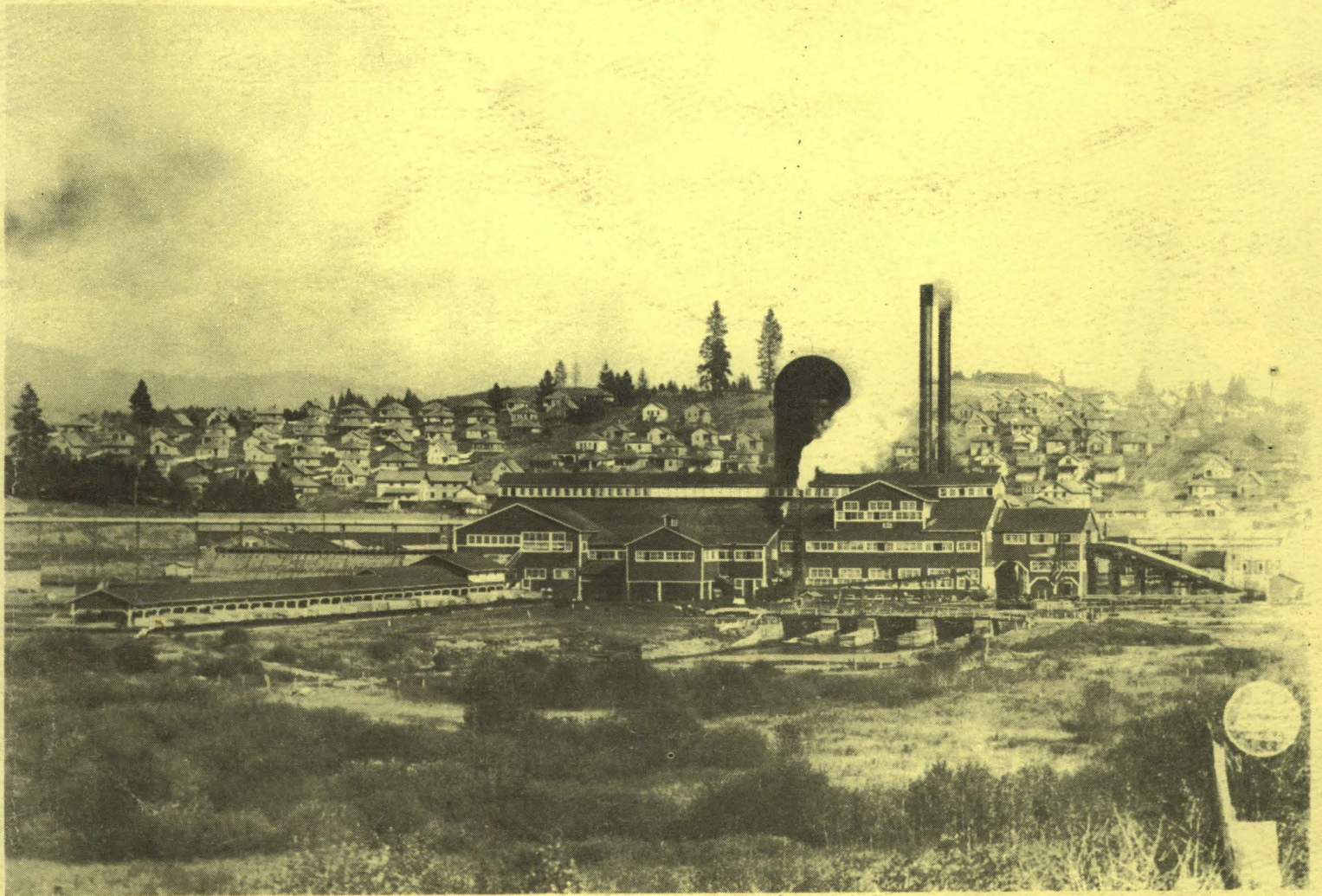


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in this issue

Life in a Company Town: Potlatch, Idaho

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CONTRIBUTORS

KEITH PETERSEN is the former director of the Latah County Historical Society. He is presently working as a historical consultant based in Pullman, Washington. His interest in Potlatch stems from a 1979 LCHS exhibit. This article was originally given as a paper at the 1980 Idaho History Conference in Boise, Idaho. His major research interest is in Psychiana and he welcomes any information in this area.

Born on a Latah County homestead near Bovill, JOHN MILLER spent his early years on a ranch near that town. A University of Idaho graduate, with a degree in geology, he spent 40 years with Standard Oil of California in foreign exploration. He and his wife, Pastora, now live in Belmont, California. Mr. Miller returned to Idaho from his far-flung assignments (for vacations). This continued interest lead him to write The Trees Grew Tall, a book on eastern Latah County history published in 1972.

STAFF

Editor: Ralph Jenks

Typists: Janyce Paulsen
Kathleen Probasco

Editorial Assistant: Margaret Jenks

Newsletter: Keith Petersen

Drawings and Maps: John B. Miller

Cover photo: The Potlatch Mill with the town in the background, taken in 1913. LCHS collection.

mill and town rather than enlarge the facility in their community. But Palouse was not the only town to lose in the bidding war for the great sawmill. A group of directors of the Company met in Moscow to decide where to locate the factory. Company manager William Deary came in from the woods, pulled off his boots and began drying his feet and stockings by the stove. When he heard the directors discussing Moscow as the site for the mill, he jumped up barefooted, went to the table where a large map lay, picked up a pencil and said in his thick Irish brogue, "Gentlemen, there isn't enough water in Moscow to baptize a bastard! The mill'll go here." He then punched a hole in the map, which, coincidentally, was exactly where Potlatch, Idaho, now stands. Of course, Deary was familiar with the map.¹¹ In 1905, construction began on the Company's plant, the largest white pine sawmill in the world. By the following September, the factory turned out lumber "as though the ground on which it is located . . . had never known anything else than the vibration of the mill's multitude of machinery in restless operation."¹² At the same time the Company erected houses and commercial buildings. When the plant opened, 128 dwellings were occupied with 35 more nearly finished. In addition the town had two large boarding houses, two schools, a hotel, two churches, a store, a bank, a post office and an opera house. More structures were built later.¹³

One consideration for selecting an isolated location was that the Company needed space upon which to build its gigantic sawmill. But the managers also wanted to have control over the men who worked at the plant. By owning the town, the Company could force dissidents to leave the community and would also, to a degree, regulate the social life of their employees. Thus Potlatch was born. The town was patterned after Pullman, Illinois, which, before the strike of 1893, had a reputation for producing a new type of dependable and ambitious workingman. That image was tarnished by the strike, but

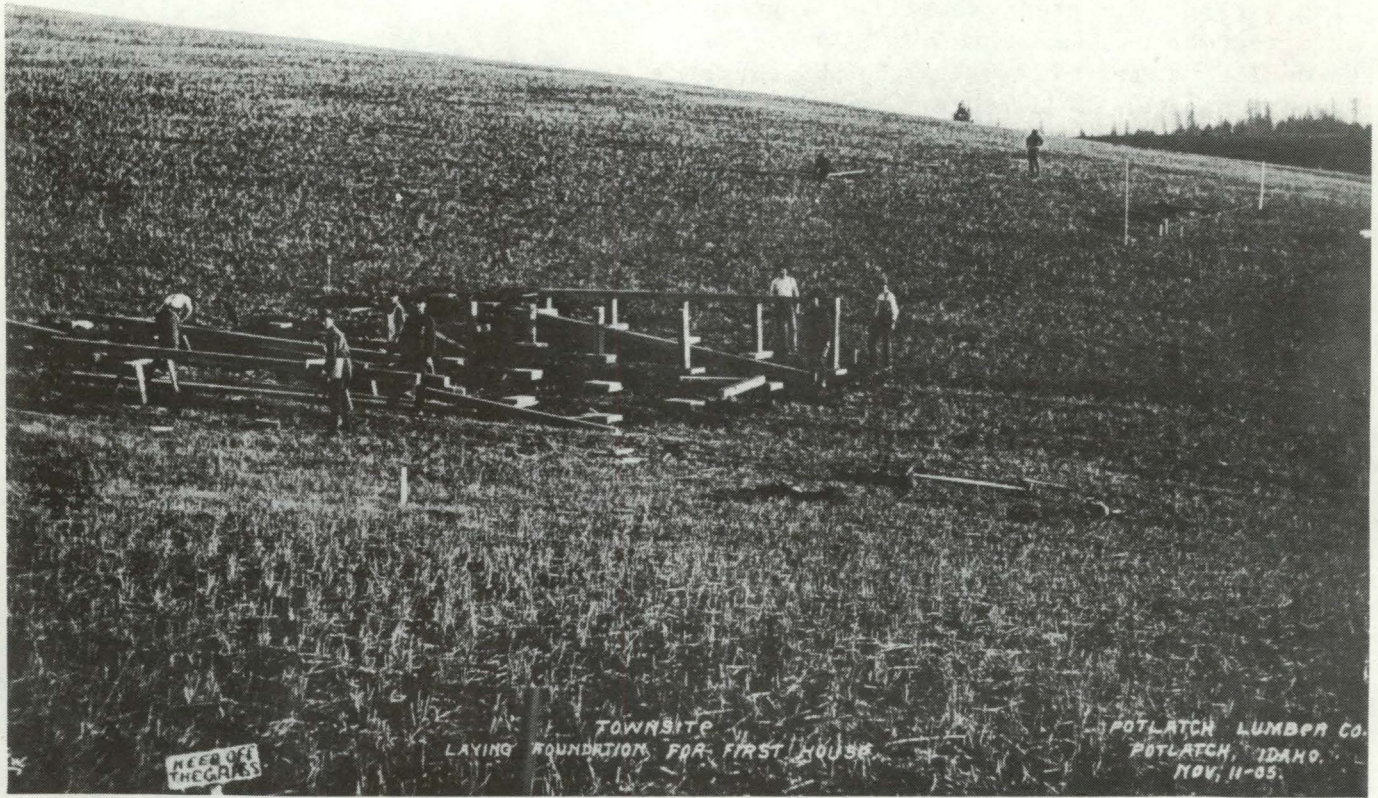


William Deary. LCHS collection.

* *

the incorporators of the Potlatch Lumber Company, inspired by what Pullman had been, believed their town could mimic the good while eliminating the bad. "Their idea," stated longtime Potlatch resident and employee W. J. Gamble, "was that their men should not be burdened with excessive . . . rentals, that you should have good schools for them, you should have a company store where they can buy things at a fair price."¹⁴

Pullman owed much of its success to its layout, and, following George Pullman's example, both Deary and Allison W. Laird, town manager, spent considerable time planning their town.¹⁵ No structure was far from the mill and the plant whistles could be heard from any point. Plank streets and wooden sidewalks facilitated travel in the business core, while board



Laying the foundation for the first house on the townsite of Potlatch. November, 1905. LCHS collection.

* * *



The town of Potlatch in April, 1906, looking north. LCHS collection.

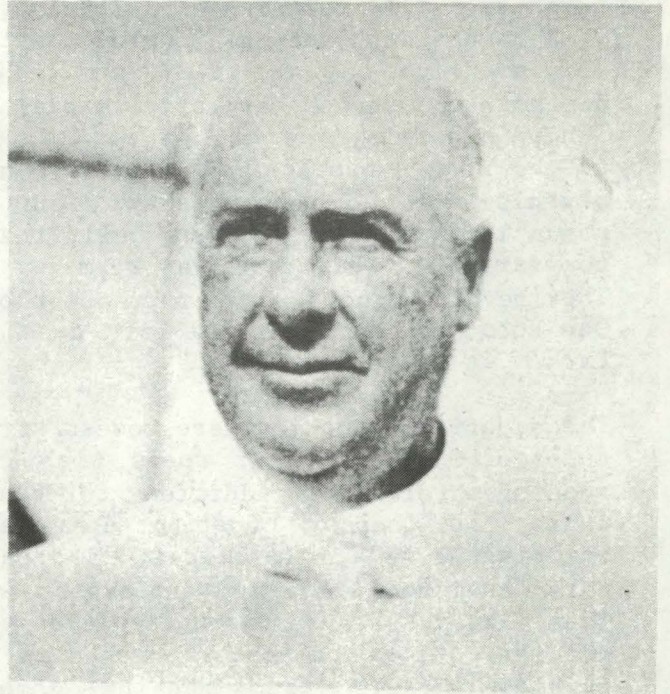
fences surrounded each house lot. Carefully manicured yards typified the residential district surrounding the businesses. The town eventually had over 250 frame houses, somewhat varied architecturally and usually painted different colors to relieve monotony. The management lived on a slope southeast of the city center known as Nob Hill, which consisted of a park, tree-lined streets and substantial homes. Large boarding houses for single men and immigrants from Italy, Japan and Greece were located close to the mill on the flat. The overall layout of the town was quite impressive. Arthur Sundberg came to the place in 1906 and compared Potlatch with the logging towns he had known in the Midwest. "Oh, well, this here was just like coming into heaven, coming out here," was his viewpoint.¹⁶

Where one lived depended on one's position in the Company, marital status and nationality. Nob Hill houses--modern three-to-four bedroom homes with steam heat and hot and cold running water--were on one end of the scale. Many of the administrators living on Nob Hill even had servants. "The thing to do," recalled Anna Utt, who worked as a domestic so she could go to school in Potlatch, "was to have your little servant girl. . . . You get a family to live with and they'd feed you for doing the ironing and the dishwashing and taking care of the kids. Stuff like that . . . so they could go to their parties and whatnots."¹⁷

There was a certain antagonism toward Nob Hill. The place was often referred to as "Snob Hill," which reflected some residents' attitudes towards managers. But the class divisions were not as tightly drawn as in many company towns. While Laird was considered a snob who "didn't know any more about lumber than a hog knows about Sunday,"¹⁸ Deary, another Nob Hill resident, was just one of the boys. The Nob Hill families usually socialized together to the exclusion of others, but even this was not a cause of great alienation. The "common people" probably preferred socializing with themselves, as

Sundberg explained. "They didn't really have anywhere near the social life that the common people had. The common people had a lot more fun."¹⁹

* *



A. W. Laird, assistant and then general manager of the Potlatch mill.

* *

The housing at the foot of the hill, reserved for certain ethnic groups, typified the other extreme. At first, the Greeks, Italians and Japanese lived in bunkhouses. Sundberg explained that,

There was a little strip of this island here . . . where they had some buildings that was the original buildings that they put up when they first started construction. . . . Well, after they got the houses built here in town . . . they still had these buildings . . . and . . . they had one big building . . . that was a Jap camp. . . . Then they had some of these buildings that had been bunkhouses and so on, where all the Italians lived. And then there was just a few of 'em there where all the Greeks lived. There wasn't any of the Greeks or Italians or the Japs that lived in the town itself.²⁰

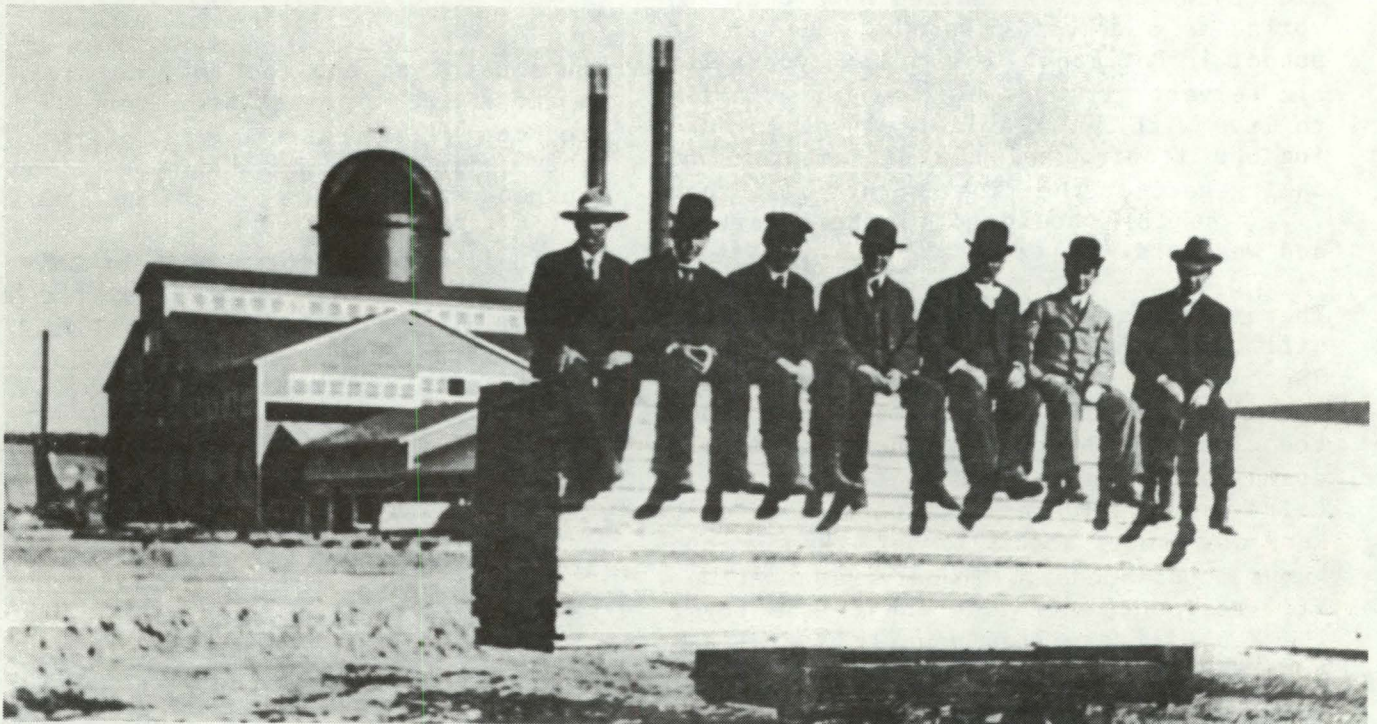
A fire destroyed the bunkhouses used by the Greeks and Italians and the Company replaced them with "temporary," single-wall, frame structures built on the same location. Many of these temporary structures are still being used. Although the workers did not like the housing they had little choice but to live there. Mike Stefanos, a Greek employee explained, "There's nothing you can do. . . . You got to stay someplace. They didn't have anything else to go and stay. You can go up to Onaway, . . . but hell, that's too far. . . . But there was rooms. . . . They're nice rooms, two nice bedrooms. One room--you can eat and sit down and talk. It was pretty nice."²¹

The majority of houses were modest structures of three-to-eight rooms with cold running water. In addition to family units, the Company constructed a large boarding house for bachelors. The managers believed married employees were less likely to cause disruption than single men, and consequently prohibited unmarried workers from renting company houses.²²

In addition to housing, the Company provided residents with all necessary services. Management contracted with the county sheriff's office for police protection and organized a volunteer fire department. All employees were covered by medical insurance and were treated by a company physician, while the doctor cared for non-employees on a fee basis. The bank was a secure place to deposit money. The Company even disposed of out-house waste.

You take rural living, used to be that they would dig a hole . . . and then they'd build a little building on top of that. . . . And then they'd generally put in a crescent or a star . . . in the door to indicate what it was. . . . [In Potlatch] on the end of the woodshed . . . was this little privy building. . . . But instead of having a hole in the ground it had a drawer. . . . Well, then they had a contractor that come around . . . and he would empty all these . . . and cart it off. . . . So you see, they were a little bit more modern than the average rural person.²³

* * *



Taken September 11, 1906, this is the first load of lumber shipped from the Potlatch mill. From left to right: R. M. Weyerhaeuser, Cliff Musser, William Deary, A. W. Laird, Wilkinson, A. H. Irving, Mark Seymour. LCHS collection.

The Company spent a good deal of effort trying to make Potlatch a morally enlightened community. The managers wanted to do more than merely provide shelter and necessary services. Again, following the Pullman example, they believed working men would be better off if alcohol, gambling and prostitution were banned from the town. Things did not work out exactly as the Company hoped.²⁴

"No women of questionable character are allowed at the hotel, and should a waitress or chambermaid show signs of departing from the path of virtue she is at once discharged and . . . has no recourse but to leave town," wrote Clifford Imus about Potlatch in 1910.²⁵ The Company abrogated brothels, but eliminating prostitution was a different matter. While Imus, a visitor, did not detect prosti-

tutes, the working men knew where to find them, as Gus Demus remembered.

[The management] knew it, but they wasn't sure of it, and they didn't bother to look into that, you see. Because they knew, the single men they have to have their women once in awhile. They only bring a girl from Spokane or two, and they don't bother. . . . 'Course, they don't stay long. It wasn't regular prostitute house. . . . They didn't permit it because it was Company's town, see. And Company didn't want anything like that. . . . But weekends, you know, they bring a girl in here and stay over for a night or two.²⁶

Similarly, the Company forbid saloons and gambling and even attempted to have the

* * *



First school in Potlatch. This was near the present "old gym." LCHS collection.

county commissioners limit the number of taverns in nearby towns.²⁷ Once again, their efforts met with limited success. The elimination of saloons within the city limits actually brought a boom to the Saturday night prosperity of neighboring towns such as Princeton and Onaway. Even in Potlatch it was impossible to abolish booze. Edward Muhsal recalled how some men smuggled alcohol into their homes. "Guys'd walk from here up the railroad track there to Princeton and get their stuff there, you know liquor and stuff and bring it home. Bring it home in gunny sacks."²⁸ Stefanos told of other ways to obtain booze, and remembered that gambling was not uncommon.

In Potlatch there was some Italians. They were bootleggers. They was making some wine. . . . And we'd go and get together. . . . We go visit them and they always give us drink . . . and we had a lot of fun. Sometimes we play poker together and we get along fine.²⁹

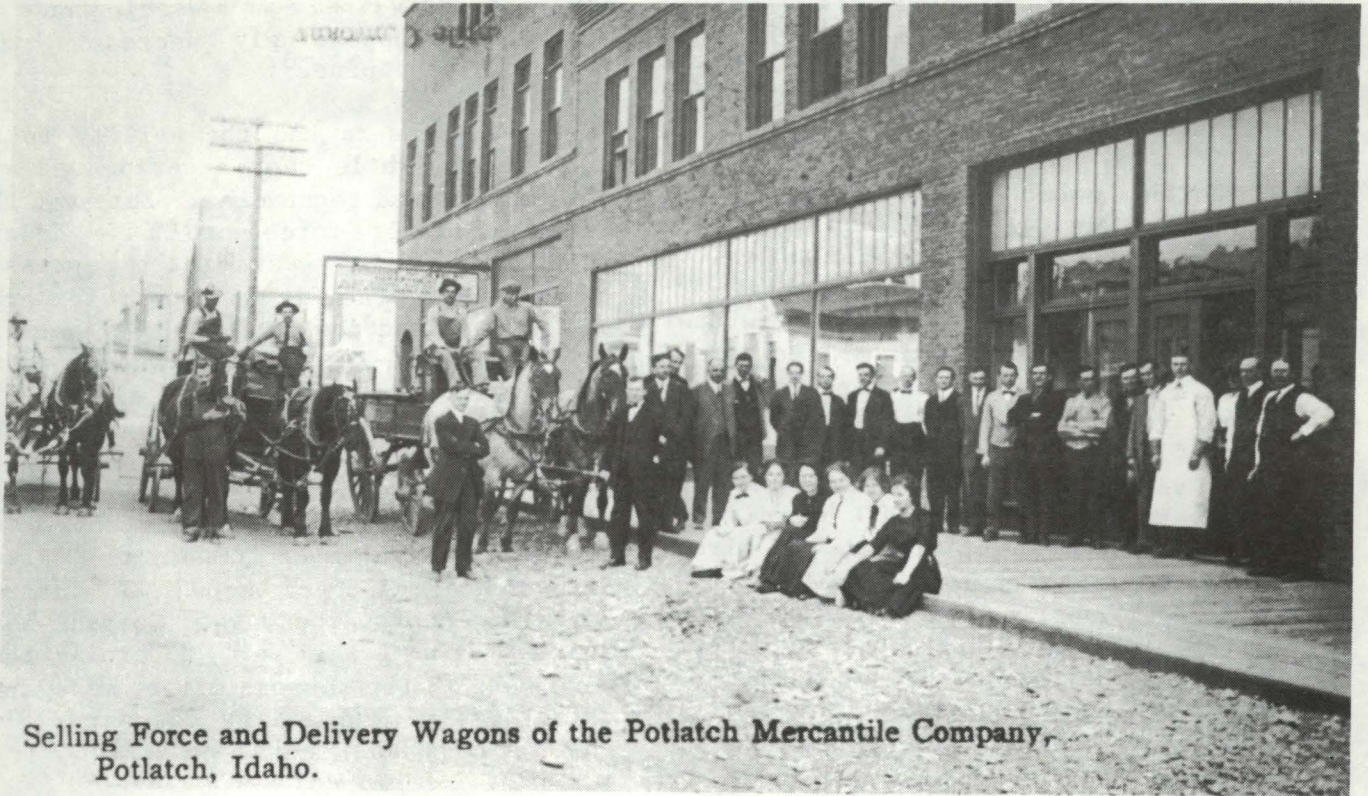
Good schools and ample places of worship were considered necessary to create a proper moral climate in the town. Mabel Morris recollected that "there was hardly ever a time when the seats weren't all full" in the Potlatch churches.³⁰ Eventually, three churches served the needs of the residents. The Company constructed and furnished each, and paid for all maintenance.³¹

As important as religion was, the managers paid even more attention to schooling. Again, the Company built and maintained the school houses. In addition, the firm assumed all other educational costs, including teachers' salaries. The school board consisted of the town manager and two other company employees and saw to it that the teachers received considerably more pay than in neighboring towns--almost as much as those in Spokane. Highly qualified instructors were attracted to the place. The Company also handled disciplinary problems in a unique fashion. If a student misbehaved too often,

the father was threatened with losing his job at the mill, which generally led to a remarkable turnabout in the student's behavior. As a result of these efforts, many people considered the Potlatch schools the best in the county.³²

One of the harshest criticisms of company towns is that company-controlled stores over-priced goods and, through various script and credit schemes, forced employees into constant debt. This image seems in most cases to be overdrawn. In Potlatch few people "owed their souls" or even much of their wages to the company store. Low prices and well-stocked shelves at the Potlatch Mercantile attracted customers from miles around. The store was one of the largest in the Inland Empire and had two full floors and twelve separate departments ranging from dry goods and shoes to glassware and a millinery. The Company maintained a large ranch on logged-off lands outside of town and had over 500 head of cattle as well as hogs and poultry which insured that The Merc was stocked with fresh dairy and meat products. Numerous gimmicks, from free coffee and donuts to stud service, drew customers. The biggest attractions were The Merc's Sales Days. Usually held five or six times a year, the Sales Days would bring as many as 5,000 people to the town. Arthur Sundberg remembered how they were.

Well, this McDonald was the manager of the store. He was a typical P. T. Barnum. . . . He was full of blarney from one end to the other. . . . He'd advertise a big sale. And he advertised it clear from Spokane to Lewiston . . . and, maybe one time he'd say he had free haircuts or maybe the next time it'd be . . . free candy for the kids or something. . . . Well, then the Sale Day come here'd come the people and actually they'd come as far away as Rosalia with horses and buggies and wagons and maybe some of 'em'd take two, three days for the trip. . . . The hillside, over here on the north side of town. . . . Well,



Selling Force and Delivery Wagons of the Potlatch Mercantile Company,
Potlatch, Idaho.

Selling force and delivery wagons of the Potlatch Mercantile Co. LCHS collection.

from there clear over--almost to Ona-
way . . . that hillside'd be just
thick, just full of wagons and teams,
tied out there. And, of course, the
town was full of 'em. And the
streets down there--you couldn't
drive through for people and teams
and stuff.

And old Mac he'd stand there and
his belly'd bounce up and down and
he'd laugh and he'd talk and he'd
trade and he'd trade. He'd swindle
some of them people just something
terrible, and oh, they liked it, they
just really soaked it up. There was
nobody in the world like Mac!³³

The paternalistic nature of company towns
is also strongly criticized. Residents
lived in an artificial environment, with
no private property and no local voting
privileges. By offering everything from
an outstanding baseball field with a large
grandstand to providing for all personal
services, the Potlatch Lumber Company
controlled the lives of residents. Town

* * *
dwellers could vote in county, state and
national elections, but had no voice in
local affairs. There was no mayor and
no town council. The town manager made
decisions, and the relationship between
the manager and residents was strictly a
business one. People were discharged
from the community for disobeying rules.
And, of course, no one owned their own
homes.³⁴

Disapproval of such a system is valid.
The lifestyle was contrived, with its lack
of local democracy, prohibition of per-
sonal property ownership, ethnic segrega-
tion and matrimonial encouragement. But
in Potlatch paternalistic capitalism
seemed to work. The Weyerhaeusers had
a long record of treating employees fair-
ly, and certainly Potlatch residents
received many benefits--low rent, decent
wages, good schools and churches, ade-
quate police and fire protection and
competitively-priced merchandise. The
Lumber Company, as has been seen, also
took great pride in designing and managing

the town. The dictatorship was benevolent, being good for some though not for others. All could agree, however, with one former resident who claimed, "Life in Potlatch was different."³⁵

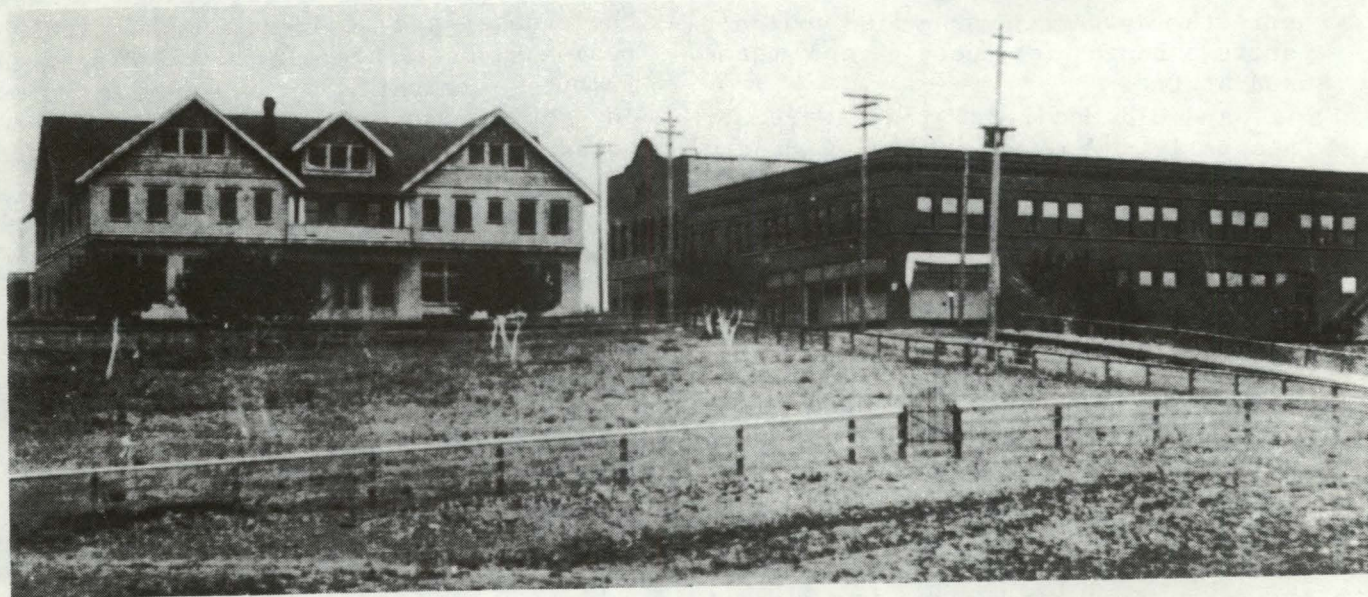
The Potlatch Lumber Company began with high expectations. "There was an atmosphere of importance and superiority about it, a sort of grandiosity that at times seemed to annoy father," wrote Frederick Weyerhaeuser's son. "It enjoyed its full share of newspaper publicity."³⁶ The venture started impressively, but early profits were deceptive. From 1908 through 1927, Potlatch Lumber sawed an annual average of 131,000,000 board feet of timber in its Potlatch and Elk River plants, but bookkeepers consistently marked ledger entries in red ink. Not until the 1940s were dividends to stockholders paid on a regular, annual basis. The Company battled a series of financial problems. The Potlatch mill was one of the last belt-driven sawmills, never as efficient as those electrically driven, and Idaho's mountainous topography hampered production. Privately-owned timber lands were taxed heavily by the state and southern pine was shipped to market cheaper than Idaho pine. The Panama Canal tremendously increased the value of Doug-

las fir harvested in Washington and Oregon, correspondingly decreasing the value of Idaho pine.³⁷

The Weyerhaeusers had the ability to absorb losses while they experimented with new markets and techniques. But even they were eventually forced to make drastic changes in Idaho. During the depression of the 1930s, Pacific Northwest lumbermen cut only a fraction of the timber normally harvested. The Weyerhaeuser conglomerate faced the possibility that all of its northern Idaho interests might go bankrupt. In 1931 they decided to merge the Edward Rutledge Timber Company of Coeur d'Alene, the Potlatch Lumber Company and the Clearwater Timber Company of Lewiston into one large firm known as Potlatch Forests, Incorporated, with Company headquarters in Lewiston. Modernizations were made in the various mills, managerial talent was pooled and by the early 1940s the business was making consistent profits.³⁸

Times were hard in the town of Potlatch during the 1930s, despite the merger. The mill shut down for awhile, and people suffered. Residents "were going without," Glen Gilder recalled. "Although they finally got this public Works Progress

* * *



Hotel and store. LCHS collection.



Mill and pond, September, 1906. LCHS collection.

project and that helped. That was groceries. I think 90 percent of them were way behind on the rent. They didn't dress too fancy."³⁹ Activities of the newly-formed P.F.I. began gravitating to Lewiston. The trees around Potlatch disappeared and the town rapidly lost population. By 1952 the Company decided to end its experiment, and residents were given the option of purchasing homes and businesses. The town was incorporated, and while the mill continued to operate, the "company" town ceased to exist.⁴⁰

The Works Progress Administration's American Guide Series on Idaho, revised in 1950, predicted that Potlatch "will doubtless steadily decline until it is little more than a store and gas station," a typical fate of single-industry communities when natural resources ran out. But

* * *
Potlatch survived. In 1970 the town's population stood at 871--down from the 2,055 who lived there in 1910. But the community was steady. A massive rebuilding of the mill was undertaken in the 1960s and new homes and schools were constructed. A shopping center replaced The Merc when it burned in 1963. The economy is now diversified with agriculture becoming important in the vicinity and timberlands reharvested.⁴¹

The town is stable and peaceful now. New growth has created some change, but the evidences of the company-town-past are unmistakable. Potlatch will probably never again be a boom town, but it will remain, and residents will remember that here was a unique community.☐

FOOTNOTES

¹The song's chorus epitomizes the popular conception of oppression in company towns:

Sixteen tons, what do 'ya get?
Another day older and deeper in debt.
Saint Peter don't 'ya call me cause I
can't go,
I owe my soul to the company store.

²"Life in a Company Town," The New Republic, 22 Sept. 1937, p. 171. Company towns have long been a ripe subject for the popular press. Two of the better researched negative stories are Zachariah Chafee, Jr., "Company Towns in the Soft Coal Fields," The Independent, 15 Sept. 1923, pp. 102-4; and "The 'Company Community' in the American Coalfields," The New Statesman, 15 Oct. 1927, pp. 6-8. A damning monograph is Frank Tannenbaum's Darker Phases of the South (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1924). For a negative view of Potlatch see Ray McKaig, "Potlatch--A Slacker City," The Public, 18 Jan. 1919, pp. 62-3. Not all of the writings are negative, but usually the positive articles are confined to accolades about city planning and generally do not deal with true company towns which are completely owned and operated by a single enterprise. See George D. McCarthy, "Morgan Park--A New Type of Industrial Community," The American City, Feb. 1916, pp. 150-53; Graham Taylor, "Creating the Newest Steel City," Survey, Apr. 1909, pp. 20-36; and Rhys G. Thackwell, "An Industrial Village of Home Owners," The American City, May 1927, pp. 669-71. Two good bibliographies provide access to both the popular and scholarly secondary literature on company towns. See Rolf Knight, Work Camps and Company Towns in Canada and the United States: An Annotated Bibliography (Vancouver, B.C.: New Star Books, 1975); and J. Douglas Proteous, The Single Enterprise Community in North America (Monticello, Illinois: Council of Planning Librarians, 1971).

³The best study of an individual company town is Stanley Buder's Pullman: An Experiment in Industrial Order and Community Planning, 1880-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). Also see Thomas F. Gedosch, "Seaback, 1857-1886: The History of a Company Town," unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Washington, 1967, for a look at a lumber town. James B. Allen's The Company Town in the American West (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966) is an overview of several communities. Ruth B. Allen's East Texas Lumber Workers: An Economic and Social Picture, 1870-1950 (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961) devotes an excellent chapter to company towns. Two good earlier studies are Lois MacDonald, Southern Mill Hills: A Study of Social and Economic Forces in Certain Textile Mill Villages (New York: Alex L. Hillman, 1928), and Vera Shlakman, Economic History of a Factory Town: A Study of Chicopee, Massachusetts (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College, 1934). The authors of these works all express some reservations about company towns, particularly the paternalism involved. But in each case the image is considerably more favorable than that usually depicted by the popular press.

⁴For a discussion of the history of planned communities see Michael Hugo-Brunt, The History of City Planning: A Survey (Montreal: Harvest House, 1972), especially pp. 155-8. Allen, Company Towns in West, pp. 7 & 140, discusses the connection between geographical isolation and company towns, as does Allen, East Texas, p. 143, and Proteous, The Single Enterprise Community. See also Buder, Pullman, p. 42, and William C. Chanler, "Civil Liberties in the Soft Coal Fields: The Point of View of the Operators," The Independent, 13 Oct. 1923, pp. 162-63.

⁵See Allen, Company Towns in West, p. ix, for the use made of interviewing in that study. Tamara K. Hareven and Randolph Langenbach, Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) is the outstanding example of the use of interviewing to document the social history of a community. For another example of the use of oral history in community studies see Paul Bullock, Watts, The Aftermath: An Inside View of the Ghetto by the People of Watts (New York: Grove Press, 1969). Oral history has been used as a social history technique by scholars for a variety of studies. The best oral history bibliography, which provides access to "how-to" literature as well as studies making use of the techniques, is Manfred Wasserman, Bibliography on Oral History (The Oral History Association, 1975).

⁶See Buder, Pullman, pp. 93-4 for the author's lament that not more interviewing was done with town residents in the 1880s and 1890s. The Latah County oral history collection is housed in the University of Idaho Library, with transcripts also in the Latah County Historical Society Library. For access to the collection see Sam Schragger, ed., A Guide to the Latah County, Idaho Oral History Collection (Moscow, Idaho: Latah County Historical Society, 1977).

⁷The account of the Hill-Weyerhaeuser friendship and resulting land deal is carried in Ralph W. Hidy, Frank Ernest Hill and Alan Nevins, Timber and Men: The Weyerhaeuser Story (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), pp. 207, 212-13; and Albro Martin, James J. Hill and the Opening of the West (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976) p. 465. See also Frederick K. Weyerhaeuser, Trees and Men (New York: The Newcomen Society, 1951), pp. 13-14. For the impact of the deal and the change in lumbering methods the Weyerhaeusers brought to the Northwest, see Robert E. Ficken, "Weyerhaeuser and the Pacific Northwest Timber Industry, 1899-1903," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, Oct. 1979, pp. 146-54. Also see Robert W. Swanson, "A History of Logging and Lumbering on the Palouse River, 1870-1905," unpublished Masters Thesis, Washington State University, 1958, for a localized study of lumbering techniques prior to the coming of the Weyerhaeusers. Swanson ends his study in 1905 precisely because the incursion into the area in that year of the Potlatch Lumber Company, a Weyerhaeuser subsidiary, completely changed the complexion of logging.

⁸Hidy, Hill and Nevins, Timber and Men,

pp. 248-72; Weyerhaeuser, Trees and Men, p. 15.

⁹Spokane Spokesman-Review, 30 March 1903, p. 4.

¹⁰Quote in Spokane Spokesman-Review, 10 March 1905, p. 14. For the incorporation of the Potlatch Lumber Company and its early history see Hidy, Hill and Nevins, Timber and Men, pp. 254-55; Ralph Hidy, "Lumbermen in Idaho: A Study in Adaptation to Change in Environment," Idaho Yesterdays, Winter 1962, pp. 5-6; "50 Years at Potlatch," undated photocopy in the Latah County Historical Society Library, p. 18; and Spokane Spokesman-Review, 22 May 1903, p. 1. For the excitement caused in Palouse, see Spokane Spokesman-Review, 30 March 1903, p. 4. Also see Palouse Town and Country Study Program: Report of History Committee (Palouse, Wash.: 1962), pp. 26-7. The Lumber Company later reimbursed every dollar that had been given for the railroad right-of-way.

¹¹The story has been told in many places with slight variations and is now a part of Latah County folklore. This account comes from Hidy, Hill and Nevins, Timber and Men, pp. 255-56. For information on the disappointment of Palouse and Moscow residents at the mill not being located in their towns, see, respectively, Arthur Sundberg, interviewed by Sam Schragger, interview #2, Oral History Collection, Latah County Historical Society, p. 38 (hereafter cited as Sundberg, "Reminiscences"); and W.J. Gamble, interviewed by Sam Schragger, interview #1, Oral History Collection, LCHS, pp. 14-15, 19 (hereafter cited as Gamble, "Reminiscences"). As Ficken, "Weyerhaeuser and the Pacific Northwest," p. 147, points out, the Weyerhaeuser's plans for the Northwest were a leading topic of conversation. It is easy to understand how residents were disappointed at losing Weyerhaeuser money and business.

¹²Quoted from a 1906 account in the Palouse Republic in "Potlatch Unit . . . New Era for a Historic Part of Potlatch Forests, Inc.," The Potlatch Story, Sept. 1965, p. 2.

¹³Hidy, Hill and Nevins, Timber and Men, p. 256.

¹⁴Gamble, "Reminiscences," interview #1, p. 15. For Pullman's influence and reputation, see Buder, Pullman, especially pp. 92-106. Also see Spokane Spokesman-Review, 16 Oct. 1905, p. 7.

¹⁵Hidy, "Lumbermen in Idaho," p. 10, asserts that one of the major reasons for the Potlatch Lumber Company's lack of profits was that too much attention was given to the town.

¹⁶Sundberg, "Reminiscences," interview #1, pp. 9-10. For other details on the town's layout see Ray K. Harris, "Life in Potlatch Was Different," The Pacific Northwesterner, Winter 1976, pp. 3-4; and Clifford Lewis Imus, "A Social Study of Potlatch, Idaho," unpublished BA Thesis, State College of Washington, 1910, pp. 7-8, 14.

17 Anna Utt, interviewed by Sam Schragger, interview #4, Oral History Collection, LCHS, p. 26.

18 Sundberg, "Reminiscences," interview #3, p. 122.

19 Ibid., p. 116. For more on attitudes towards Nob Hill see Imus, "Social History of Potlatch," p. 18.

20 Sundberg, "Reminiscences," interview #2, p. 68. Most of these ethnic residents were single men who sent part of their earnings to the old country to support families but could not afford to bring them to America. This seems to be especially true with the Greeks. There were some Japanese women in Potlatch, but it is uncertain at this point how many, or the numbers of Italian and Greek women in the community.

21 Mike Stefanos, interviewed by Sam Schragger, Oral History Collection, LCHS, p. 14 (hereafter cited as Stefanos, "Reminiscences").

22 For further details on the housing at Potlatch, see Harris, "Potlatch Different," p. 4; Imus, "Social History of Potlatch," p. 14; and Sundberg, "Reminiscences," interview #1, pp. 10-11. For matrimonial encouragement, see Spokane Spokesman-Review, 17 Oct. 1909, p. 5. As Allen, Company Towns in West, pp. 19 & 92, points out, neither substantial housing for managers nor bunkhouses for single men were unusual in western company towns. Allen, East Texas, pp. 147 & 153, found that encouraging marriage was not uncommon in lumber company towns.

23 Sundberg, "Reminiscences," interview #1, pp. 13-14. For other details on city services provided by the Company, see Imus, "Social History of Potlatch," pp. 10-11, 26; and Harris, "Potlatch Different," pp. 4 & 6.

24 Buder, Pullman, p. 69; Harris, "Potlatch Different," p. 2.

25 Imus, "Social History of Potlatch," p. 29.

26 Gus Demus, interviewed by Sam Schragger, interview #3, Oral History Collection, LCHS, p. 2 (hereafter cited as Demus, "Reminiscences").

27 The Spokane Spokesman-Review, 16 Oct. 1905, p. 7, reported "The Potlatch Lumber Company . . . appeared before the [County Commissioners] . . . and protested against the issuance of any saloon license within five miles of the right-of-way of the [Washington, Idaho and Montana Railway--owned by PLC] Company. 'The [State] law,' said the attorney, 'expressly provides that the commissioners shall not issue a saloon license . . . where liquor is sold in less than five gallons, within five miles of the construction of any railroad or public works, unless the applicant for such license shall have been doing business within said limit at least six months prior to the starting of said works.'

'Princeton . . . is not incorporated, and therefore comes within the meaning of this

law. . . . There were two saloons in Princeton prior to the beginning of the construction of the new road, which . . . are entitled to renew their license. . . . Two other persons have paid the required amount of money . . . and filed their application for saloon license. . . . It seems to be a question whether the commissioners can issue licenses to two saloons in Princeton and refuse licenses to two other persons on account of the five mile limit. Another application for liquor license is on file from Avon post office, which is also within five miles of the right-of-way of the new railroad.'

28 Edward Muhsal, interviewed by Sam Schragger, Oral History Collection, LCHS, p. 27 (hereafter cited as Muhsal, "Reminiscences").

29 Stefanos, "Reminiscences," p. 15. For more on bootlegging and gambling see Demus, "Reminiscences."

30 Mabel Nickell Morris, interviewed by Sam Schragger, interview #1, Oral History Collection, LCHS, p. 18.

31 Imus, "Social History of Potlatch," pp. 21-2. Harris, "Potlatch Different," p. 8, maintains that in the early years the ministers were also on the Company payroll, but Imus contends that the congregations paid for the ministers. Allen, Company Towns in West, pp. 100-01, found that many companies subsidized religious activities in their towns.

32 Imus, "Social History of Potlatch," pp. 12, 19-21; Harris, "Potlatch Different," p. 7; Gamble, "Reminiscences," interview #2, pp. 7-9. In the early years the town manager was a member of the school board. Later he stepped down and was replaced by another of the Company's people in a managerial position. But the Company continued to maintain complete control over the schools.

33 Sundberg, "Reminiscences," interview #1, p. 24. For more on The Potlatch Mercantile, see untitled article in The Potlatch Story, Sept. 1960, p. 16; Imus, "Social History of Potlatch," pp. 13, 24-5; and Harris, "Potlatch Different," pp. 4 & 14. Allen, Company Towns in West, pp. 134-37, found that generally the bad reputation of company stores is undeserved, a feeling shared by Ole S. Johnson, whose The Industrial Store: Its History, Operations and Economic Significance (Atlanta, Ga.: University of Georgia, 1952) is the outstanding work in the field.

34 For the strongest criticism of company town paternalism, see Tannenbaum, Darker Phases of South, especially 58-9. For Potlatch paternalism, see Harris, "Potlatch Different," pp. 4, 6, 11-12; and Imus, "Social History of Potlatch," pp. 10-13, 23. Muhsal, "Reminiscences," p. 38, recalled that there was always a threat of being kicked out of town if rules were disobeyed, but could not remember that actually happening. Only during World War II, when Japanese were removed from Potlatch, could he remember anyone being forcibly ejected.

35 The phrase is the title of the previously cited article by former Potlatch resident Ray K. Harris. Weyerhaeuser, the authors of Timber and Men claim, "was a follower, not a leader" in providing benefits for laborers. Nonetheless, the Weyerhaeusers were "fair in terms of industry-wide practices at the time." Likewise in Potlatch they were not overly generous with their employees, but they wanted their community to be as good and fair as any other company town. For wages and rent, see Sundberg, "Reminiscences," interview #1, pp. 2, 15-16. There is a strong possibility that paternalism worked in Potlatch because the town's residents were screened before being allowed to move in. The evidence for such a conclusion has not yet been found, however.

36 Quoted in Hidy, Hill and Nevins, Timber and Men, p. 255.

37 For insight into the financial difficulties of the Potlatch Lumber Company, see Hidy, "Lumbermen in Idaho," pp. 9-12; Laura Barber Richards, "George Frederick Jewett: Lumberman and Conservationist," unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Idaho, 1969, pp. 5-6; and Richard Madden, Tree Farmers and Wood Converters: The Story of the Potlatch Corporation (New York: The Newcomen Society of North America, 1975), p. 14.

38 For the unique ability of the Weyerhaeusers to experiment and absorb losses, see Norman H. Clark, Mill Town: A Social History of Everett, Washington (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1971), p. 68. For information on the merger and the immediate post-merger period, see Richards, "Jewett," pp. 8-12; Hidy, "Lumbermen in Idaho," pp. 9-11; "50 Years at Potlatch," p. 20; and untitled article, The Potlatch Story, Sept. 1965, pp. 5-6. The name was eventually changed to Potlatch Corporation.

39 Glen Gilder, interviewed by Sam Schragger, interview #3, Oral History Collection, LCHS, pp. 25-6.

40 Richards, "Jewett," p. 12; "50 Years at Potlatch," p. 19; The Potlatch Story, Sept. 1965, p. 6; Gamble, "Reminiscences," interview #1, p. 17.

41 Helen Cross, "Potlatch Blends Eras," Spokane Chronicle, 17 Sept. 1976.

* *
Dobson, a Walla Walla farmer, became drunk, and when going home took Mr. Lux gray horse for his own. Lux followed and shot him for a horse thief. Moral: drink lemonade.

Moscow Mirror
18 September 1885

A Jimmie Jane of Walla Walla picked up four horse shoes and took them home with him and the Grand Jury has indicted him because there was a horse nailed to the shoes.

Moscow Mirror
22 January 1886, p. 3

LATAH BUFFALO

by
John B. Miller

The term "Latah Buffalo" is introduced in the title simply to make a point: the American buffalo almost certainly roamed once on ground that has become Latah County. Evidence of his presence still remains.

I saw this evidence long ago, when it was well preserved and plain. In The Trees Grew Tall (Miller, 1972, p. 6), in speaking of natural grasslands of the county, I wrote as follows:

At one time even buffalo, in small numbers, wandered here. I can remember seeing two or three of their wallows. They were shown to me by one of my adult friends--perhaps Swan Erickson--when I was a small boy. They appeared as round hollows, perhaps 20 feet across and five deep. They were bounded by distinct rims, notched where trails came through. I was able to picture the beasts standing in these holes, fighting flies by pawing dust over their great sides and shoulders.

When I wrote this, I was aware that historians speak generally of the absence, not the presence, of buffalo in all the region west of the Bitterroots. I interpreted this (although I knew that others do not always so regard it) as meaning only that indigenous buffalo were so scarce as to have almost no effect on human affairs either of the Indian or the pioneer. A deeper pursuit of literature proves this to be true.

A subspecies of the North American bison, the buffalo or bison of the Pacific North-

west were of the type known as WOOD BISON. Their range was mainly in the mountains. They differed a little from the PLAINS BISON, just as kinds of cattle will differ. As stated by Ed Park (1969, p. 146-147):

There are two separate subspecies of bison in North America: the plains bison, Bison bison bison (Linnacus), and the wood bison, Bison bison athabasca (Rhoads). In the past, other forms recognized were the northern bison, the Pennsylvania bison, the mountain bison, and the Oregon bison. The northern and Pennsylvania bison are now considered to be identical with the plains bison; the mountain and Oregon bison are now considered to be identical with the wood bison.

THE RIDGE AND THE WALLOWS

It was nearly 60 years ago that I saw, on one of the ridges south of Deary, the hollows that were the "buffalo wallows." I believe the year might have been 1921; at least, it was before my father bought his first automobile in 1923. We went in a touring car of approximate World War I vintage (not a Ford). In our group were my father, W. S. Miller, my brother Marvin, our guide (who drove the car), and I.

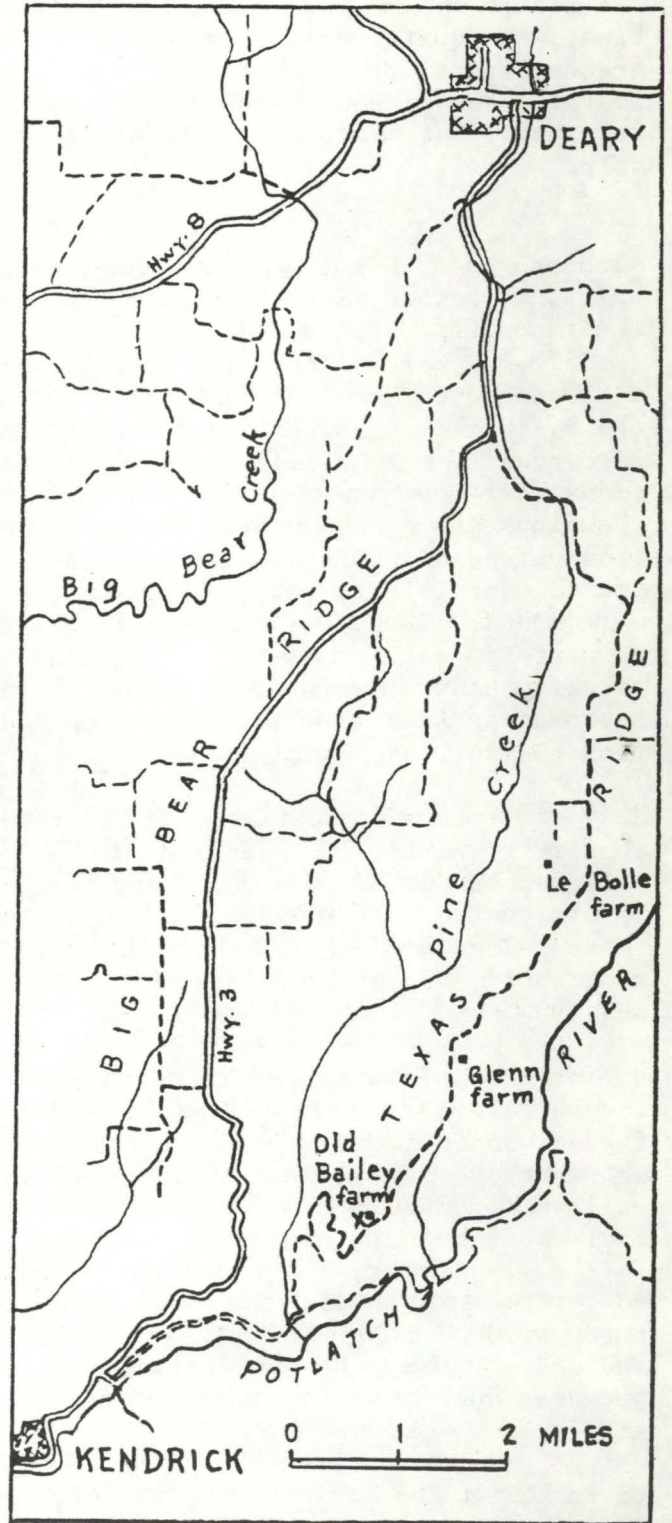
My book says that Swan Erickson (pioneer Deary blacksmith) was our probable guide. I later began to doubt this, because my mind became fixed on the idea that Swan Erickson never owned or drove a car. This doubt was dispelled when my cousin, Margaret Olson, reminded me Swan had once owned an old Dodge touring car. She re-

called an amusing story. Accustomed so long to his horse and buggy, Swan would get excited when he wanted to stop, forget the brakes, yank on the steering wheel, and holler "Whoa!"

I was about nine, I think, when we visited the wallows, and my brother about fourteen. At several times before his death, I talked to him in an effort to check and refresh our memories. Definitely there was a large, deep wallow and, some distance east of it, a second one not quite so large. I had an indistinct memory of a third wallow, yet smaller, which Marvin could not confirm. We agreed on many details about the wallows and the associated landscape.

Each wallow would have accommodated two, and the larger one perhaps even three or four animals (comparable to large cattle) standing in a loose cluster. This indicates a floor area 12 to perhaps 16 feet across. Thrown up around each hole, as a circular rim, was a mound of earth. The height of these grassed-over rims is now uncertain. Memory can exaggerate, as can the youthful eye, but Marvin and I agreed that at the larger wallow, the mound must have stood at least two feet, and perhaps as much as three feet above the level of the surrounding ridge. Adding the rim to the probable depth of the excavation, we reasoned that the entire depth of the cup was at least three, and perhaps as much as four feet.

The indented traces of trails led to each wallow. These slanted into the holes through deeply worn notches in the rims. Marvin said that one trail, or visible parts of a trail, led from the larger wallow to its neighbor. Otherwise, we did not remember the trails going very far. They may have been dispersed into branches; in fact, while I cannot clearly sort fact from fancy, I seem to remember a trail division just west of the larger hole. Quite evidently the trails had been worn by passage, to-and-fro, of large animals. We did not doubt that these were buffalo.



Map showing the location of the buffalo wallows (x) at the old Jack Bailey farm on Texas Ridge.

* *

The trails and embanked rims, rounded with time, were quite heavily sodded with the grasses and weeds of the ridgetop. The features seemed not to be of man and his endeavors, but part of the wilderness itself.

Although he did not witness the living herds, my father was well acquainted with their country. He came with his family, in 1875, as part of the migration of settlers to southwestern Minnesota--a boy of age 9. While the buffalo and Indians had been gone for a decade or more, their signs were everywhere. The prairies of the Sioux River country were still more or less untouched. For more than 20 years he roamed over this country, to hunt, fish, work new farmland, or help his father (a carpenter) build homes. He guided a breaking plow through many acres of the unbroken prairie sod, picking arrowheads from the soil as he did so.

Many of the early settlers of the ridge country probably had seen multitudes of wallows, perhaps even more than my father, before coming to Idaho. If they called these holes wallows, as I believe they did, their judgement would be highly persuasive.

My father explained to Marvin and me how the buffalo used the wallows to protect themselves from flies and insects. In wet weather, they rolled in the mud of the wallows to dislodge pests and plaster their bodies with protective wet earth. In the dry summer, they used their hoofs to scrape and powder the soil, and to throw plumes of dust over their shoulders and sides. The vigorous action by the forefeet dug the holes, moved dirt to the sides, and built the rims.

Ed Park, in The World of the Buffalo (p. 87) says that wallowing was promoted not only as a result of insect bites, but by itching caused by scratchy grass seeds, such as spear-grass barbs, which clung to and penetrated the wool. On p. 63-65 he describes wallowing (actually a complex process), and shows pictures. He says:

Wallowing in mud or dust seems to protect bison against insects and to relieve itching. Although summer is the peak season for wallowing, the bison does a lot of it in the spring (or any time it feels an itch, regardless of the season).

Bulls, especially mature ones, seem to wallow much more than cows. They stretch out, rub their heads vigorously back and forth on the ground, and kick the dust or mud with their feet. They also try to roll over onto their backs, but the high hump on the shoulders prevents them from doing so. . . .

A typical buffalo wallow is a saucer-shaped depression in the ground, possibly a foot or so deep and eight to ten or more feet in diameter. Constant use keeps the area completely bare of plant life. There are thousands of these wallows on the bison's summer range.

He does not mention a piled rim, nor do his pictures show one. The wallow seen most clearly in his photos, judged by its muddy look, is primarily a mud wallow. I am prompted to think that a mud wallow would be deepened mainly by the process that naturalists call "quarrying." In this, the adhering mud and earth is carried away by the animal, to fall elsewhere. Where the wallowing medium is dust, however, excavation would occur largely by scraping the earth materials toward the side, where it would pile up as a circular mound at the edge of the hole.

My brother told me that, from what he could remember, he believed we had seen the wallows on Texas Ridge. Without this direction, I might have searched mainly or only along ridges in the Bear Creek country, for I believed we had turned a little toward the west after leaving Deary. A search was not started until the summer of 1977, after Marvin's death. This delay was unfortunate, for Marvin would have been an enthusiastic partici-

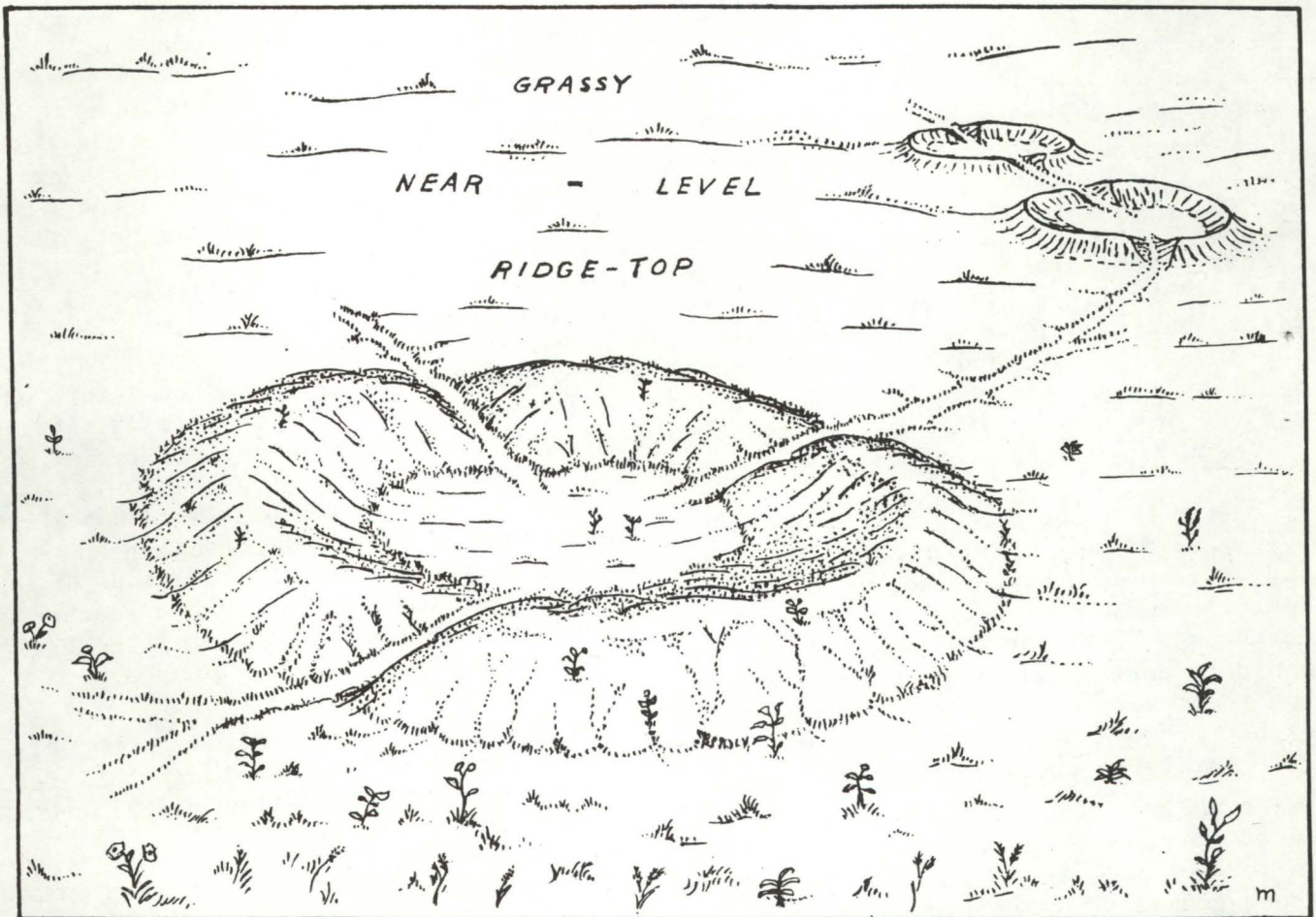
pant. And more information would have been obtained, with less work, had he been along.

At the point of Texas Ridge, in a physiographic setting well in accord with my memory, was a round hole about a foot and a half deep and 18 feet in diameter. About 100 feet northeast of this was a shallow, saucer-shaped depression, adjoined on the north by another slight

sag, similar in shape but less-well defined. Each depression collects a little water for a short time during the spring.

Even though the setting and arrangement looked right, I was not yet at the time convinced that these were the wallows. Only the large hole seemed substantially abnormal. The other two differed only a little from nearby, natural irregularities of the ridgetop. Also, I noted that

* * *



This drawing roughly represents the appearance of the wallows when seen by my brother and me during our visit there sometime in the early 1920s (period 1921-1923).

The portrayal assumes the presence of three wallows, as indicated today by a surviving large, westerly hole, plus two rather indistinct depressions (scars) about 100 feet farther east. Detail is best remembered for the dominant, westerly wallow, shown in the foreground.

The outside of the mounded rims, as drawn, may be proportionately too high, and there was probably less rilled erosion than the drawing suggests. Also, the arrangement of the trail system is doubtlessly inexact, even though I am convinced it resembled what is shown.

soil in the larger hole seemed to be reduced to a thin layer above basalt bed-rock. Mixed with the soil, over the floor of the depression, were rock debris and a number of small rock. I remembered no rock in the wallows. There was no rim present, nor evidence that one ever had existed. And as to the locale, I seem to remember the car, on a southwest heading, stopping with the large wallow on our left. The natural and easy place to park at the site today is on the Kendrick road, which leaves the site on one's right.

The farmhouse nearby was abandoned. My time ran out; I asked no questions. No further search was made until the summer of 1980.

Airphotos were purchased and examined for likely sites farther west, on the ridges of the Bear Creek drainage. None seemed right, but a trip was made over some of the ground anyway, and some of the residents there questioned. It became apparent the only possibility was the location on Texas Ridge seen previously.

It may be that the rocks, partly concealed by grass, missed my attention when I saw the wallows as a boy. Also, we might have left the main road along a lane past the farmhouse. Near the wallows, such a route would go unnecessarily over rough ground, but to drivers in the 1920's, rough ground either on-road or off was so common as to stir hardly an extra thought.

The decision to direct the investigation back to Texas Ridge was rewarded almost immediately by new information, as follows:

*** Don and Harold LeBolle, lifetime residents of Texas Ridge, live about 5 miles north of the wallows and 9 miles south of Deary. Don and Harold had not heard of the wallows. They identified the place I questioned them about as "the old Jack Bailey place." Their father, dead since the 1920's, could have told me "everything about the ridge," they said.

But they remembered an old trail that went straight down into the Potlatch Canyon from the Bailey place had been known as "the buffalo trail." It followed mainly along a rocky ridge, and was very steep. "We thought it was called 'the buffalo trail' because it was so steep and rough no man would want to use it."

The name "Texas Ridge" had come into use, they told me, because among early settlers of the ridge had been several Texans.

Then they advised me to talk to Roy Glenn, who owned a farm about two and one-half miles farther along the ridge. He had farmed the Bailey place for a number of years in addition to his own, and knew a good deal about it.

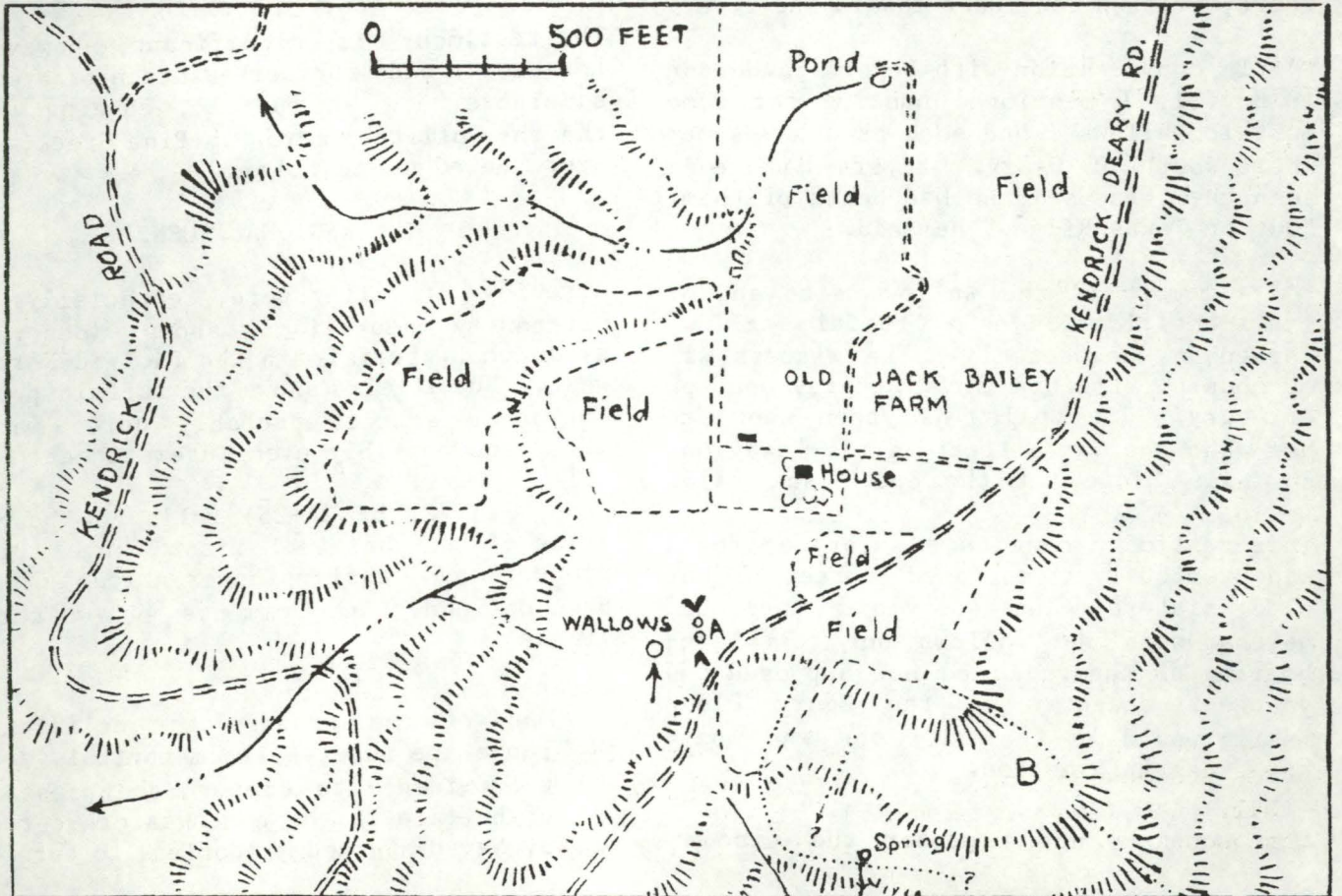
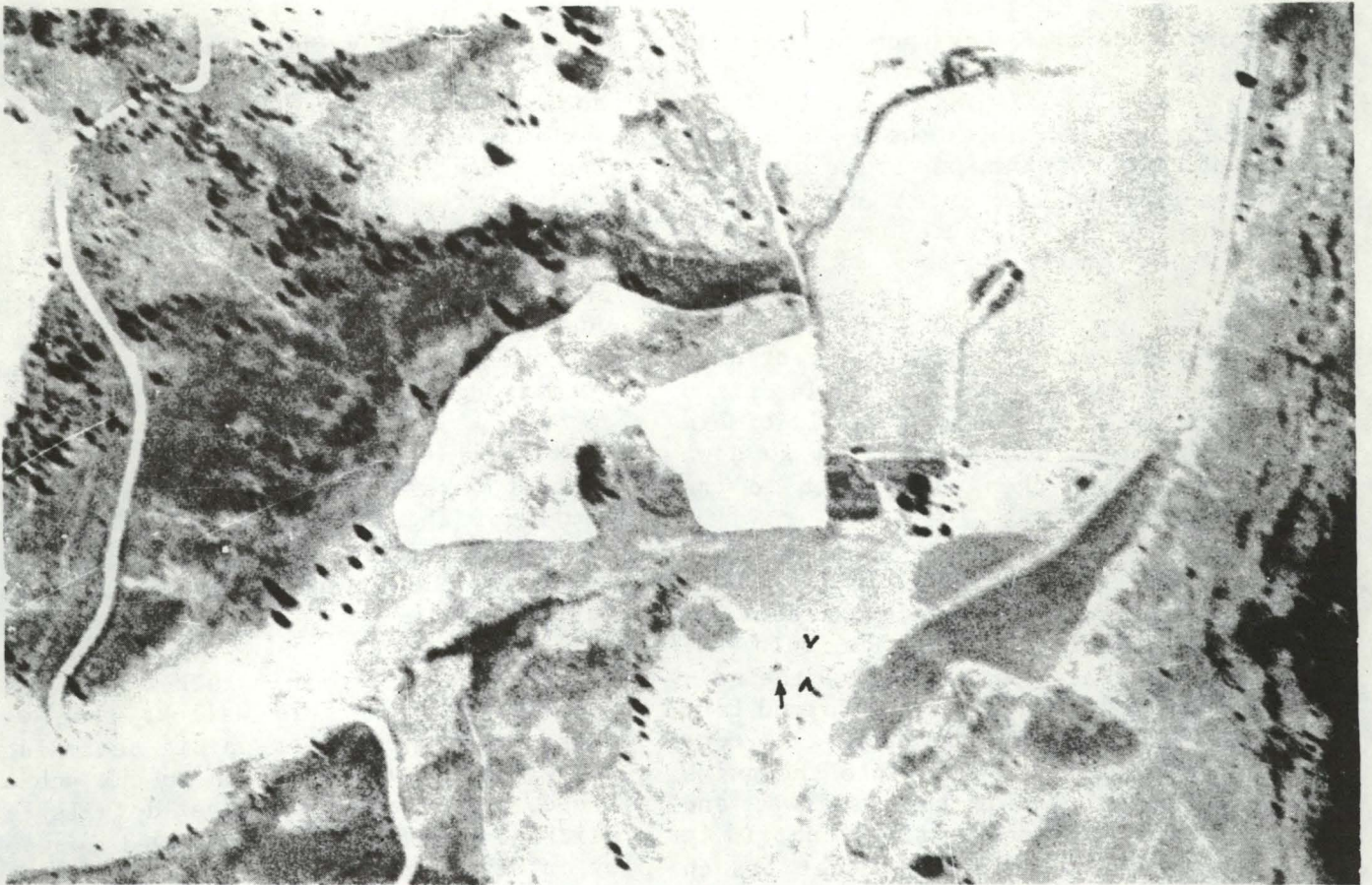
*** Roy Glenn had lived on Texas Ridge since 1933, the year he bought his farm. He had farmed the Bailey place under a

* * *

The photo is part of an airphoto dated 8-6-'47, enlarged seven times. The Jack Bailey farm house is at the right center. The main wallow (a slightly darker patch) is just above the arrow. The other possible wallow sites (not distinguishable) lie farther to the right, between the "tick" marks. Additional features are identified on the map.

Hatched lines on the map follow form-lines along steep slopes to show topography. Branches of the buffalo trail (dotted lines) collect to go down ridge "B."

The wallows are seen more plainly when adjoining and overlapping airphotos are viewed stereoscopically. The image seen by this means is in relief, and in better detail. No "rims" were visible at the wallows when viewed in this way. A pair of stereoscopic photos has been provided to the Society. John B. Miller photo.



lease or share-crop arrangement only in later years.

The holes I asked about were "old," he said. He did not know their origin, nor had he heard about or seen any elevated rims. He was quite sure he had never heard anyone speak of them as "buffalo wallows."

"But there was an old trail that went down into the canyon," he said. "People called it the 'buffalo trail.' The old-timers said the buffalo had used it to go down to the river and then climb back to the ridge."

I came again in May, 1981. Glenn went with me to the wallow site to show me where the buffalo trail heads into the canyon. The trail (visible below the cultivated field) appears to have formed from a collection of several branches. A conspicuous branch heads down into the gulch from a point south of the wallows, and then traverses along a slope until it reaches a ridge. Joining another branch there, it then continues toward the river.

*** In conversation with Beyers Sanderson in Bovill, I mentioned hunting for some buffalo wallows I had seen as a boy somewhere south of Deary. Beyers had never seen them, but said he had heard of them. "Out on Texas Ridge," he said.

*** A memory of the wallows site and of its identification as a "buffalo wallow" turned up unexpectedly. The witness was my cousin, Virginia (Mrs. Archie) Johnson of Deary. The wallow had been shown to her when she was a little girl--"away out on Texas Ridge, at the end," she said.

This testimony came as a surprise, for I had previously questioned three of her older sisters, and was told they had neither seen the wallows nor remembered hearing of them. I had not supposed the youngest daughter of the Emory Olson family would be the only one who would have such information.

Virginia does not remember the circum-

stances of her visit, nor her age except that it was in her young girlhood. But she is younger than I, and to have an accurate recollection of their location, their visit there must have been several years (perhaps 4 or 5 years, at least) later than mine.

She remembers only a single wallow, and does not specifically remember a rim. But--"It was a big hole," she said, "pretty deep."

***While in Moscow in May, 1981, I chanced to meet Gerald Ingle, a son of a pioneer family of the Ridge area south of Deary. Gerald had heard about my inquiries among residents there, and offered some information.

He had learned from his father many years ago about two buffalo wallows that were present in early times on Big Bear Ridge. He referenced the location to the schoolhouse, but I neglected to get details. He said the wallows were destroyed long ago by cultivation.

The testimony is significant, however, because it adds further evidence of a considerable herd of buffalo, ranging from the the Potlatch Canyon up Pine Creek, and over the adjacent ridges.

THE REGIONAL SCENE

A review of literature, especially as written by naturalists, shows widespread evidence of buffalo in the Pacific Northwest. But it also shows the buffalo population as sparse, probably quite variable, and possibly even intermittent.

McHugh (1972, p. 24-25) tells how boundaries of the original bison range (pre-pioneer and early-pioneer times) have been defined, and comments on westerly limits:

Many of the grounds for delimiting range are purely circumstantial. Meager evidence to support the presence of buffalo in the northwestern corner of Nevada forced historians to turn to

old maps for additional clues. They soon discovered a Buffalo Spring, a Buffalo Salt Works, a Buffalo Cañon, a Buffalo Creek, and a Buffalo Meadows.

Other circumstantial evidence has come from the careful sifting of antiquated records. . . .

With these additional bits of evidence, we can extend the known range of the bison almost to the borders of the continent--west to parts of Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, south to central Mexico, and east to the Atlantic states, from much of

Florida to central New York. But despite the presence of buffalo in these marginal areas, the fabled myriads roamed only on the Great Plains.

In such published works, agreement is found that the buffalo of the Northwest were of the type called the wood bison. McHugh (p. 22-23) gives this description: "Darker coloration . . . woolier fur . . . greater size, the bulls reaching twenty-five hundred pounds . . . larger and thicker skull and stubbier horns."

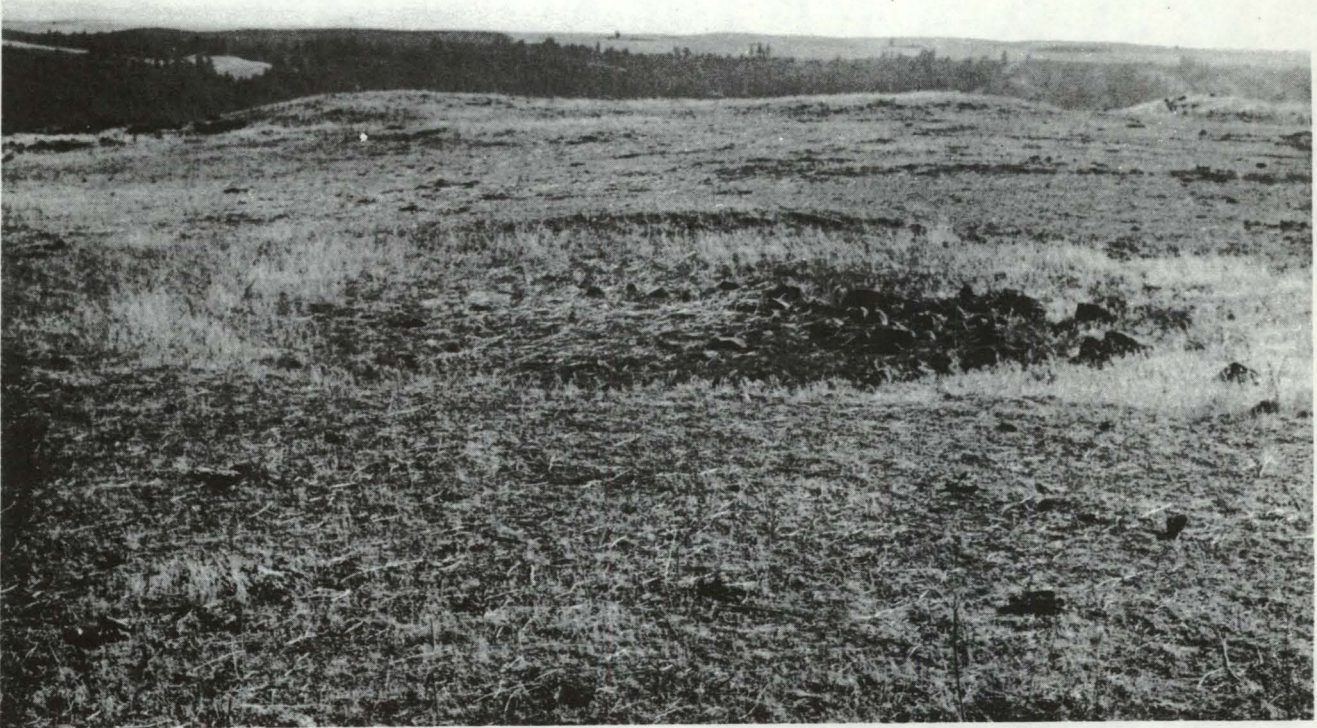
Contrary to an opinion sometimes given by pioneers, the weight of the wood bison as determined from living examples preserved

* * *



Left--A branch of the buffalo trail which descends a gully slope south of the wallow site. It appears as an irregular streak in the grass coming from the notch at skyline. Concealed by the grass is a trench-like slot a foot or so wide and about the same deep, apparently formed by traffic of the animals and by erosion. The bottom of this slot is a pavement of rock, which were once embedded in the soil and subsoil. The camera, pointed northward, was tilted upward as an accommodation to the ground slope to take this picture. John B. Miller photo.

Right--A view of the same trail, looking northeastward across the gully from an adjoining hill. The trail is seen on the upper slope just at the top of the large bush, and runs to the low brush above the lower right-hand corner. The field presently existing south of the Kendrick road lies along the skyline at left, its fence extending to the bush which stands (left half of photo) against the sky. Some of the ground along the trail was once in a field, also (see 1946-'47 airphotos), but the trace of the trail has survived whatever there was in the way of cultivation. John B. Miller photo.



The main wallow as seen in mid-July, 1977. Its diameter, some 18 to 20 feet, apparently has been increased a little by crumbling and wasting along some of its edges, partly caused by the trampling of cattle. Its depth is about 15 or 18 inches. The view looks south-southwestward, across the Potlatch Canyon. John B. Miller photo.

* * *

in Wood Bison National Park in Canada and at one time in the Yellowstone appears to be greater than that of the plains bison. Perhaps the idea of smaller size came from the relative quickness and agility of the wood bison. As stated by Christman (1971, p. 44-45);

Its most significant attributes were: altitudinal migrations; extreme shyness, manifested by a tendency to escape into forests or other topography unsuitable for pursuing horsemen; agility and speed; dark pelage with longer, finer hair than the plains buffalo; and a tendency to congregate in small bands. . . .

"These animals are by no means plentiful, and are moreover excessively

shy, inhabiting the deepest, darkest defiles or the craggy, almost precipitous sides of mountains, inaccessible to any but the most practiced mountaineers . . ." (R. I. Dodge: The Plains of the Great West, 1877). "The buffalo on the Pacific side of the Rocky Mountains are fleeter and more active than those of the Atlantic side . . ." (Washington Irving: Adventures of Captain Bonneville, 1835).

The wood bison was also called the "mountain bison" because of his agility, which carried him sometimes among rocky crags and high mountain peaks into altitudes exceeding 12,000 feet. The rough character and surprising height of this range is well documented by Fryxell (1926; 1928).



The main wallow in mid-July, 1980. Slightly lower ground, an axial sag which is the location of the second, also possibly a third wallow, is located in mid-distance at the extreme right. The house and outbuilding belong to the old Bailey farm. The boy, Kevin Miller, my grandson, is about 5 feet tall. John B. Miller photo.

* * *

Christman (*ibid.*, map, p. 47) shows a "core area" for the wood bison extending through western Montana, southeast Idaho, western Wyoming, northeast Utah, and part of Colorado. Shown also are 10 sites in the state of Oregon and 18 in Washington where historical records, bones, and archaeological discoveries indicate the former presence of buffalo. These sites he describes as "only a preliminary plotting of information," and then goes on to say (p. 46):

Salvage archaeology in eastern Washington has unearthed extensive collections of bison bones in village sites. Both bison and pronghorn antelope, unknown in Washington in

modern times, were abundantly represented in levels before the advent of the horse. The great weight of bison and the absence of horses for transporting them indicate that the kill site was in close proximity to the villages; bison killed farther away would not likely be represented in the village, for the meat was dried at the kill site and few or no bones carried back. The number of sites represented suggests more than a rare or sporadic occurrence of bison in the area. Furthermore, the presence of bones of fetal and immature calves argues for a breeding population.

Quotations from two other works are se-



In May, 1981, the main wallow was deeper than when seen in 1977 and 1980. Its floor area, wet with recent rain, was trampled by cattle to form a central, rock-filled, cone-shaped hole. The central depth, in relation to the ridge-top, was not less than two and one-half feet. There was no evidence that this hole had yet reached bedrock.

Very short grass made it possible to examine, in some detail, the configuration of ground around the wallow. Visible were two gentle, mound-like earthen swells, one on the east border and one of the west (largely out of the view, but to left and right in this photo, which looks north-northeast). Roy Glenn and I thought these might be small patches of earth remaining from the once-existing high rims. John B. Miller photo.

* * *

lected as significant to the general background. From J. A. Allen (1876):

(p. 118-119) Although the main chain of the Rocky Mountains has commonly been supposed to form the western limit of the range of the buffalo, there is abundant proof of its former existence over a vast area west of this supposed boundary, including a large part of the so-called Great Basin of Utah, the Green River Plateau, and the Plains of the Columbia. It is probably not yet half a century since it ranged westward to the Blue Mountains of Oregon and the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California.

Respecting its former occurrence in

Eastern Oregon, Professor O. C. Marsh, under date of New Haven, February 7, 1875, writes me as follows: "The most western point at which I have myself observed remains of the buffalo was in 1873, on Willow Creek, Eastern Oregon, among the foothills of the eastern side of the Blue Mountains. This is about latitude 44°. The bones were perfectly characteristic, although nearly decomposed."

(p. 124) Dr. Suckley, writing under date of December, 1853, also says: "Buffalo were formerly in great numbers in this valley (the valley of the Bitter Root or St. Mary's River, one of the sources of Clark's Fork of the Columbia), as attested by the



The apparent site of the second wallow, mid-July, 1980. The outline of the sag is partly hidden by grass, which was thicker in 1980 than at the time of my visit in 1977.

In the summer of 1977, one could distinguish a depression of round, pan-shaped form, and see a coincident area where a muddy deposit was present on ground and grass. The mud had evidently settled from a shallow pool of turbid water which had occupied the low ground sometime during the spring. Cattle had wandered through the pool, leaving tracks in the ooze of its floor.

Roy Glenn says that this area was once ploughed. This may account, at least in part, for disappearance of the mounded rims, and certainly can account for the dim outline of these easterly wallows. John B. Miller photo.

* * *

number of skulls seen and by the reports of the inhabitants. For a number of years past, none had been seen west of the mountains; but, singular to relate, a buffalo bull was killed at the mouth of the Pend d'Oreille River, on the day I passed it. The Indians were in great joy at this, supposing that the buffalo were coming back to them."

(and, p. 125) It thus appears that the buffalo formerly existed west of the Rocky Mountains, nearly to the northern boundary of the United States, and that they had become completely exterminated there as early, according to Fremont . . . as 1840, although they swarmed there in immense herds as late as 1835.

and from Francis Haines (1967):

(p. 8) In establishing the edge of the buffalo range during historic times, it is necessary to distinguish between permanent range, where herds were found every year; a marginal belt, where herds were found occasionally, and submarginal places, where small herds appeared once in a century or two.

(p. 9-10) A few buffalo bones dug from village sites near the mouth of the Snake River indicate that some buffalo ranged that far west a few thousand years ago. Such herds would have come down Clark's Fork to Lake Pend Oreille, across to Spokane Falls, and on southwest another hundred and fifty miles to the Columbia. The Indians around Spokane Falls had an account of a small herd of buffalo living around one of the pothole lakes near Sprague. Two Coeur d'Alene Indians told James Teit that around 1815 their ancestors had killed two buffalo bulls at Tekoa, forty miles south and east of Spokane, but the fur post, Spokane House, makes no mention of the event.

The evidence indicates that at least two, and probably several, small herds of buffalo came as far west as central Washington during the last few thousand years, but that there have been none in that area since 1800. In fact, the old bull killed at Horse Plains in 1853 is the only authentic buffalo kill west of Deer Lodge in historic times.

And so, while not ruling out more recent appearances of buffalo, Haines says that most known traces of the animals in the region of the Columbia Plateau are very old. He attributes a variable and sporadic infiltration of buffalo to a changeable effectiveness of natural barriers--to climatic variations in particular; to the condition of mountain passes; and to obtainable forage along the migration routes.

Christman (op. cit.) takes the viewpoint that small numbers of buffalo were almost constantly present in the Pacific Northwest until after the Indians came into possession of the horse. His ideas, quite different from those of Haines, by an odd chance carry from Haines' publication* on how and when horses first came to the region. Says Christman (p. 47), "Francis Haines pointed out (in November, 1967, issue of THE AMERICAN WEST) that by 1720 the Nez Perce and Cayuse tribes of northern Idaho and southwestern Washington had acquired horses from the Shoshone Indians." Then he follows with this conclusion:

By the end of the century these sedentary fishing folk had altered their economy and culture. They had become dependent upon plains buffalo for food and trade, and had picked up many other aspects of the Plains Indian culture. Their increased killing efficiency and greater mobility spelled doom to the bison populations on the Columbian Plateau, and forced Indian hunters to seek out the plains buffalo to maintain their altered culture.

Thus, for at least seventy-five years before the arrival of white men, horse-Indians were hunting bison in the Far West. Either by direct killing or by restricting movements of small herds from the core range, the horse-Indians eliminated the bison over a large area; today the only surviving mountain bison in the Western United States are in Yellowstone National Park, and even these have been genetically diluted by contact with plains buffalo.

CONCLUSIONS

The belief of at least a few individuals among early pioneers was that two, or perhaps three, holes at the extreme end of Texas Ridge were buffalo wallows. Such is the conclusion, also, of this paper. One of the holes, although altered, remains quite plain today, and what are

*The correct reference would seem to be Haines, 1966, p. 14; see also Haines, 1971.

perhaps scars of two more can still be seen indistinctly.

Alternate explanations of the holes that have occurred to me do not stand up well under inspection. If they are not wallows, one must almost perforce think of them as man-made, and must account for their round shapes and built-up rims which once were present. Root cellars, when built above ground, were sometimes insulated with earthen embankments; also, sometimes Indian houses were banked, for warmth. But the holes on Texas Ridge could hardly be either. The shape and detail were wrong. The location, on a bare, rocky, lonely ridge-end, is inappropriate and unlikely. Their shapes resembled somewhat a type of military redoubt, but in terms of history, this explanation seems beyond consideration.

The hard-working pioneers had been living on the ridge scarcely 35 years when I first saw the wallows. It is hard to see how any creation of their own labor could be attributed to "buffalo" except as a hoax. Considering all aspects, such a thing is improbable.

As to the origin of the holes and what has happened later, at least two major questions need attention. One concerns their age. The second relates to their alteration, particularly with regard to the removal of the rims--a change which appears to have taken place sometime in the late 1920's or early 1930's.

A factor in judging their age is their rather good state of preservation into this century. And in assessing them, if they are wallows, their maturity and depth suggest the presence of buffalo, not for a season or two, but over a number of years, and indicate a herd of animals numbering well over a dozen head.

Had such a herd existed after the arrival of white men, its presence almost certainly would have been picked up by someone, and a report entered into early journals. Indeed, Indian lore might have brought the matter to the attention of Lewis and

Clark, The Reverend Spalding, or other early whites many decades after the animals had disappeared. I am convinced by this that the age of the wallows must have been close to a couple of centuries, at the least, when I first saw them.

Under proper conditions, the long preservation of features such as these wallows and their rims is not unusual, and I submit that the ridgetop site is quite well adapted to it.

For one thing, on the nearly flat, narrow ridge-crest, there are no stream channels, and very little run-off. The erosive forces amount to little more than rain-wash and the wind. All erosion would be subdued to a very low level as soon as the animals were gone and the slopes of the wallows sufficiently anchored by grass and sod. The wallows site is protected additionally by a curving line of hard, basalt outcroppings a little west of the wallow holes, at the point where the ridge crest begins to slope toward the canyon.

Probably the most effective agency for destroying the rims would be the freezing and thawing of soils in wintertime. Many of us have seen this freezing process smooth embankments and steep hummocks even within several decades. But the ground does not succumb to such frost action readily unless it is quite wet. Also, the stabilizing presence of rocks and vegetation is helpful in slowing it. At the wallows the relative drying of the location, permeable and rocky soils, and good drainage of the rim structure all would slow the process.

Unlike the wallows, the "buffalo trail" was on steep ground. Parts of the trail must have been exposed, during heavy rains, to the erosive effect of guttering run-off, which would tend to follow the trail's worn indentation. Abundant rock is present and would protect the trail, and grass would also protect it.

It is rather hard to account for the dis-


appearance of the large earthen embankments which rimmed the wallows in the early 1920's. There is today little visible surplus soil to attest their former presence. The material of the rims must have been hauled away, but where, and why, and by whom?

One can suppose that the rims were made up of pretty good soil. In fact, part of their bulk may have come from a rather generous admixture of buffalo droppings--thoroughly decomposed, of course. This suggests a somewhat speculative answer as to what might have taken place. There are numerous places in "breaks" near the edges of the ridge-top where soils are thin. Some farmer may have recognized the value of the soil in the rims, and it might have been worth his while to dig them up and haul the earth to supplement some part of a field where thin, rocky soils over rock did not otherwise afford easy cultivation and adequate crop production. Or the farmer may have simply plowed away the circular piles and scattered their soils at the site.

The somewhat divergent views of Haines and Christman about buffalo in the Columbia Plateau region are of great interest. They are important to this paper, however, mainly in the fact that these two authorities both accept the presence of buffalo in sufficient number, and probably within a suitable time frame, to explain the wallows on Texas Ridge.

While my paper argues without hesitation that the features discussed are indeed buffalo wallows, an unquestioned and unquestionable answer to such things can seldom be achieved. The paper intends only to develop a credible thesis, with an adequate background of physical evidence, circumstance, and history.

Most important is to document items from memory together with information on ground conditions at the site as they exist today. It is important, also, to excite interest in the hope of bringing forth further testimony and perhaps new

facts. An early photograph of the "wallow" features, for example, would be of extraordinary interest and of great value. 

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* *

If you want to see a grand sight go out into one of the large fields of flax now in bloom of light blue, and from the center of the field gaze at the sea of blue around you and the sky of blue above you and you are sure to exclaim: "how wonderful and grand is the grain yield of the Moscow country."

Moscow Mirror
17 July 1885, p. 3

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COLLECTIBLE RAILROAD TICKETS FOR SALE

Tickets from the Washington, Idaho and Montana Railway Co. Duplicates of these tickets, as well as baggage tickets, will be available to buy starting June 6, 1981. They can be sent for or purchased at the McConnell Mansion, 110 S. Jefferson, Moscow, Idaho 83843 (882-1004). They may be purchased singly for 25-35 cents or as prepackaged sets for \$4.50.

LATAH COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
110 South Adams St.
Moscow, Idaho 83843

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In 1968 interested individuals organized the Latah County Historical Society to collect and preserve materials connected with the history of Latah County and to provide further knowledge of the history and tradition of the area. Every person, young or old, who is interested in the history of Latah County and who would like to assist in its preservation and interpretation is cordially invited to become a member. Subscription to this journal and a discount on books published by the Society are included in membership dues. Dues for the various classes of membership are as follows:

	Friend	Contributing	Sustaining	Sponsoring	Benefactor
Individual	\$ 5-10	\$11-25	\$26- 50	\$ 51-100	\$101-499
Family	9-15	16-40	41-100	101-200	201-499
Business	25-35	36-75	76-150	151-300	301-499

A "500 Club" is reserved for contributions of \$500 or more. Privileges are identical for all classes; the higher dues represent a much needed donation to help the Society's work. Dues are tax-deductible.

The Society's services include conducting oral histories, publishing local history monographs, maintaining a local history/genealogy research library and the county museum, as well as educational outreach. The Society wishes to acquire objects, documents, books, photographs, diaries, and other materials relating to the history of Latah County. These are added to the collections and made available to researchers while they are preserved for future generations.

The Society is housed in the William J. McConnell Mansion, 110 South Adams, Moscow. The museum is open from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. Visits to the museum or research library are welcomed at other times and can be arranged by calling (208) 882-1004.

LATAH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Volume 4, Number 1

June 1981

REORGANIZATION

As this Newsletter is being sent to the members, the financial status of the Historical Society is still much up in the air. We have made our request to the county commissioners and have written our usual number of grants. What remains now is to see how much funding comes in from those sources. What is obvious, however, is that the Society will need to continue to expand its membership and will need to sponsor periodic fundraising events so that our level of non-governmental funding will continue to increase. For this, the Society will need a lot of assistance. You are already helping by being a member. If you have other ideas and/or time to spend on special fundraising projects, please give us any additional help you can.

It is also obvious that the Society will have to cut back on some programs and activities. The Trustees are currently working on plans for a scaled-down, yet vital Society. The exact re-organization has not yet taken shape, but members will continue to be kept informed of activities and plans through the Newsletter.

Four of the Society's current staff of five are leaving at the end of June. Diane Becker, Curator of Collections since May 1980 and an intern before that, is getting married on June 27 and will be moving to Pasadena. Nancy Luebbert, Historical Records Surveyor since March and an active volunteer for three years, is going to graduate school in history at William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. Carol Young, Museum Administrator since January, is taking a new administrative position in the School of Education at the University of Idaho. We are grateful for all of the professional assistance these people have given the Society, and wish them well in the future. In addition, Keith Petersen, Director since August 1977, is leaving to do historical consultant work.

Karen Broenneke, formerly Curator of Educational Services, will assume Diane's position as Curator of Collections. The

educational position will not be filled at this time. A search is underway for a new Director. The Museum Administrator position will not be filled at this time. The Society's staff, therefore, will be less than half its present size beginning in July. Members should be understanding if it takes a bit longer to respond to your needs.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL

The sixth annual Ice Cream Social and Old Time Crafts Fair will be held on Sunday, July 26 from 1-5 p.m. at the McConnell Mansion. This has become the Society's largest public event, and is one the entire community looks forward to. It is also a vital fundraiser. It takes a lot of work to organize the program, and any help you can give would be greatly appreciated. Listed below are the committee chair people. If you can assist them, please give them a call, so that we can continue to make this a special event. And remember: DON'T MISS THE ICE CREAM SOCIAL. BRING YOUR FRIENDS. IT'S THE BEST EVENT OF THE SUMMER!

Publicity: (Help in hanging posters)--Lillian Otness, 88204227

Refreshments: (Need donations of cakes; also need help serving)--Cora Knott, 88205191

Sales: (Staff membership/publications booth; take tickets for refreshments)--Margi Jenks, 882-6717

Music: (Arrangements for musical entertainment)--Lucille Magnuson, 289-5122

Mansion Tours: (Help staff the Mansion, develop tour guide booklets)--Merideth Monserud, 882-1376

Crafts Demonstrations: (Make contacts with crafts people; provide needed special equipment)--Kathy Probasco, 882-1309

Set Up and Clean Up: (For those who have time in the morning or late afternoon on July 26)--Keith Petersen, 882-1004

SPRING EVENTS A SUCCESS

Several activities and fundraisers took place in the spring, and all were great successes.

On May 2 and 3, the United Church of Moscow held a special historical open house in celebration of their 105th birthday. The program included outstanding music, a fine display of historical photographs and artifacts, and delightful refreshments. The committee that planned the event were members of the Society who are also members of the Church. We appreciate the work all of them did to make the open house a success. A special thanks goes to Mildred Humphrey for her hours of dedicated service in planning the event, and for her generous monetary contributions to insure its success. Steve Talbott should also be thanked especially for his work in preparing a slide show on the history of the Church.

The second Moscow Historic Homes Tour was held on May 9 and was attended by over 250 people, who toured seven outstanding historic homes and St. Mary's Catholic Church in the Fort Russell Neighborhood. Thanks go to all who helped by making cookies, served refreshments and served as hosts in the homes. A special thanks goes to the homeowners, Samuel and Lois Butterfield, Terry and Mary Burton, Robert and Virginia Coonrod, Ivar Nelson and Pat Hart, John and Phyllis Veien, Evan and Leslie Wilson and St. Mary's Church. A thank you is also extended to the Homes Tour Committee, Tina Lawhead, Merideth Monserud, Kathy Probasco, Marilyn Scheldorf and Calvin Warnick.

On May 16 Roger Slade, dressed in appropriate attire, sold pies as a fundraiser at the Renaissance Fair. Thanks are extended to all who made pies, and to Liz Mowrey for helping Roger with the sales.

RAILROADS

A special exhibit on railroads in the Palouse was held on June 5 and 6 in the Mansion and was attended by over 200 people from as far away as Kennewick and Spokane. The exhibit was set up to enable people to learn about the recent donation of the Washington, Idaho and Montana Railway records to the Society. During the days of the exhibit, souvenir passenger tickets from the W.I. & M. were on sale. The Society still has a limited number of these original tickets

and if members would like to purchase any for 25¢ apiece they should contact the Society. A list of towns for which tickets are available will soon be prepared. Also during the day, the Society's latest local history book, Railroad Man: A Conversation with W.J. Gamble was sold. This book is available to members for \$2.20 using the form included with this Newsletter

NEW MEMBERS

Since the last Newsletter the following people have joined the Society. We thank them for their support and hope they enjoy their membership.

Elizabeth Davison, Moscow
 Dorothy Matson, Pullman
 Viola Weis, Uniontown
 Debbie Moehrle, Uniontown
 Robert Weir, Jr., Moscow
 Christie Dimock, Moscow
 Lee Severson, Troy
 Elsa Eisinger Shern, Coeur d' Alene
 Velma Stephens, Spokane
 Mrs. William Buchanan, Clallam Bay, Wa.
 Cliff Trafzer, Pullman
 Carol Perkins, Moscow (CONTRIBUTING)
 Matthews Family, Moscow
 Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Ma.
 Patricia Peek, Viola
 Lee Magnuson, Washington, D.C.
 Joanne Sutton, Moscow
 Diane Holt, Bovill
 Carl Sonner, Kennewick
 Robert Victor Nonini, Sausalito (SUSTAINING)
 Judy Nonini Glenn, Spokane (SUSTAINING)
 Barbara Anderson, Fremont, Ca.
 Carol Young, Moscow
 Mrs. Everett Will, Moscow
 Broemeling Welding Shop, Genesee (CONTRIBUTING)
 John Bindl, Moscow
 Evan and Leslie Wilson, Moscow
 John and Phyllis Veien, Moscow
 Ivar Nelson and Pat Hart, Moscow
 Robert and Virginia Coonrod, Moscow
 Terry and Mary Burton, Moscow
 Elk River School--Community Library
 Robert Moore, Troy (CONTRIBUTING)
 Mr. and Mrs. James Krauss, Moscow (CONTRIBUTING)
 A.G. Edmunds, Clarkston
 David Sandquist, Juliaetta
 REMEMBER: GIFT MEMBERSHIPS ARE EXCELLENT
 PRESENTS FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY!!

EXHIBITS

Three new exhibits are planned this summer and fall at the museum. Currently under construction is an exhibit on Genesee which will focus on the history of the community using photographs and artifacts. The exhibit is being sponsored by Broemeling Welding Shop of Genesee.

Later in the summer an exhibit on Folk Art in Latah County will be set up. This will be an expanded version of an exhibit that was held at the museum in the summer of 1977 and was at the First Security Bank of Moscow last winter. The exhibit will focus on folk art artifacts that were used in the home. We need folk art materials for the exhibit, and if you have some to loan, please contact the Society at 882-1004. We are looking for items made by Latah County people--chairs, paintings, kitchen utensils, and so forth--that actually were used in local homes.

The exhibit on Carol Ryrle Brink sponsored by the Association for the Humanities in Idaho and noted in the last Newsletter will be assembled in the late summer or early fall.

 U OF I LIBRARY ASSISTS SOCIETY

In the last Newsletter we made a plea for much-needed storage space. The University of Idaho Library has come to our assistance and an agreement has been signed that should be of great benefit to both the University and the Society. The Society will be able to continue to obtain large archival collections--such as the W. I. & M. donation--and not have to worry about where to store them. Such collections will remain the property of the Society, but will be stored and cataloged at the University Library Special Collections Department where they will be available for researchers. A similar arrangement had previously been reached with the Library concerning the Society's oral history collection. In these days of budget cuts all around, we are always looking for cooperative arrangements such as this, and we are grateful to the University for their assistance.

We still, however, have a great need for storage space for museum artifacts. Whether we are able to continue collecting museum pieces in order to preserve them for future generations depends to a large extent

on whether we are able to find a place to store them once collected. The Society needs the use of secure, dry warehouse or similar space. A contribution of such room would be tax-deductible. Please call us for more details.

 GIFTS

Since the last Newsletter the following gifts have been made to the Society. We thank these individuals for their efforts to preserve Latah County history.

John and Jeanette Talbott: medical bottles; local advertising packages; catalogs; clothing.

Don and Evelyn Becker: women's hats; men's formal clothing; glassware.

Robert Kinser: family photographs; Moscow High School diploma (for Mildred Paulson Kinser).

Sandy Lytle: Fay Sholes Co. Typewriter.

Alma Lauder Keeling: graduation dress; muslin dress.

Robert and Nancy Hosack: dental floss and container; product packages.

May Fleiger: handmade afgan.

Roy Sundberg: photographs.

Rose Alene McArthur: water color stamp book.

Thomas Miley: photograph of Bovill.

Edith Driscoll: pen; local advertising.

Carol Escapule: Appaloosa: The Spotted Horse in Art and History

Ross Thompson: photographs of Troy; local advertising materials.

Rita Bindl: Needlecraft magazines.

Dale Good: embroidered table cloth from the Potlatch Mercantile.

Batoule Wallace: Hoosier Cabinet; hall mirror.

Cope Gale, Jr.: local advertising materials.

Dean Hanson: photographs; books.

Monetary gifts have been received from:

Nancy Luebbert Leonard and Jean Ashbaugh

Kathleen Probasco Keith Petersen

Lillian Otness Beth Mickey

Mildred Humphrey Grace Wicks

University of Idaho Retirees Association

MEMORIALS

Memorials to the Historical Society are an excellent way to remember friends. These generous gifts also greatly help the Society. Since the last Newsletter, memorials have been received from the following:

For Arthur Heick, from the Latah County Pioneer Association
 For Leone David, from the John Neely family.

LATAH LEGACY

For the past year-and-a-half Ralph and Margi Jenks have served as editors of Latah Legacy. Under their leadership the journal has been greatly enlarged and has changed its name and format. Latah Legacy is one of the outstanding local historical society quarterlies in the Pacific Northwest. More importantly, it is a lot of fun to read! Putting the journal together takes many hours of volunteer help, and we are thankful to Ralph and Margi for their assistance. This is the last issue for which they will serve as full-time editors. The Trustees are considering having a rotating editorial board, with each editor responsible for one issue a year, and we hope Ralph and Margi are able to continue on that basis and lend us their expertise.

The past few issues of the Legacy have been assembled by the following people:

Merideth Monserud
 Margi Jenks
 Francis Nonini
 H.R. and Lillian Otness
 Diane Becker
 Carol Young
 Karen Broenneke
 Jamie Sitz

If you would like to help out on the colating and assembling of the next issue, please give us a call.

SUMMER HELP

Jamie Sitz will be working as a secretary at the Society for the summer, providing much-needed office assistance. Jamie will be a senior at Deary High School next year.

A PERSONAL NOTE

There is always a touch of sentimentality that goes with completing the final details of a job you have enjoyed. This is my last Newsletter, and I am approaching my last day as Director of the Society. I certainly feel the tinges of melancholy that come with leaving the Society's staff. I look upon the past four years with many fond memories. I have genuinely appreciated having had the opportunity to work for the Society, and I am grateful for the many friendships I have made. It has been a pleasure working with the Trustees, the many Society volunteers and the other staff members.

While I will not forget my past association with the Society, I am looking forward to many more active years as a member and volunteer. I do not view my association with the Society as ending, merely as changing. Looking then to the future, I want to nonetheless thank all of you for the help you have given me in the past.

Keith Petersen

LIFE IN A COMPANY TOWN POTLATCH, IDAHO

by
Keith Petersen

Potlatch, Idaho, is a planned community of repetitious frame houses, uniformly-sized yards and orderly streets with precise ninety-degree corners. The sawmill on the flat overpowers surrounding smaller buildings and indicates the area's economy is controlled by a single industry. Residents readily explain that this was a company town and speak of the past with pride. One expects bitter remarks, some indication that life is better now that Potlatch is no longer owned by "The Company." But there is little of that, and most visitors come away with a new perspective about life in company towns.

The negative image of company towns, characterized by constant toil, eternal debt and substandard housing, was firmly established in many people's minds when Tennessee Ernie Ford popularized "Sixteen Tons" in the 1950s.¹ Such criticism is not unusual. Readers grew angry along with Ma when she confronted the clerk of the company store about overpriced goods in John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. Upton Sinclair in The Jungle depicted the hopelessness of life in Packingtown and in 1937, the editors of The New Republic commented that citizens in company towns "live under a system of paternalism about as friendly as the relation between serf and nobleman in feudal society."²

Historians have examined many types of American communities--New England villages, frontier outfitting posts, large cities, Mormon towns and utopias, to name a few--but they have largely ignored the social history of company towns. Recent studies indicate that a reevaluation of this popular image might be in order.

Some of these towns were oppressive, but in many places life was quite comfortable.³

Planned communities and company towns developed for a number of reasons. Visionaries and entrepreneurs in Europe often designed settlements for the moral enlightenment of their residents. Two examples of this type of enterprise in the United States are New Harmony, Indiana, and to a lesser extent, Pullman, Illinois. Most company-controlled communities in this country, however, started out of geographical necessity. In isolated regions companies undertaking the exploitation of mineral, fish or forest wealth had to create a total environment for their workers. It was unreasonable to expect employees to own homes or merchants to erect buildings in towns with limited lifespans determined by how rapidly the corporations depleted existing natural resources. So the company found it necessary to build, own and maintain all the community's structures.⁴

It was not unusual to find company communities in the mining and logging frontiers of the West. These short-lived camps usually disappeared with the growth of population and the development of automobiles and modern highways. An exception was Potlatch; larger than most western company "camps" with a peak population of over 2,000, it remained under company ownership until 1952. Furthermore, as will be seen, it was built with a dual purpose: to extract pine lumber from surrounding forests, and to develop an ideal living situation for employees and their families.

One problem confronting social historians who attempt to determine the style of life in company towns is the paucity of sources. Working class families traditionally leave few written materials. Extant company records normally deal with financial matters and offer little insight into town life. Newspapers are helpful but do not give adequate information for a reconstruction of everyday life. By using oral history, much of the confusion surrounding these communities can be eliminated. James Allen found interviewing former residents the most fruitful source of information for his study of company towns and Tamara Hareven used oral histories to document life in the mill town of Manchester. Oral history can help to determine the accuracy of the popular image of these settlements.⁵

Unfortunately, oral history will be a viable methodology for only a short time. Company towns are virtually a thing of the past, and it is now often impossible to reconstruct the feelings of residents because they were not interviewed and are no longer living. Since Potlatch was so recently detached from its company control, the oral history possibilities are unique. In the 1970s the Latah County Historical Society conducted an extensive oral history project. Several of the people interviewed lived in Potlatch and these narrations form the basis of this paper. To the extent possible, I have tried to tell the story in their words.⁶

Frederick Weyerhaeuser prospered by the idiom that the only time he lost money on timberlands was when he did not invest in them. He united with other lumbermen in a timber conglomerate in the midwest and by the 1890s his wealth rivaled that of John D. Rockefeller. Weyerhaeuser lived in a fashionable section of St. Louis where his neighbor and good friend was another financial baron of the day, railroad magnate James J. Hill. When Hill decided to retire \$8,000,000 worth of Northern Pacific Railway bonds by selling 900,000 acres of timber land in the Pacific Northwest, he took his idea to

Weyerhaeuser. One night in 1900, while the two sat before a fire in Hill's comfortable den, they sealed one of the largest real estate deals in American annals. Weyerhaeuser's syndicate purchased all the Northern Pacific property for six dollars an acre. Weyerhaeuser himself provided a third of the price with the remainder coming from other partners. The days of small time logging in the Northwest came to an end as the Weyerhaeusers moved in.⁷

The timber deal included lands in Washington, Oregon and Idaho. Douglas fir, a tree with little commercial value at the time, covered much of the property, but great white pines grew in Idaho so the Weyerhaeuser group considered that state to hold the greatest potential. White pines had made the Weyerhaeusers rich in the Midwest and the members of the conglomerate believed they would bring them even more profits in Idaho. Nonetheless, despite the investment of millions of dollars, it was years before the Weyerhaeuser interests in Idaho showed a profit.⁸

The most ambitious of the Idaho enterprises was the Potlatch Lumber Company. Capitalized in 1903 for \$3,000,000, the Company quickly acquired property in the Palouse River drainage. When the Company purchased the mill and timber lands of the Palouse River Lumber Company, excitement ran high in Palouse City. "Few towns have made greater advancement during the past year than Palouse," commented the Spokane Spokesman-Review in 1903, "and it is thought this will be the best year in the history of the town."⁹ Many residents believed the Weyerhaeusers would build a major mill in Palouse, and when the Company asked for a right-of-way to construct a logging railroad, the town's businessmen voted unanimously to grant it. "Give them the right of way?" the mayor asked incredulously. "Of course we will. There is not a man here who will not do all in his power to secure the road."¹⁰

Disappointed Palouse residents learned that the Company planned to build a new

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"Well, there was no railroad at that time. The Northern Pacific had built into Palouse, and the lumber company wanted the Northern Pacific to build from Palouse into the timber--in other words, where the W. I. & M. goes now. But they couldn't make them see the value of a railroad into the timber. A big company makes big mistakes, and a little company makes little mistakes. And that was a big mistake on the part of the Northern Pacific. We couldn't induce them to build. So Bill Deary, he was a rough, tough lumberjack, he said, 'To hell with ya. We'll build our own.' So we built our own W. I. & M."

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