Northwest, employed men to build lookout towers in the forests for spotting fires; it also built ranger stations and telephone lines to report fires. The Public Works Administration (PWA) financed large building programs such as Bonneville and Grand Coulee Dams here in the west.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enabling legislation was signed by President Roosevelt March 31, 1933, with the purpose of fighting soil erosion and declining timber resources by utilizing unemployed youth. Its target age group of seventeen to twenty-one year olds was the group having the hardest time finding



jobs. The young men had to come from needy families, be single, and unemployed. The program was administered by the Army and the projects were designed by various conservation agencies. The Army was in charge of subsistence, housing, pay, and discipline. Eventually there were over 5000 camps across the nation.

Forest service and conservation agencies were in charge of the work projects. The CCC was primarily used in the forest for control of blister rust, a disease that killed or damaged white pine trees. CCC crews cut out the barberry bushes that were the host plant that spread the disease. Fire fighting and planting seedling trees on burnt-over forest lands were also projects of the forest service camps. Camps at Moscow and Emida reforested thousands of acres of burned over land between Emida and Santa, Idaho. There is a scenic overlook and historical marker commemorating the CCC work on Highway 3.

All the young men came from needy families. The monthly salary was \$30.00. The men received \$5.00 in cash and the rest was paid directly to his family. The five dollars was to cover expenses for movies, picnics, cigarettes, beer and personal items. On payday, they were handed a five dollar bill, however any items charged at the canteen were first deducted, often leaving them to receive much less than the expected five dollars. The opinion of most of the young men was that “they let you feel it, then take it away.”

CCC men learned work skills, a work ethic, and discipline. Many young men from poorer sections of the big cities were given experiences in the woods and outdoors. Throughout the nation, trees were planted, soil conservation work was completed, fire towers were built, and truck roads were constructed. The CCC ended after World War II began; funding ceased in June of 1942. Most CCC men were by that time inducted into the armed services or employed in war industries.



Some area CCC camps dealing with forest restoration and soil erosion on farm lands include: Mt. Spokane, Chatcolet, Genesee, Moscow (next to where the John Deere Implement Co. is now located), Dayton, Walla Walla and five camps on the Clearwater forest. There even was a small camp between Palouse and Garfield, which was serviced from the Pullman camp.

The Pullman City Council voted at the March 5, 1935, meeting to grant a lease for the use of the airport east of town to the Civilian Conservation Corps to establish a CCC camp at Pullman. The city appropriated \$300 toward the purchase of crushed rock and drain tile to improve the road to the airport site. The city and Chamber of Commerce also allotted money to drill a well.

The purpose of the camp at the city of Pullman airport was to stop erosion, plant trees on hill tops, repair gullies, and prevent fire hazards. On May 10th work began on construction of the Pullman CCC camp. Twelve buildings were erected at first. There were eight barracks, each with 15 double bunks, an infirmary, machine shop, mess hall, and a truck garage across the road. Soon the camp included a bathhouse, a water tower, and telephone lines. The area was landscaped, and a water system installed utilizing the recently drilled well.

With the buildings mostly completed, the camp opening on June 17, 1935. There were 200 recruits; three Army officers, including a captain, lieutenant and surgeon; nine supervisors; and two cooks. In those days there was just one runway graveled at the airport. The senior officers flew a plane going from camp to camp.

The men planted trees on the top of steep hills. Some noticeable today are planted on the C. W. Young farm, now the WSU dairy complex. You can also see trees on the west side of Highway 195 half way between Pullman and Colfax. Many hill tops in Whitman County still have some trees planted by the CCC men.

THE STORIES OF TWO CCC RECRUITS

George “Bud” Siple

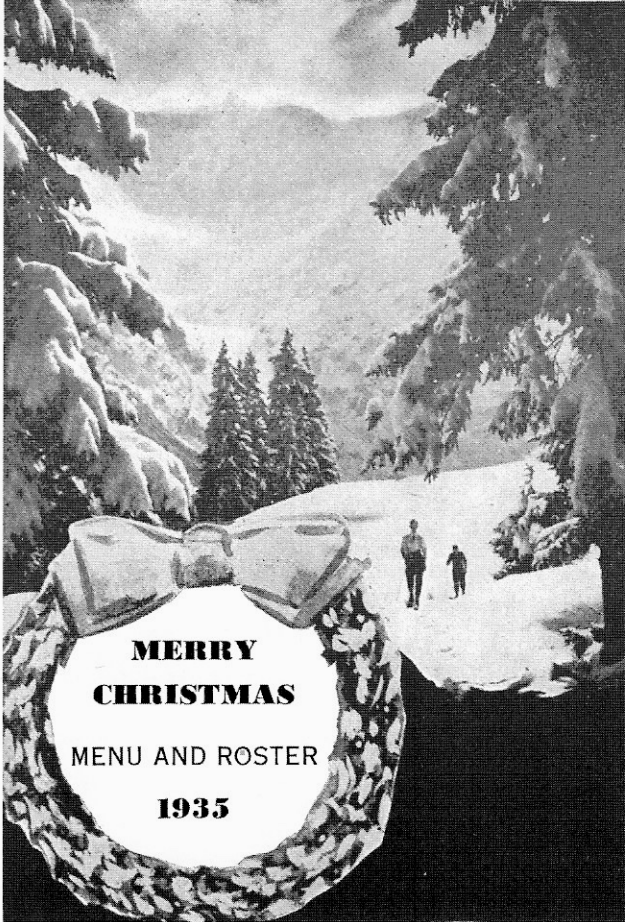
George “Bud” Siple was born in Pennsylvania and moved to North Dakota when he was 6 years old. His father took over managing a farm owned by his father-in-law. In 1933 when Bud was almost 17, he joined the CCC and was stationed at Castleman, North Dakota. From there he moved to camps at Hinkley and Rochester, Minnesota, and then back to North Dakota at Harrington.

Meanwhile, his father was experiencing the depression and the dust bowl that started in Oklahoma and extended into the Dakotas. Since he at one time been a conductor on the railroad in Pennsylvania, Bud’s father, Joe, moved the family to Tekoa, Washington, in 1935, in hope of finding employment on the railroad. He went to work for the Union Pacific until his retirement. As a UP conductor, Joe Siple was a conductor on the last passenger train to Pullman.

With his family in Tekoa, Bud joined the Pullman CCC Camp in January, 1936. While Bud was there, the CCC men planted trees obtained from the WSC Tree Nursery. Evergreen trees were planted on Idaho’s highway 95 from Moscow to the top of Lewiston Grade. As the trees began to grow, they mysteriously disappeared at Christmas time. There are only a few of these left, mostly near Genesee. Two local men Bud remembers from the CCC are Merl Simmons, who later served

as manager of the College book store, and Russell Dyer, from Tekoa, who later became Bud's brother-in-law.

Bud left the CCC in 1937 though he never left Pullman. In 1938, he married Lois N. Dyer. He worked for several farmers and for the Northern Pacific until in May 1942 he was hired as Night Watchman for the State College. This position, in 1946, was turned into what is the present University Police Department, from which Bud retired in 1974 after 34 years of service.

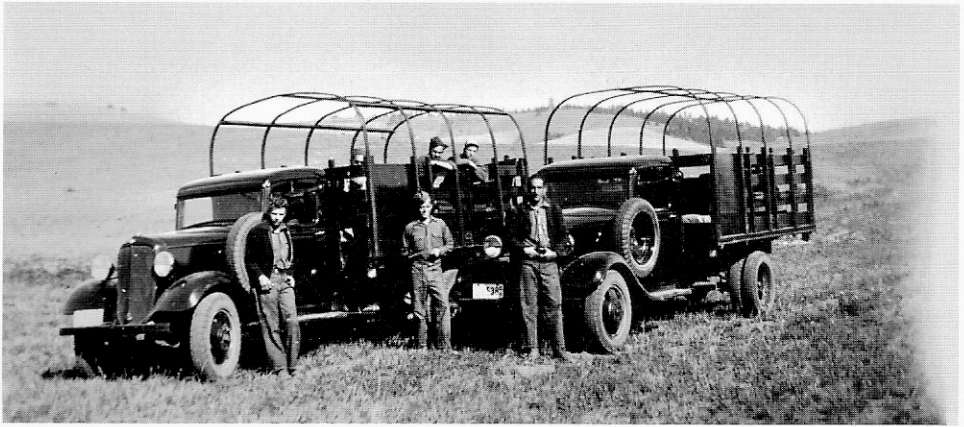


Company 2914, C. C. C.
Camp SCS-2
Pullman, Washington





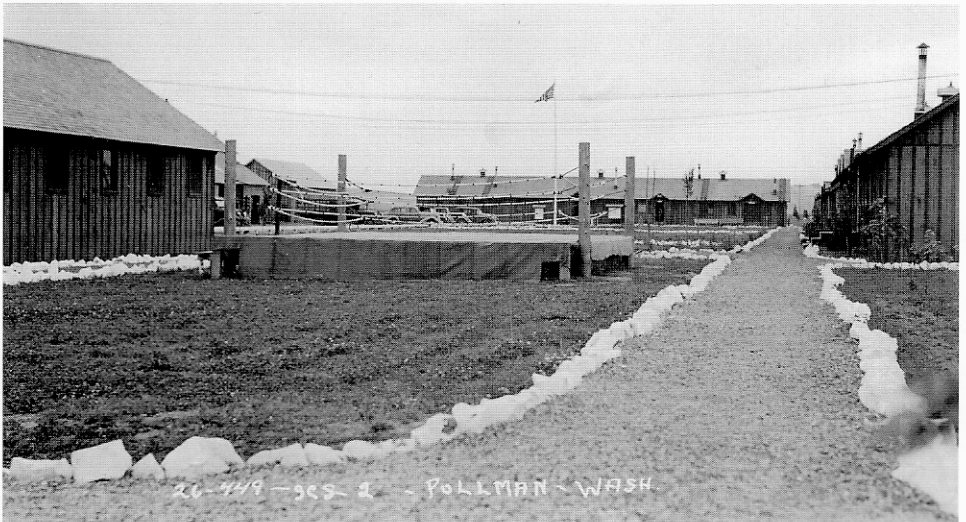
Photo courtesy of George "Bud" Siple



George Matson

George Matson, from Albion, enrolled at age 18 in the Pullman CCC. The date was June 20, 1935, three days after the camp opened. While there George spent 1 ½ years working on soil erosion and gully work. He was then assigned as a project truck driver. George was honorably discharged, “by reason of employment,” on July 11, 1937. George was later married to Dorothy Sevier.

The Pullman CCC camp newspaper, “The Pullman Airport Beacon,” (the July 20, 1937 issue being the only known copy), reports that George took over as catcher for the baseball team after the regular catcher, Al Meyer, was called home to receive employment. The team that summer also had problems with other members leaving for jobs in the outside world.





Pullman CCC Camp No. 2914 Located at the Pullman Airport - Circa mid-1930's



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Whitman County Historical Society
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