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Empire Building in the Northwest

Henry L. Reimers

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EMPIRE BUILDING IN THE NORTHWEST

The story of Frank Magers, a pioneer of the Inland Empire,

as related by himself, and those who knew him best.

---Henry L. Reimers

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INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1938 Henry L. Reimers, a student at the Eastern Washington College of Education, told me that he had written the reminiscences of Frank Magers one of his neighbors in Deep Creek. At my request Henry loaned the manuscript to us to be copied for the college library.

The Magers family came to Washington territory when Frank was a boy of seven. They traveled the Oregon Trail and eventually found a home a few miles from Deep Creek in Spokane county.

It is a most interesting picture of early life in the Spokane region as seen and remembered by a boy upon whom the long journey across the plains and mountains and the experiences of settlers in new country made a vivid and lasting impression. Frank Mager's experiences were typical of the privations and hardships. At the same time,inextricably mingled with these difficulties were all sorts of enjoyable and humorous incidents which the old-timers loved to recall. Early Spokane and the region roundabout live again in this story of the Washington of 60 years ago.

C. S. Kingston

January 23, 1940

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I

FIGHT AND FRIGHT ON THE OREGON TRAIL

Even as coming events are said to "cast their shadows before", in a similar manner the experiences of childhood color or influence the years to come.

To Frank Magers, seven years old when his family moved to the Deep Creek country, in 1878, many of the events of that long covered wagon pilgrimage still remain as indelibly impressed as when seen through the eyes of childhood, but shaded and tempered by the mature judgment of one who has lived long and worthily.

Whether the events of which he speaks, were truly stirring and exciting, or were the ordinary prosaic experiences of all pioneers of his period, you must judge for yourselves, in this record which I have written, following several very interesting visits with Mr. Magers at his home near Deep Creek, Washington.

Mr. Magers' story follows:

My father, Sergeant William L. Magers, of the 1st Arkansas Cavalry during the Civil War, owned a good farm in Jasper County near Carthage, Missouri, and was to the best of my knowledge, in very comfortable circumstances, but the same lure of adventure which had prompted him to enlist in the army seemed to call him to Washington Territory, of which much had been heard, and where, by "homesteading" and "timber cultures", one could get all the land it was possible to farm with the kind of equipment then available.

I'm not at all sure my mother favored selling out, and leaving, but my father, and we children John, Henrietta, and I were all full of enthusiasm.

Everything was disposed of, save five mules, and two wagons. All our remaining possessions were stowed away, and we left Carthage in May 1878, heading north to Topeka, Kansas, where other wagons awaited, to make up the train. We encamped on the outskirts of that town, while plans for the organization of our group were completed.

My father, largely by virtue of his war experience, was elected captain, for Indian uprisings were still common. Only the year before Chief Joseph and the Nez Perces had been on a long warpath, until General Nelson A. Miles rounded him up, in the Bear Paw Mountains. Just two years before Sitting Bull and his savage Sioux had wiped out Custer's gallant command.

Now there were rumors of discontent and outbreak among the Bannack and Klamath Tribes, and our proposed route led through the region where this war fever burned strongest. The plans and proposals were put into effect by sober faced men, who prepared to meet all emergencies.

One rather amusing incident occurred to enliven the tedious days of waiting for laggards.

One family had an old balck mare, stone blind, but true enough in the harness and obedient to the slightest pull on the reins. Our camp lay near the railroad track, so we could use the discarded ties as fuel. One train, passing, let loose a long, piercing blast from its whistle. All the horses threw up their heads and snorted, but the old blind mare was startled into a frenzy. She tore loose from the picket and came full tilt toward the camp. Straight through she went, knocking over tents and scattering fires. Somewhere along the route she rammed one foot through a shiny new dishpan, and that scared her all the more,

as it rattled, and banged against her legs. Finally she plunged into a large tent, tangled up in the ropes and threw herself. Someone sat on her head and so we got command of the situation again, but she left a trail of ruin that took some time to repair.

At last the appointed day came, the signal was given to "Fall in and get 'em rolling," and we were on our way. Our train by this time numbered some forty wagons, carrying one hundred and twenty persons. Most of the outfits were light wagons, canvas covered, and drawn by one team of mules.

There were a few four mule teams, as I recall it, but most of the families traveled light, carrying little in their wagons besides food supplies and a few sacks of grain for the mules.

One good riding horse was brought along, for use in hunting when we came to the game country, but there were no cattle, few tools, and very little furniture. Most of the men had rifles and were well supplied with ammunition.

We followed up the river and crossed the mile long bridge at Kearney Junction. From there our proposed route lay along the north bank of the Platte, a sluggish stream with banks barely above the water's edge. We were traveling mainly through a level country, and made good time. All this time we traveled parallel to the railroad so that we could pick up discarded cedar ties for use as fuel. They were light, and furnished quick hot heat.

We had our first view of the Rockies weeks before we came to them, as they loomed jagged, majestic, and purple in the distance.

We rested a few days at Laramie, Wyoming, and re-routed the next stage of our journey, electing to follow the Sweetwater Route through the mountains.

Numerous trains of immigrants had passed through ahead of our band, and all the grass was cropped nearly to the roots so we were obliged to drive the work stock four or five miles off the road, and away from camp in order for them to find sufficient feed. Here the sacks of grain came in handy. We were told that pasture would be better along the Sweet Water, even though it was a longer way.

Going through the mountains was a tedious journey. Several of the people were ill from Mountain Fever. This is caused by the high altitude and results in excessive bleeding from the nose, and ears.

My father suffered a very severe attack, and there was considerable worry over his condition, but he rallied as we descended toward the plains beyond the divide.

One redeeming feature of this part of the trip was the herds of prong horn antelope. These speedy desert racers would circle our train, bounding at breakneck speed, and inspect it from all sides, but never quite satisfying their very evident curiosity. Every day one of the men would follow on the saddle horse far off the flank of the train, and bring in enough antelope meat for all.

But even all the fresh meat we wanted could not quite make up for the lack of milk, eggs, and butter, so common at home, but so out of the question here in the wilderness.

In our train was an uncouth Arkansas family, dominated by a gaunt determined woman called "Ma" Gillem.

"Many's the crock of buttermilk I've throwed to the hawgs," she stated one night, "but never again. I'd swap pap's rifle for just one of 'em right now!"

We all laughed, but no doubt entertained similar vows, as we thought of the home comforts left far behind. But one home comfort, at least, we brought along.

A Baptist Preacher, named Passley, was a member of our band. No traveling was done on Sunday. Instead we held regular services and enjoyed a day of rest.

Once out of the steeper mountain our road led us some twenty miles north of Salt Lake City. Here in the land where the Mormons had settled, we found little green oasises, fresh and inviting to our travel worn folk. These fertile little spots were tilled and irrigated by industrious Mormon farmers, for truly "They made the desert blossom like the rose," and here for the first time since leaving home we enjoyed the luxury of eggs, butter, milk and cream, and all for a very reasonable price.

I'm afraid my opinions of Mormons had always been based upon the story of the Mountain Meadow Massacre, when John Dee and his renegades wiped out a whole wagon train of immigrants, with the exception of a few children. My father had been acquainted with these survivors, after they had been returned to their homes in Arkansas, and all of us were familiar with the story of that outrage. I had looked forward with childish fear to meeting these folk, and now was very glad indeed to change my earlier, fear-founded impressions.

A few days only were we able to enjoy the change in our bill of fare, and then we were out on the great sand flats, heading toward Boise, on the one lap of our journey where trouble with Indians was most likely to occur.

The days, with their tense hours of apprehension seemed to

drag, and the withering heat and heavy sand joined forces to impede our progress, as we plodded through this desolate region. Water holes were few and far between, and even the hardiest of the mules began to show the effects of difficult traveling. Added to these travails were rumors of ever increasing Indian danger, that seemed to materialize out of the very air, neither helpful nor re-assuring.

One day two scouts, in their regular Cavalry uniforms, halted their lathered horses alongside our train, spoke a few brief word to my father and some of the other men, and then spurred away, to be lost in a cloud of dust.

That night the wagons were corralled with even greater care, and chained together. Boxes, trunks, bedding rolls, anything suitable, was piled up to form a barricade behind the wheels. A triple detail was sent out with the work stock, and during the night a regular guard was posted.

In the morning we were roused early, and again on our way, the men grimly silent, and the women anxious and uneasy.

One man, on the saddle horse, scouted far ahead, and to the sides. During the day several details of army scouts passed our train, usually pausing for a few brief words.

We learned that they were members of General O. O. Howard's command, and that the quicker we were out of the immediate territory the better our chances of a happy ending to our long jaunt.

The Bannack Indians were on the warpath, muttering and revengeful and known to be holed up somewhere in the near vicinity.

And here occurred the first serious casualty in all our long weeks of travel.

The horse herd was sent off the trail nearly five miles in search of suitable grazing. I know the men conferred very seriously over the wisdom of this, but it seemed a necessary risk. The sacked grain was gone, and pasture along the road was exhausted.

Four men, all well armed, were sent out. Lem Gillem and a step-brother were slated for the first watch. Bert Agee and Crowell, a fellow Missourian, were to take the graveyeard shift, when the other two roused them at midnight. All being understood Crowell and Agee made themselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit, and dropped off to sleep. The stamp of restless hoofs, the crunch of busily grazing animals, and an occasioned coyote's moonlight serenade were the only disturbing sounds on the still night air.

Somewhere towards morning Crowell, wakening from uneasy slumber, sat up, rubbing his eyes, with a vague sense of something wrong.

"Bert ! Bert ! Wake up ! The mules are gone. I'll bet them d---d redskins have injuned up on Lem and Clell, and then run off the whole herd !"

Agee came to with a start and stared hard.

Sure enough, not an animal, nor a sign of the herders was visible.

Bewildered, the two worried men took up the search. Stranded out in this wilderness of sand and sage, in hostile Indian Country was serious enough to sober anyone.

Contrary to Indian nature apparently, for they generally chose the hours just before dawn for a raid, all the mules and the saddle horse had been run off.

With suitable caution Agee and Crowell explored the little swale where the animals had been grazing, but no encouraging signs greeted them.

A rasping, gurgling croak grated on the tensely charged air.

"Bert ! Yuh hear that !"

"Uh Hugh ! Sounds like some one breathin their last ! This way !"

Snugly under a squatty sage brush they found the two herders. Neither was breathing their last, though they very nearly did at the hands of the two outraged Missourians.

Clell lay quiety enough but from Lems cavernous mouth came the rasping snores that had startled the older herdsmen.

"Asleep at the switch, the low-down shotes, whilst the redskins run off the mules !" roared Agee, and he roused Clem with a lusty boot in the ribs.

That woke Clem, all right, but didn't bring back the mules. It was decided Clell and Crowell should attempt to follow the trail of the missing animals, while Clem and Agee should hurry to camp and report.

My father fell into a towering rage when he learned of the sleeping night herds.

"Worthless whelp like you ought to be whipped," he roared, shaking his fist in Clem's sheepish face.

"No one can talk about my boys, that away," cried Ma Gillem, elbowing her way through the group of excited immigrants.

"Clem stand up and assert yourself !"

Clem made some half-hearted threatening gesture, and Captain Mager's retaliated with a wild swimg that grazed the lank Arkansan's stubby chin. Not hurt, save as to dignity, Clem wheeled and stalked toward his wagon, with Ma following after, clucking like a worried

setting hen.

"There 'Ma', you've gone and got Clem mad," some of our band jeered after the disgruntled pair, but really, it was no time for raillery.

Stranded in that great waste of barren land, with only a few gallons of water, for this had been a dry camp, things looked bad enough.

There still remained the possibility that Indians had run off the mules, and some feared an attack. Searching for the mules on foot was an almost impossible task in that great unfenced reach of plain, but a few of the men started out on the hopeless task. The others maintained a vigilant watch about the wagon corral.

About ten o'clock an animal came straggling lazily into camp. It was Jenny, an old black mule belonging to my father. Head drooped, lower lip sagging and shaggy ears, torn and shredded by numerous encounters with her pugnacious companions, flopping disconsolately, old black Jenny looked almost angelic to her fellow Missourians.

She was greeted with out-stretched pans of oats and a rope was gleefully flung around her scrawny neck. With no more ado, my father flung himself on board, and set out along her back trail, as fast as her shambling gate would cover the ground. No doubt Jenny, expecting her daily ration of oats was much disgusted at such an act of human perfidy. A group of eager men followed on foot.

Clell and Bert Agee arrived in camp around noon, weary, dusty, and discouraged, but brightened at news of Jenny's appearance.

By three o'clock all of the mules and men were back, and we hit the trail again. The animals had merely taken advantage of their sleeping herders, and comfortably full of dry grass, they had gone in

search of water, since they had been given only a bucketful apiece at camp that evening.

So we were once more safely on our journey, but it is amusing to think that for the space of several hours the success or failure of our venture was the sole responsibility of that one contrary, obstinate, much maligned, and misunderstood, member of our expedition, a Missouri mule.

A few more days travel brought us to Soda Springs, Idaho, and here we encountered the only Indians seen on the entire trip. Soda Springs is a natural outflow of effervescent water, and the redskins came from miles around to drink their fill, for they considered it "heap big medicine", and so it was.

A peculiar shelter, or shanty, had been erected here, consisting of four posts set in the ground, and rudely thatched with brush and rank salt grass.

While we were resting here, sampling the peculiar sparkling water of the spring, a small band of Indians, some half dozen of them galloped up on their wiry ponies. All were gaudily arrayed in colored blankets, buckskin leggings, and head feathers. They carried bows and arrows, for the soldiers had confiscated all Indian's guns, following the recent outbreaks.

They sat their horses, in the shade of the shanty, carrying on a gutteral conversation, emphasized by much pointing in our direction.

A barn swallow had built her nest against the roof of this ramshackle affair, and was busily darting back and forth, catching gnats and other insects.

At length she swooped back to her nest, and hung poised at its opening for just an instant. That was long enough. One of the swarthy braves lifted his bow, and seemingly without aim, let fly an arrow that pierced the inoffensive little creature, and pinned her to the roof.

All the redskins laughed uproariously, at her fluttering struggles, and then they wheeled their horses and raced away. No one regretted their departure, least of all myself. My early opinion of all Indians was largely based on that one act of wanton cruelty.

Our route continued on through monotonous, barren country. We spent the Fourth of July at Oneida, Idaho, drinking lemonade, and indulging in a little target practice, for by now we were well out of dangerous Indian Territory and could spare the ammunition.

The valley of the Grande Ronde was a welcome relief from the expanse of drab sage and sand we had been journeying through for so long. This pleasant region, fertile, and well irrigated, I recall as one of the pleasantest spots we passed through during our entire trip. All too soon we left it behind, for the less pleasant trip through the Blue Mountains. The road was well marked but rough, being routed along the edge of precipices that overhung roaring rivers far below, down pitches when the wheels had to be rough locked, and up grades where the mules could barely pull the wagons, lightly loaded as they were, here near the end of our long march.

While we traversed this rugged stretch of region there occurred a total eclipse of the sun, a thing weird and aweinspiring to most of us, the more so because of our wilderness surroundings.

By the time we reached Walla Walla we had crossed the Snake

River five times. The ferries were large flat scows, capable of taking two wagons and teams at a trip. They were attached to large cables, and the force of the current helped swing them across. Though these old dilapidated boats looked risky indeed, and despite the swirling currents of that treacherous stream, all of our corssings were made without accident.

The 28th of July, 1878 found our weary, travel worn caravan pulling into Walla Walla, a bustling, busy town, and a most welcome sight to all of us. For most, the journey was now over.

Friendships, born on the long trail, were interrupted, and slight differences were forgotten in the stern task of finding work or locating a satisfactory claim.

A weeks time, and we were all scattered, some to work on neighboring ranches, others in search of land for themselves, still others took carpenter work or odd jobs around Walla Walla.

I believe the Rev. Passley eventually settled near Wenatchee.

As for our family, we had decided to settle near Spokane Falls, and made plans to continue our journey after a few weeks of rest.

II

The Land of Promise

My father elected to spend several weeks at Walla Walla, or in the nearby vicinity. This community had been established for years and there were many opportunities for employment. After doing carpentering and teaming about the town we moved to a ranch some five or six miles out. Here a new addition to our family made his arrival, my brother Will, who now farms in Idaho.

At this time it was reported that good land could be obtained near Deep Creek, about one hundred and sixty miles north and east, where the youthful village of Spokane Falls was hopefully taking root beside the river. Although it was rather late in the season for making such a long move into strange territory and uncertain conditions, my father, with his customary abruptness, gave up his work, loaded his belongings and family into the same wagon that had withstood the weary travel across the plains, and headed northward.

There were no events of outstanding interest as we wove our way through the bunch grass hills of the Palouse Country. One other family, not lost in the shuffle at Walla Walla, accompanied us, lured by the hope of getting good land--cheap. At night we camped together for the sake of company, and listened to the coyote's chorus from the hill sides, as the snappy weather of early fall inspired them to warn us of the hard lot that was to be ours during the coming winter.

At Four Lakes there was a general merchandise store run by a man named Morgan. We added considerably to our stock of supplies, but depleted our scant savings to the same extent. That night we camped on the shores of Silver Lake. All were tired, for it seemed that the nearer

we came to our journey's end the slower the miles rolled behind. It surely could have been nothing but overwhelming weariness, rather than carelessness that caused my mother to stumble near the open fire. In a moment her skirt, which was of the broad, ample type then in style, was a mass of flames. Well it was for us that the two families camped together, for the men were tending to the mules, and we children could do nothing but stare in horror.

As mother's scream startled the still night air, Mrs. McDowell flung her to the ground, snatched a blanket from the jumbled disarray of equipment, and swathed it around her. Almost as quickly as they started, the flames were out. When the men rushed up everything was proceeding as usual, unless the whimpering of tired children may have been a little more pronounced. Such were the near fatal consequences of our last night's camp on the trail from Carthage, Missouri to our new home in Washington Territory, which we were due to reach on the morrow.

It must have been about ten o'clock the next morning when our little caravan pulled into Deep Creek. Two brothers, Strupe by name, were the original owners of the townsite of this little settlement, and operated a store and saloon, the latter of which sometimes did what might be termed a too prosperous business, though these are details I didn't realize until more mature judgment arrived to temper my earlier impressions.

As we pulled up the grade from the creek crossing to the cluster of buildings we noted a man busily engaged at some unique job beside a crude shed. It was one of the Strupes, the larger of the two very large brethren. He held a large cedar block in a vise-like grip between his thighs and his ample abdomen, and pried off shakes with powerful strokes of a draw shave. With each new shake he would spit tobacco expertly, and scan the rapidly dwindling block for his next cut.

Not even the approach and halt of our laden wagons served to interrupt his concentration on the job at hand. I remember watching him with childish curiosity, and idly speculating on the probable results should the powerful tool in his ham-like fists miss the intended mark and slash into his stomache. My curiosity was just verging on genuine worry when the laborer deigned to answer my father's eager questions.

"Over yander that away I reckon yuh'll find land and to spare," he rumbled, and made a vague gesture toward the northwest. "Bout five, six miles on they's a spring, fair pasturin' and timber. Ye can't miss the trail, ner the spring when yuh come to it."

Much as we would have liked to remain in the little town to learn more of this region, our home to be, it was felt best to get located some place where we could camp indefinitely while scouting for the best possible claim that we could file on. So once more the wheels rolled on their way, but the going did not seem so monotonous now. We scanned the surrounding country with revived interest, almost as if we were coming home. It was now November, and we had been gone from our old home nearly seven months, in all that time having no definite end to our journey in sight. Now we had at last reached the "free" land.

In due time we reached the spring, staked our travel worn mules in the little sub-irrigated meadow near at hand, and pitched camp. There we rested, thought of friends back home, wondered what new friends we would make, and wondered too, about the winter which must surely be close at hand. Day times my father and McDowell rode over the nearby regions looking for a more favorable camp site but at last they gave up. Open springs, timber, and good pasture were already pretty well taken up, even in this comparatively new territory, and we were lucky to be as well

situated as we were. A week of fruitless scouting seemed to assure my father of this.

"We winter here," he said, and all able hands went to work erecting the dug-out that was to be "home-sweet-home" for the next several months.

Father chose the south slope of a neighboring ridge as offering the best protection from north winds, and exposure to such sunlight as might occur to brighten the long, dreary days to come. An excavation, about thirteen feet by eight was finally dug. On one side the wall was formed by the hill, but the ends and the south wall had to be built of logs, likewise the rafters. These were cut from the pine thickets and skidded to the shanty, there to be shaped and fitted into place. Both the men were good hands with an axe, and soon all was complete from dirt floor to rafters. Now to cut some shakes, huge, home made shingles, cover the roof properly, and all would be snug.

Down the draw were several big pines, which would have measured nearly four feet through at the stump. The bigger tree the better the shakes, thought the men folks, and they felled one of the forest giants. Then they made a couple of cuts across the trunk and went to work with their froes. A fro is a sturdy tool. It has a very heavy blade, fine edged, but bulging to a heavy back, which may be hammered upon. Viewed from the end it would have a wedge-shaped appearance. The handle turns up and out like an inverted capital L so that one can hold and guide the implement, or pry off slabs of wood if it happens to be a light, or straight grained variety.

But the fallen pine was too stubborn to yield to such treatment. At last father gave up, and another tree was downed. It likewise

proved too tough, and it began to appear that the hillside might resemble a windfall before enough shakes were obtained. Just at this critical time one of the earlier settlers rode by, and stopped to "neighbor" a bit. He laughed good naturedly, pointed out the knots and bulging limbs on the big trees, and then picked out a smaller, very straight tree.

"This one'll fill the bill alright," he assured us, and then rode away. His prophecy was fulfilled. Our dug-out was soon very thorougly shingled, or perhaps "shaken" would be the proper term.

Now that the shelter was completed the next problem was that of laying in a food supply for the winter. My father and Mr. McDowell determined to drive back to the palouse country and get a load of wheat. This they did, but on the return trip the heavy, incessant rains soaked some of the grain so thoroughly that it sprouted. That wheat proved a very important item in our bill of fare all during the winter that followed. We ate wheat cooked or otherwise prepared every day, with an occasional rabbit, chunk of venison, or a roast of beef to vary the monotony.

14 fourteen

All together, there were eleven of us in that dug-out most of the time. A cook stove was set up at each end, the big room was divided in the middle by a gunny sack curtain, and all were cozy enough. The winter proved to be not unduly severe and everything went along as well as could be expected.

The men were lucky enough to get a job hauling logs for Pete LeFevre, who operated a sawmill near Medical Lake. They were away from home much of the time, and when not busy at that work, one of them would travel on snow-shoes to Colfax for mail, and additional supplies, such as flour, salt, tea or sugar. Which ever one remained behind would busy himself rustling wood or trying to bag a deer.

Shortly after the first heavy snow fall one of the neighbors found a herd of deer yarded up near Knight's Lake. He was lucky enough to bag seven of them, and generous enough to share with other less fortunate hunters.

Sometimes there would be an opportunity to help butcher at a near by ranch, and receive pay in meat, though the deal was not regarded in such a business like manner. You helped a neighbor because it was the thing to do, and he gave you some meat because he had lots of it, and wished to return a favor. Winter passed and spring was with us again.

III

Home Building

When at last the snow was gone, and conditions of travel somewhat easier, it did not take long to select the one hundred and sixty acres most suitable to our needs from the lots remaining unfiled upon. The place was about one and one-half miles west and three north of Deep Creek, and is still in the family, so to speak. To the north just a half mile is another "hundred and sixty" which was granted as a timber culture.

Definitely located at last, we set about home building with enthusiasm, but a good deal more than that was needed. We had to rustle timbers, fence our claim, break that tough sod, and get a crop in.

Some of the land was covered with native bunch grass, other areas were grown up to what was commonly called wool grass. This latter, smaller and thicker than the tall bunch grass, covered the ground like a carpet, and matted together in such a way that "busting" it proved a real job. It required six head of horses to pull the breaking plow.

After turning the sod it had to be listed, or disked to break up the mats of roots. After getting the land in a fairly pulverized condition it could be seeded with a shotgun seeder, and then harrowed again to cover all the grain. A shotgun seeder was fasted to the rear end of a wagon box, and the seed scattering apparatus was powered from one of the hind wheels. Once the seed was in the ground, all else was in the hands of Mother Nature, or, as the verse of an old song puts it,

"We'll take our plow and bust the sod,
And for a crop we'll trust in God."

It seemed that all the necessary tasks were finally accomplished, though all hands had to do their part. While still less than twelve years

old I was often sent with the wagon and a team of oxen to the timbered bottom lands along Coulée Creek.

During the cold weather my father had cut several piles of poles for use in building corrals and hog pens. They were seasoned and light enough for me to handle and eventually I hauled them all home.

With a barn, corrals, and pasture fence erected, the next problem was to get hold of some more cattle. There was an old rancher near what is now Half Moon Prairie who used to loan milk cows to the newcomers. I guess it must have been what more modern folks would call a hobby, at any rate he did his part in building up the Inland Empire. He deserved a much better fate than was in store for him, for this kindly old gentleman was later murdered under very mysterious circumstances, which never were cleared up. If my memory serves me correctly, two later owners of the same place met a similar end. No, it was not entirely neighborliness and fellowship, even in "the good old days".

Not content with borrowing a cow, my father joined with a few other men who likewise wanted stock, and rode down to Farmington, where cattle seemed to be more plentiful. Just why there was not any surplus stock in the Deep Creek country is hard to explain. After much hard riding, and no end of chasing, the drover returned. Such "critters" they brought! Rangy, horny brutes, they were, fleet as deer and wild as hawks, with not a pound of surplus flesh on them anywhere. When it was time to milk they had to be hog-tied, and one almost needed a pipe wrench to separate them from their precious lacteal fluid. I will venture to guess that one self respecting cow today, on any dairy ranch, would give as much milk as our nine meek and lowly kind did.

"They're just g'anted from the trip," said my father, and he

threw the hay to them, but they wouldn't eat. Sometimes they would sniff at it, but generally not, and their anguished bawling fairly shook the rafters of the barn. When we turned them out, even in the dead of winter, they were much more content, and would look off across the snow blanketed prairie toward the open range, and nose the snow off of the grass rather than eat what we offered them. I don't exactly recall what finally did happen to our rambling wrecks, but I do know that another trip was made, this time to Crab Creek, where a rancher had a big herd, and this time the results were much more satisfactory for all concerned.

Events moved along quietly enough with the exception of a few highlights which I will deal with later. There were barn raising when new settlers arrived, or quilting bees when the arrival of cold weather suggested the need for more bedding.

I suppose the barn raisings interested me more than the tamer, but equally necessary task of making quilts. At any rate I was always allowed to take a part even if only a minor one such as carrying water, fetching tools, or sawing pegs to hold the logs from bowing.

When a frame building was being put up the timbers would be hewn and fitted and nailed or pegged together while the skeleton for the side wall was laying flat on the ground. The whole framework would then be raised to the perpendicular and fastened in place. A similar routine would be followed with the opposite side, and soon the building would be ready to board up and shingle. The big barn on our old home ranch was built in such a fashion. In its ample loft the neighboring children and the youngsters of our family played and froliced.

It was no frolic to fill that huge mow with hay however, in the

old hand pitching style, for it would easily hold fifty tons of bundles.

In building the log barns a good axe man would take a position at each corner of the structure. The logs would be squared or partially hewn, and then rolled up into place where the expert went to work with his keen blade and put on the finishing touches. It was a decided honor to be selected by the property owner as one of the axe men. I think I practiced diligently and looked forward eagerly to the day when I might be one of the chosen four to help lay up a big barn. Eventually my time came, though not before I was sixteen years old, and I was ready.

Over on Indian Prairie near the rim of the coulee is a log barn which has been standing for nearly forty-five years. I suppose it might be called my masterpiece. The building has long been abandoned but is still as good as new.

There were different methods of holding the logs in place. One novel, but very workmanlike way was to square the logs as true as possible. A shallow groove was then hewn down the upper side of the bottom log. A ridge would then be trimmed along the bottom of the upper log. When it was laid in place the effect was the same as we obtain by using tongue and groove lumber. The corners were shaped in different fashions, according to the whim of the builder. When the two logs were fitted into place holes were bored through them with augurs, and snug wooden pegs driven in. The result was a very strong wall. Houses built after this fashion were invariably warm in winter and cool in summer.

I was initiated into this method of log fitting by an old country Swede who build such a house on his own farm. He spent a great deal of time and effort in accomplishing the desired result, but that house is

still the superior of many modern homes in everything save modern conveniences.

Not all pioneer homes were the equal of the one I have just mentioned and not a few of them were decidedly poor shelters when the north wind came whooping along in December or January.

IV.

Concerning Our Indian Neighbors.

In 1880 came the last serious Indian scare. It seems there was an argument in Spokane between a white and one of the natives. In the resulting scuffle the Indian was seriously wounded and his tribesmen vowed to avenge him if he died. His condition turned even worse, the red men muttered gutteral threats of vengeance, and the alarmed inhabitants of Spokane took shelter on Havermale Island in the river just a short distance above the falls.

We residents of Deep Creek were also affected by the 'war' scare, and too far away to 'tree' on the island. Instead we gathered together on the place now farmed by Chris Lucht. It is about a mile and a quarter west and north of the Whitman School. There we dug out a large entrenchment on top of a prominent knoll, threw the excavated earth up to form an embankment, and laid in a few supplies.

A band of Spokanes pitched camp on the present site of Camp Washington on Coulee Creek, about two miles due north of us. We waited in some uneasiness, and by day tried to figure out hidden messages in the columns of smoke that lifted skyward, but apparently they meant nothing at all, for the whole incident blew over, and after a rather feverish week or two all was once more calm and peaceful.

We folks to the west of Indian Prairie, and those living on the prairie itself very nearly had our own private war. A blustering, bull-dozing Irishman, named Brooks, had taken fancy to a piece of land along the rim of the coulee. There was a good spring on the place and it was quite a popular hang out of the noble red man. Brooks fenced the spring, and went to work breaking sod, pausing in his activities from

time to time to throw the Indian off "his land". I say "throw" in the literal sense of the word for Brooks was a husky, and no mistake, and apparently he didn't know there was such a word as fear.

The Indian who claimed prior right to the spring pitched camp outside the fence and grumbled about the injustice of it all. Day by day his tribesmen joined him until there was really a formidable band of angry redskins gathered and priming for trouble.

The whites talked things over, and decided to reason with Mr. Brooks, as any little incident might lead to serious consequences. The feats of Chief Joseph and Sitting Bull were by no means dead in the minds of the Indians, nor, I hasten to add, in the minds of the whitemen either.

A band of determined settlers called on Mr. Brooks. They found him striding boisterously along between the handles of his plow, whistling cheerfully to his big gray horses, and utterly heedless of the storm brewing just beyond his fence where a gaudy cloud of Indians were still "making medicine."

As a result of this hurried parley between the settlers and Brooks, the big Irishman elected to pay off the Indian's claims in some manner acceptable to the red man. It was either this or clear out. Nothing must arouse the Indians again. Most of the whites managed to dispose of all claims to the land before clearing or breaking it and in most cases there was no argument.

Brooks went ahead with his farming and became a permanent settler. It was on his place that I helped build the big log barn which I might call my masterpiece. Poor Brooks, he had all nerve and little judgment. He picked a quarrel with another settler, a rather elderly

man, over some road work, and received a thorough thrashing for his pains. Years later he came to his death beneath the wheels of a locomotive, a colorful figure to the last.

Another settler named Wills settled near a spring where the loose cattle of the prairie were accustomed to drink. He helped himself to a few head of unbranded critters and the next thing we knew another rumpus was brewing.

The cattle belonged to some Indians who were settled a few miles to the east. Once more they made war medicine, and once more the settlers paid a call; this time equipped with a new rope. Mr. Wills just happened to be "out", and so far as I know he still is out. We never saw him again. Such work as he had done about the place eventually fell into disrepair and finally someone else took it over. Someone who didn't try to stock his ranch at the expense of the Indians.

Then there was the time a Mrs. Bradbury bought a pony from the Indians. She took the cayuse home and turned it in the pasture. It vanished. She went to the brave from whom she had bought the animal and asked if it had returned. The answer was no, but Mrs. Bradbury, being a rather indomitable soul, was not satisfied. She hustled back to the log shed behind the house, and there was her pony. She rode the nag home in triumph, while the redskin stood with folded arms and watched her go.

Soon after this the pony dissappeared again, and this time similar tactics failed to obtain the little cayuse. It vanished, and its whereabouts never were discovered.

One day while we were busy about the buildings on our own place we heard a chorus of whoops and yells. Riding pell mell across

the bunch grass came about twenty Indians. We dived into the house like wood-chucks, and father took down his old rifle. We peeked out of a window as the gaudily attired braves circled our cabin at a very discreet distance. At this time we were justified in taking precautions, but apparently the warriors were just making a little "whoopee". Chief Garry rode at their head, and he was the proven friend of the whites but my father was thoroughly angered.

"If that old rascal gits within range I'll fill his ornery pelt so full of holes it won't hold corn shucks!" he vowed, but fortunately the Indians kept their distance and presently veered off and went dashing back the way they had come. Perhaps it was their way of greeting new comers.

Chief Garry, while visiting with some of the settlers, made the following comment regarding the treatment of the Indians by the whites.

"After the soldiers killed all the Indians ponies we became very poor," he said. He was referring to the occasion when Colonel George Wright had eight hundred ponies rounded up and killed near the present site of Spokane Bridge, to keep the red men from manouvering so quickly if they chose to go on the war path again.

A somewhat similar circumstance occurred after the battle of Spokane Plains when the soldiers killed all the captured horses. I can recall driving across White Bluff at night in late fall and seeing a pale, bluish flame flickering over the spot where the bones of the slaughtered ponies were scattered. I was told the flame was the result of contact between the moist earth and the phosphorus in the bones but some of the more credulous folks called it "witches fire" or "jack o' lanterns". Whatever the mysterious blue flame was, it helped enliven

the monotony of a long night journey from Spokane to my home at different times.

It is only in very recent years that Indians have become unusual visitors to our community. As late as 1925 they were accustomed to make cross country trips past our place, generally in a hack drawn by two ponies. They would pitch camp beside the road, often on the same spot where we spent our first night in the Deep Creek Country. Their colorful costumes and mysterious goings and comings made them figures of wonder to young folks returning from school, and many a time I circled their camps by a quarter of a mile rather than follow the road directly past.

I have since learned that the red man was not so fierce, and that my first impression, gained on that long gone day at Soda Springs, was a wrong one. When it came to conservation, honor, religion, and true appreciation of the world about him, the Indian could have taught much to his white conqueror. He certainly has contributed much to the color and romance of American History.

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V

Pioneer Highlights

The old Colville Road ran near to our old home ranch. Along this historic trail passed a steady cavalcade of frontier humanity; Indians, stagecoaches loaded with drunks, half-drunks, or pioneer merchants and drummers, regiments of cavalry, gamblers, and profane old freighters, hauling to the lively little settlements farther north.

Frequently some of these characters would stop over at our place. They were always doubly welcomed, by the elders because of the news they brought, by the children because they generally had gifts of candy or toys. One old freighter never failed in this respect, and sometimes he even brought dresses or other clothing for the youngsters.

I recall with a laugh the tale of the freighters who were engaged in hauling whiskey from Spokane to Colville. They tapped one of the barrels to quench their thirst along the weary trail. Just before they reached their destination they stopped at a creek they were fording to refill the barrel. They were quite astonished when it required three buckets full to make up for the liquor they had taken. No doubt the ones who eventually consumed the adulterated whiskey were just as well off in the long run as though it had been full strength.

This section of the road travelled west from Spokane, turned north near Deep Creek, and then ran in a generally northern direction to Colville, crossing the river near the present site of Long Lake.

There was one old gambler who became quite a friend of my father's. He journeyed over the road between Colville and Walla Walla as regular as clock work. His special forte was playing poker with the soldiers at the military garrisons and his arrivals coincided with pay days.

When old "Dude" stopped at our house we all could tell how the cards had been running. If luck was good he would be very carefully dressed, though not in a showy manner, save for a large diamond stick pin.

This pin represented his "nest egg", or special bank account. If luck was bad he might pawn it but when fortune smiled again he always redeemed the trinket first thing. So our friend journeyed over the old road, sometimes nattily dressed, and sometimes as ragged as a "digger Injun", but always welcome, perhaps because he refused to ply his rather nefarious trade while visiting with us. His reputation as a strictly honest gambler was, I am sure, well deserved.

Then there was a former school teacher who had come west, determined to make a fortune supplying the military posts with vegetables. Our brand of pioneering did not suit him. He must needs have a more unique type of frontier living, so he "squatted" in a little draw where there was a small plot of land which he could quickly bring into cultivation and irrigate if need be. The "perfesser" soon had has garden ready, and eventually was ready to market his produce. The problem of transportation presented itself. Neighbors offered the eccentric old gentleman the use of their wagons, or were willing to make room for him when they went to town but the adventuresome spirit of the pioneering perfessor rebelled.

Instead, he built his own wagon, a carryall, he called it. To make the contrivance, he sawed off a couple of cross sections from a big log, to serve as wheels, reamed out holes for an axle. He rigged up a box, tongue, and all other seemingly necessary equipment, and hied away to market. As to how his business venture finally resulted I do

not know, but eventually the would-be gardener vanished from our community, and if not with the speed of the rustler, Wills, at least with the finality. Perhaps he found a field where his talents received a better reward, at any rate I hope so, for the old gentleman was a very sincere and neighborly fellow even though he refused to accept accommodation from his fellows.

The Colville Stage ran over its route regularly, drawn by four or six horses, depending on the road conditions. We children enjoyed the sight of the eager ponies plunging along.

I don't recall that there were any hold-ups, or untoward adventures, nor can I say definitely that Felix Warren, master of "the ribbons", and the most outstanding driver in the Northwest, ever drove over this run. I do recall gathering with my younger brothers and sisters on the ridge near our house to watch for the coming of the stage, heralded in advance by a cloud of dust, and we would watch it pass and disappear until not the slightest trace of its going could be seen in the distance.

One old freighter, we'll call him "Cap" and skip his last name, used to make overnight halts at our place. One evening he came wheeling along, "encouraging" his mules with more than ordinary enthusiasm. When he halted for a few words with us it became quite apparent that "Cap" was thoroughly "polluted". In vain we argued that he should go no farther that day. There had just been three days of heavy fall rain and not far ahead on the trail lay a broad flat, a regular quagmire in the spring or after a downpour. Real Missouri gumbo could have been no worse. There was genuine danger of getting bogged down but all our reasoning availed nothing. "Cap" was determined to spend the evening with another neighbor a couple of miles farther on.

We assured him he would get stuck.

"Naw, these here canaries can lug twice the load I've got across that swale," he bragged, and whistled to his mules. He had six head hauling a wagon and a trailer, both well enough loaded. The weary brutes heaved into their collars and toiled away, while we went about our chores.

About eight thirty there was a commotion in the yard, the barking of dogs, the stamping of hoofs, and a jingle of chains. Father and I hurried out with a lantern. There was "Cap" and his six mules, all of them thoroughly plastered with "dobe," and soaked by the drizzling rain that had begun anew. "Cap's" bristling black whiskers were glued together with mud so that only his eyes peered forth, bright with anger.

"Why'n tophet didn't some one tell me about that pesky slough up ahead?" he demanded, as though we had not spent half an hour trying to do just that. At any rate he spent the night with us. The next morning we helped get the wagons out, but it was necessary to unload the barrels of liquor and roll them across to solid ground, and tear down the wagons and drag them out in parts. Once everything had been skidded to terra firma it did not take long to get the stranded freighter on his way again, but this time he detoured. He had done well to get his six mules out by himself; such was our conclusion after seeing him happy on his way. Old "Cap" spent many nights with us after that, but never under the same circumstances.

I shall not go into detail regarding the old German farmer, who, during the World War, let his native thrift get the better of judgment. He was a member of the school board in his district, and the matter of buying a new flag came up. The old one was getting pretty well frayed.

"Mebbe it's besser we wait awhile," said old Hans, "we might

want a different one pretty quick now."

I don't suppose the old fellow will ever know how close he came to being exhibit A at a neck tie party, but cooler counsel prevailed and the hotheads finally gave up their resolve to make an example of him. For a long time he was regarded with a goodly share of suspicion.

We pioneers have our tales of buried treasure too. There was another old German farmer who did not believe in banks. When he visited with relatives he always slept outside if the weather would permit. It was suspicioned that he buried much of his money under an apple tree near his own farm home. Beyond a doubt he did "plant" some of it for only a couple of years ago the man who now owns the place, while plowing over the old building site, turned up about three hundred dollars worth of gold coins. Other treasure troves were rumored to have been buried by this same old fellow from Deep Creek to Colville, but that was the only find reported.

Over on Indian Prairie it was told how in the "early" days an old prospector had made a real "killing" and had buried the wealth under his cabin, and then been killed in some forgotten Indian skirmish. The land where the cabin had once stood has long since been cleared, but when the recent owner of the field used to plow near the asserted location of the fateful dwelling, he always set the plow down to the last notch in hopes of raising some thing of interest. I guess a few arrow heads have been the sum of his reward so far.

There was another place on Indian Prairie where money was supposed to be cached away. It just happened to be one of those places that seem destined to change hands every so often, and every new owner has apparently ransacked the buildings to try unearthing some of the hidden

hoard.

How any one could have made enough money on this particular place to bury a fortune is a mystery to some folks.

The sands of Deep Creek and Coulee Creek have been panned, with negligible results, and a rock ridge running through the western end of Indian Prairie is claimed to be of gold bearing formation, but there the matter rests.

Much gold has probably been taken out of the ground in some of the afore-mentioned regions, but needless to say, it was obtained through the medium of grain or livestock.

VI

A Pioneer Peace Officer

Into the capable hands of Joel Warren fell the task of upholding law and order in our particular part of Washington Territory. He was a brother of Felix Warren, mentioned previously in these pages. The Warrens had a place a few miles north of us, but none of them settled there with any degree of permanence.

I remember Joel as a tall, reliant sort of individual, immaculate as to dress, and accustomed to wearing a mustache, goatee, and long hair in the style made popular by "Buffalo Bill" Cody, and "Wild Bill" Hickok. At times he wore a beaded buckskin vest and large hat, carried a pair of pearl handled revolvers with which he was an expert. He seemed to have a choice selection of mounts, and what few times I saw him he seemed to always be on a different horse.

He later became the first Chief of Police in Spokane, and there must be any number of people who are better informed on the record of Joel Warren that I am, but with one his most interesting cases I had occasion to have what the young moderns might call the "inside dope".

On Indian Prairie was a small settlement of Spokanes, under the leadership of a very admirable old Chief, William Treemountain. Up north near Colville was another settlement of redmen, though whether they were members of the same tribe I will not say. A band of some six or eight half breeds seemed to gravitate back and forth between one village and the other, when they were not around town, or generating cussedness elsewhere. The recognized leader of these misfits was a burly villain named Jackson.

The "breeds" were much inclined toward drunken orgies and

quarreling, and when they came to visit their friends on the prairie they generally laid in a supply of "fire water". This they would share with the full blooded Indians, all would get pretty well soused, and then the whole affair would wind up in a row.

One day the half breeds rode in for a visit. Chief William Treemountain desired to avoid unnecessary trouble, so he mounted his pony and hurried to Deep Creek. He asked the Strupe Brothers who still operated the saloon not to sell liquor to the breeds if they came after any. The brothers, respecting the old Chief's wishes, as they had every reason to, promised. (They not make any sales to the breeds, over the bar, or in containers). Satisfied, the old Indian headed homeward. For some reason he took a rather roundabout way, following Deep Creek canyon instead of going up the ridge and back across the Indian Prairie. Perhaps he wished to dodge any unpleasantness that might arise if he should happen to meet the renegades along the trail.

He had not been long on his return journey before the gang of breeds came tearing into Deep Creek. They were a maudlin, reckless collection, already half drunk, and in dire need of more liquor if they were to carry on their celebration. But the Strupes said, "No," and as they were backed up by several whites, the half breeds had to accept the verdict.

But some careless remark gave them the tip that the old Chief was responsible, and had just left. They muttered together for a while, then slunk out the door. Once in their saddles they hit the grit at top speed. We were uneasy at the suddenness of their departure, and the ease with which they had given up their determination to buy some more whiskey.

Of course none of us were eye witnesses to the following events, but the facts were easily put together. Apparently Jackson felt that his leadership of the half breeds required that he do something to avenge the affront to their dignity. At any rate, old Chief Treemountain was cut down by an assassin's bullet far up the canyon. Badly wounded, he still managed to cling to hir horse, and was carried into camp, but he died in a few days. From the time of the wounded chief's return not a breed was seen around the Indian Village.

When Joel Warren rode into the picture the entire encampment on Indian Prairie was in mourning, but he gathered enough information there, at Deep Creek, and at the scene of the crim to put him on the right track. The finger of guilt pointed strongly to Jackson, and the officer took up the trail. It was a long and crooked one but after a stern pursuit that led over much of the rough country to the north Warren "got his man". Jackson was lodged in jail, but the affair which Spokane boasted at that time was a very weak log structure.

From this he made his escape, dodged pursuers, although he was wounded severely in an exchange of shots, and at last went into hiding with friends near Colville. But his wound proved his downfall, for his condition grew steadily worse. Complications set in, and evidently the outlaw realized he was nearing the end of the last trail. He sent word to Joel Warren, and asked him to come at once.

The officer, learning the circumstances leading up the message, supposed the breed wished to make a death bed confession and hurriedly rode away with the messenger. He took reasonable precautions to guard against ambush, and finally reached the dying man's side. Jackson, a wasted, weary creature, beckoned for Warren to come closer. The officer

did, and the half breed, summoning his final reserve of strength, sat up the blankets and spat at him. Such a gesture was an Indian's expression of utmost contempt, but it was a futile one, for Jackson died within a few hours in the squalid cabin which had been his last hide out.

There were a few other escapades of more or less prominence. A young married man was beaten to death with a bed slat in his own home. The crime aroused wide indignation in our community because of the favor with which the victim was regarded, and the ill repute of the parties under suspicion. Although the guilt for this crime was never fixed, most of us were pretty well decided as to where it belonged, but by this time "Judge Lynch" was not relied upon as strongly as in an earlier day, so nothing was done.

There were numerous cases of rustling. One especially notorious gang was cleaned up, and the small timers gradually disappeared. Not however, before a Sheriff's posse surprised several of them at Seven Mile, with a stolen herd of cattle. One man, generally believed innocent, was killed in the fracas.

Though our own farm was mainly devoted to wheat growing much of the prairie to the east of us was open range. A big Aberdeen Agnus bull roved at will there, ruling unchallenged, and accompanying a different herd of cattle home every night. He had been imported at considerable expense from Scotland and seemed justly proud of his lineage.

One day a big spotted bull from the Deep Creek country visited our range. In due course of time the two bulls got together and tangled.. The invader had long horns but they availed him little, and he was eventually whipped and driven away. In the course of the fighting several rods of stout fence were smashed down, but those who watched the battle

felt the labor of rebuilding the fence had been recompensed in full.

Black Bobby, as the Angus bull was affectionately known, did not rule the range much longer. One day his owner, accompanied by a neighbor, rode over from Four Mound Prairie. They rounded up Black Bobby, bridled him, yes, they actually put a bit in his mouth, and he submitted to the indignity like the blue blooded aristocrat he was. Then they led him away. He was never seen again on our range.

Now the man who accompanied the bull's owner had quite a reputation as a marksman. He could keep tin cans in the air with bullets, roll them in any direction, and with a rifle he could literally "shoot the eyebrows off of a gnat. Against wild game he was not so proficient, however. They used to josh him about the deer he had shot at and never even touched. Apparently he was afflicted with "buck fever" or something equally disconcerting. I mention these seemingly irrelevant facts, because this same man later on compiled a record that Harry Tracy might have envied.

Bill, (I shall leave his last name blank) in the course of time got involved in an argument over some wages due him. One thing led to another, and finally to guns. Bill "got his man", and deader than a door nail, too. Two friends of the victim set out to apprehend the victor of the gun duel. He killed both of them. Apparently he wasn't troubled by "buck fever" when man was his game. Bill lived too late to find a niche alongside the famous gun artists of the west, but he must have had that something possessed in common by all the old time gunmen. In this particular case he was acquitted on grounds of self-defense.

When Harry Tracy made his blood-stained march through Washington and seemed headed in our direction, the talk was all of his terrible reputation, and what one would do if they met him. There were all sorts of observations, some highly seasoned with brags and boasts, but one gruff old sod buster probably came closest to the core of truth.

"If I meet Tracy and he wants anything of mine he can have it,- yeah even my pants !" That would probably have been the best type of life insurance for dealing with that desperado, but Tracy never made his much discussed visit into our region. He was cornered on a farm near Creston, wounded, and cut off from any possible escape, save one. He chose to take it, and died by his own hand. One member of the posse which finally brought the outlaw to bay, later moved to a ranch adjoining my home. While not in the slightest sense approving the badman's bloody deads, he always spoke respectfully of his nerve, and deadly marksmanship, and of how he held off the surrounding posse until all his ammunition, save one shell, was gone.

In our own vicinity it seemed that the spirit of the wild west had breathed its last along with Harry Tracy, but in the middle 1920s a man in the little farming center of Reardan temporarily revived it. When the echo of shots had died away the number of victims, including himself, was four. I, personally feel, that the true spirit of the west was home-building, conquering a stubborn soil, and aiding in the expansion of the United States from coast to coast. The gunman can hardly typify the true pioneer, for we have them in abundance even today, but I sometimes feel that homebuilding, and the desire to forward the country's welfare have been relegated a bit to the background.

Perhaps I have dwelt too long on the few unpleasantries that arose to jar us out of the ordinary routine of taming the land and bringing it into use. Just a few added remarks regarding Joel Warren, and we close the chapter of violence and outlawry. When he assumed his position as Spokane's Chief of Police he largely discarded the colorful and useful garb that had served to make him such a personality throughout the region where he, almost unaided, maintained the law and order which were so necessary to settlement and progress. I'm sure a complete record of his career would prove as interesting and perhaps more constructive than most detective yarns.

VII

Pioneer Fun

It is fitting to turn from crimes and sensational events to the lighter side of our pioneer existence. There were barn dances, spelling bees, Literary Meetings, ball games, Mule Day and Community Sales at Reardan, with bucking broncs and races, and gala Fourth of Julys, spent generally at Medical Lake.

I recall that P. A. Page, over on Indian Prairie, had a little mare named Mag that won every Fourth of July race for about five years. He also imported a pack of hounds to run coyotes with. The hounds were trained to chase foxes, which circle and dodge about, but stay comparatively near to home. Not so the coyotes. When they couldn't shake off the dogs they would strike off across the country and travel for miles.

Eventually the whole pack of hounds got scattered, and did not find their way back. That ended one brand of fine sport.

Every community boasted a foot racer, and on Holidays or special occasions these champions would get together for a prize, and the honor of their respective neighborhoods. For weeks before the contest you could see the boys out training, if you knew where to watch. The races were always highly competitive affairs, with wagers laid, before the running and fistic arguments afterwards.

At one time Frank Gotch, World's Heavyweight Wrestling Champion, decided to annex, or perhaps the modern word would be expropriate, the Boxing championship as well. He planned a tour which included a stop over in Spokane, where he was to engage some local push over, and thereby build up his reputation and his bank roll at the same time. The lad who was elected to meet the aspiring champion was a husky Indian Prairie youth

bearing the impressive name of Boomer Weeks. The match came off as scheduled and Boomer bombed Gotch in the first round. The wrestling champ was naturally much chagrined at his defeat, but down it went on the books, nevertheless. I am told that he later inveigled young Weeks into a impromptu wrestling match and tied him into a pretzel, which may have helped salve his injured pride. Gotch deserted the boxing rings, and turned his attention back to wrestling.

Where young Boomer Weeks learned his fighting I can't say, but he used to represent Indian Prairie at the races, and was hard to beat. He too forsook the prize ring, after a fairly impressive start, and turned his attention to fighting fires. He became Chief of the Spokane Fire Department.

We used to drive miles to see our home team trim a rival in baseball. I was a catcher, in the days before the modern defensive equipment was used. I could show you as crooked a right hand as any big leaguer, for we didn't even use a big mitt during my playing days.

The betting and the rows at these contests would have been a scandal anywhere else. Each team provided an umpire to outcrook the opposition. The real excitement often came after the game when all arguments were definitely settled on the theory that might makes right.

It was not unheard of for some one having a big bet placed, to treat one or the other members of the opposition's battery very liberally to whisky or some equally potent liquor. At one game one of the farm hands had fifty dollars bet on the home team. Desiring to save his money, he invested another three bucks in some "moonshine" and proceeded to get the "enemy" catcher thoroughly oiled. As a result the pitcher could not get

any one out on strikes because the catcher couldn't hang on to the ball.

Eventually the game wound up in a riot, but the guilty farm hand was safely out of the way, enjoying his ill-gotten gains. Such underhanded tactics were the exception rather than the rule I am glad to say, but as the old saying puts it, "The bad often outshines the good!"

A good feature of such sporting events was the drawing together of people, and the exchanging of news and opinions.

The Literary Meetings were popular during the winter months. There the people gathered to exercise their vocal chords, and marshall their best arguments in formal debates.

The best debates, though, were the impromptu ones down at the store. Almost any afternoon there would be a sizeable gathering of the sit and whittle club, and talk generally veered around to politics. The men would argue, wet their tonsils with high voltage liquor, and then resume the verbal warfare.

One old timer, used to drink and argue until he was out "cold". Then his friends would load him in his wagon, start the team down the road, and let them go. They always took their master safely home. Once in a while the result of an argument would be a scrap, but generally one was expected to prove his points by arguments, regardless of their logic.

After the insane asylum was established at Medical Lake, a new kind of excitement frequently prevailed. The patients, or "Looneys" as they were generally referred to, sometimes slipped away from the institution's farm, and drifted through the country, heading for most anywhere.

One young rancher returned from Deep Creek to his farm one evening and noted with curiosity that all the laundry was hung out on

the line. This naturally interested the young fellow, as such had not been the case when he had gone away in the morning. He supposed his sisters had paid him a surprise visit, so he put away the team, gathered a bucketful of eggs and strode cheerfully into the house. Imagine his feelings when he swung open the door and confronted a giant of a man, diligently at work over a wash tub. The farmer stared, I imagine. The stranger straightened up from his work, wiped the soap from his hairy arms, and pointed to the table.

"Just put 'em down there," he said calmly, "and go get me some wood."

The young rancher obeyed with great eagerness, but once outside he went speedily to a neighbor's home, where he could use a telephone. There he summoned the proper authorities, and soon everything was straightened out.

A few days later he went out to start rigging up his combine. There beneath the expensive machine was a neat little pile of shavings, kindling and wood, all in readiness for a match. In the barn and sheds were similar piles of fuel. Evidently the stranger with the passion for cleanliness would have made a clean sweep if he hadn't been so crowded for time. The young rancher always considered himself lucky that he was a bachelor to have such a large supply of dirty clothing on hand, otherwise the unwelcome visitor might have found time to get around and ignite the bonfires he had so diligently prepared. Nevertheless, my-----farmer friend soon joined the ranks of the married. Perhaps he felt it would be better if no laundry was allowed to accumulate, and tempt other ambitious guests to pay him a call.

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VIII

Early Views of Spokane

My first visit to Spokane did not impress me to any extent. A single unpaved street ran the length of the humble village that was destined to be the future metropolis of the Inland Empire. At that time there must have been a half dozen scattered towns throughout the region that could have equalled Spokane in size. Cheney was even larger and more ambitious. The two settlements waged a merry little battle for the honor of being the county seat, after the organization of state and county governments.

A large portion of Washington Territory, after some revision of boundaries, was formally admitted as a state in 1889, under the very appropriate name of Washington. My father was a member of the first Spokane County Board of Commissioners.

Spokane eventually became the county seat, and in due course of time became an outstanding city, largely because of abundant water power and its location on a natural pass through the mountains, though this latter advantage was shared also with Cheney.

But my first glimpse of Spokane gave no indication of any glorious future. Along its muddy thoroughfare were located a smattering of huts, tent houses, shops, general stores, and minor business establishments. Hitching rails lined both sides of the street in various forms of disrepair.

There was practically no settlement at all on the north side of the river, and no safe way to cross, which was the main reason why the stage coach travelled west across Hangman Creek, and turned north at Deep Creek to reach the best available crossing.

Much of present day Spokane is located on built land. The site of the old Auditorium, now occupied by Pratt's Furniture Store, was a deep, rugged gully, when I made my first trip to the "city". A large, gnarled Pine grew out from the edge of it, as though to act as a landmark for the unpretentious little village which as yet did not make much of a show by itself. The gully and pine tree have both gone the inevitable way of all things that stand in the way of progress, which is, perhaps, the way it should be.

Under many other buildings in Spokane one might, by excavating, find buried the remains of another, earlier community, Spokane Falls. Those remains however, would be largely in the form of tin cans, cinders, and boulders.

After the fire in 1889, the town rebuilt in a lively, more up to date fashion, and though it seems like only yesterday that I made my first visit, one goes there today and fins a thriving industrial center, teeming with the life and vigor of those who truly believe they are the masters of their own fate.

Of course the coming of the railroads, the opening of mines in the Coeur d'Alenes, the development of lumbering, and the productiveness of the new lands all were important factors in this rapid growth.

Any one driving along the Sunset Highway from Spokane through Deep Creek would find it hard to realize that the latter was once the larger and more important town, but such is the truth. Deep Creek boasted a hotel, blacksmith shop, a couple of stores and saloons, a cheese factory, a saw mill, a livery stable and stock yard.

Today all the original buildings are gone, and school children

gleefully swim in the old mill pond, little realizing that had not Spokane come suddenly to life they probably would not be free to plunge into the cool water clad only in their birthday suits.

Yes, Spokane's new lease on life meant death to the fond hopes of Deep Creek, and while it has been a thing of interest to watch the one grow, it stirs a person sadly to see the other dwindle away, as speedy cars whiz the farmers to the "big city", where chain and department stores, not available in the old days are now ready to supply their wants.

IX

Setting Up For Myself

In the course of all these events I had grown up and now I desired to start farming for myself. I was given an opportunity to buy a quarter section of land close to where the grain shipping point of Hite is located. None of the land was broken, but I was given assurance of help in getting started, so I completed the deal.

It was hard work, for that sod was every bit as tough as any I had helped my father break several years earlier, but eventually I had fifty acres ready, and seeded to spring wheat. The crop and prices were all that one could have desired and all went well. From time to time I arranged to bring more land into cultivation.

No one troubled to summer fallow their land in those days. One crop followed another, and soon I was ready to expand my holdings. I bought another quarter section, and then came disaster, in the form of the "Cleveland hard times". Prices dropped until wheat was worth practically nothing. In addition, poor growing seasons and difficult harvest conditions added to our burdens.

The only one to benefit, so far as I know, was a Russian wood cutter, a down in the mouth sort of fellow who journeyed through the country with his tools and camping equipment loaded on a wheelbarrow which he trundled along before him. The fellow could not understand the value of American money, save the dollar. He cut wood for a dollar a rick when he could get a job, and his sole food consisted of wheat. He boiled it for breakfast, ground it in a little hand coffee mill for flour, and burned it crisp to take the place of coffee. He would pay a dollar for a sack of wheat, though it was worth much less, and eye

you with suspicion if you tried to return some change.

The "Rooshan" seemed well enough content with conditions as they were, for perhaps he was much better off than he had been in his own country, or else he did his grumbling in his native tongue, which would have been "greek" to me.

Things continued to sink, and conditions became so bad that I was faced with the threat of losing my land for taxes, which I had been unable to meet for some time.

At this critical time in my fortunes, there arrived in our community a visitor, Miss Sarah Hemphill. She was well to do, owning a ranch and considerable property in California. She had been ailing and had come to visit relatives in Washington in the hopes that she might regain her health. I wonder how that would sound to any California Chamber of Commerce.

We were married after a few months acquaintance, and my wife's money removed all danger of losing my land. For any success that has attended my many years of farming, a great deal of the credit must go to my wife.

Up to this time most of the threshing had been done with a machine owned by some halfbreeds in the Colville Valley. It was powered by a long sweep to which horses were hitched. From the gears of this power plant a tumbling road extended to the separator. The grain was fed in carefully, and the straw had to be bucked away by hand as the machine had no blower.

Grain was usually cut with a header to avoid handling excess straw.

About this time back in Chicago an ambitious chap, known to us only as young Leiter, tried to corral the wheat market. Wheat reared up from the depths to which it had lowered, to the stupendous price of 70¢ per bushel. You can well imagine the delight with which we farmers followed the trail of the skyrocketing prices. It took the World War, many years later to show us what a real boom in prices amounted to, and other things as well.

Things began to perk up. Jake Bartholemew, who farmed extensively near Reardan, bought a big steam threshing outfit. I'm not going to be too definite about it, but I believe the rig was a combination of Buffalo-Pitts and Woodbury machines.

A very large crew was needed to operate the equipment and a cookhouse was provided by the owner, in addition to all the hands. If memory serves me correctly he threshed by the day, rather than by the sack. It looked like we were in for a big run. All through the rolling Reardan and Crescent countries were countless settings of headed grain, awaiting our arrival.

And then came the fall rains, unduly early, and unusually heavy. Stubble fields became miry, the stacks of headed wheat soaked through to the ground, until the kernels started to sprout. One farmer lost practically all of thirteen large stacks, and took with a shrug. He was an old timer, and knew how things veered from good to bad.

We plugged along, threshing when we could, but always having to tear off the tops of the stacks, and throw away hundreds of dollars worth of moulding grain. At last we pulled onto Four Mound Prairie to thresh for Joe Haynes. Nobody had ever respected Joe's ability as a

farmer but he proved himself in this instance. In the lay off between stacking and threshing he had gone down to the saw-mill on Coulee Creek and bought a couple of loads of rough lumber. With these he had roofed his stacks so thoroughly that not a grain was lost. I guess that he just played a hunch.

We ran out several hundred sacks for him and he cashed in on his whole crop for the top price. Thereafter, when folks spoke of Joe Haynes they didn't talk out of the corner of their mouths.

The rains that ruined one year's crop proved to be the making of the next. I don't know how "Young" Leiter fared in realizing his plans, but he sure gave all of us a much needed boost. Prices became more or less stable, affairs settled down to normal, and the conquest of a new land, so far as I was concerned, seemed pretty well concluded. Today, such holdings as I still retain have proved worthy of the hard labor I put in developing them. I have a standing offer for $12,000 for the wheat land near Hite, and the strip of pasture bordering it.

X

Sixty Years After

In later years I decided to lease my farm land and move to Deep Creek. I built a comfortable house beside the Behm Store, and did a little carpenter work in my spare time. I have always enjoyed building things and when log dwellings went out of style I turned to work on frame ones. It was my lot to help tear down some of the old historical land marks, such as the hotel, and rebuild them into modern structures.

I also found time to write a History of the Deep Creek School, which was to run by installments in the school paper. I also helped sponsor the little newspaper, as it seemed to me a very worthwhile endeavor. From that school students have gone forth to success in all walks of life, as well as to the battlefields of France. Then too, I have always been interested in education, of which I did not receive any too much, and to help interest the children in that direction helped make up my own short coming.

During the winter of 1935-36 a fire, which destroyed my home, burned all my manuscripts and personal property. I gave the Minister, whose lot bordered mine, a life time lease on my little tract. He had proved himself a true friend on numerous occasions and I wished to do likewise so far as it lay in my power. I then went to live with one of my younger sisters, Mrs. Alice Paul, with whom I now reside. Her children help make up for the family with which my wife and I were never blessed.

In the summer of 1937 I made a trip to California to look after some of my wife's property. Because of illness she was unable to accompany me. Most of the way I travelled alone, save for an occasional

hitchhiker. One young fellow I picked up took a turn at the wheel, for which I was grateful. The trip proved to be without untoward events, and was most enjoyable in the new car which I had bought to replace my twenty year old Doge. While in San Francisco I crossed the eight mile bridge to Oakland, and attended the ceremony connected with opening the great Golden Gate Bridge. It certainly is a mammoth of its kind.

On my return home I crossed that mighty span, and my thoughts quite naturally went back to that distant day, some sixty years back, when an anxious train of immigrants crossed the mile-long bridge at Kearney Junction and turned their resolute faces toward the unknown future that awaited them all in Washington Territory.

-------The End-------

Mr. Magers died among the very wheat fields he himself had broken.

In the summer of 1938 he drove out to the combine to bring the crew home for dinner. Feeling tired, he turned the wheel over to his nephew, but the car was no sooner underway again than he slumped over against the driver, dead.

A serious heart ailment had troubled him for some time, and at last it struck, with all the suddenness of an Indian arrow along the Old Oregon Trail.

So passed one of the builders of the Deep Creek community, a man whose word among his fellows was as good as gold, and whose carefully measured opinion served to end many a bitter disagreement, to the entire satisfaction of all parties concerned.

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I grieved at his passing, asdid all who knew him, for to me he had been both a kindly counsellor, and a worthy example. I regret that this manuscript, prepared from notes he had given me, could not have been completed in time for him to approve or revise it. For any seeming discrepancies I assume all blame. For any material of interest or value, in these pages, I give him full credit. By his works you shall know him!

---H. L. R.

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