

SINCE 2001

SUMMER 2021

ISSUE 41

# WALLOWA QUARTERLY

Magazine of the Wallowa History Center

*– Preserving Our Past for the Future –*

## IN THIS ISSUE

**The Short Life of a Small  
Town: Evans, Oregon**

**West Wallowa, 1910s**

**Minam Airplane Crash  
(Part 2)**

**Wild Boat Ride, 1936**

**Wallowa's Last Grizzly**

**Promise Memories**

**AND MORE!**

**FREE for WHC members • \$10 for non-members**

# WALLOWA QUARTERLY

PUBLISHED FOUR TIMES EACH YEAR: SPRING • SUMMER • FALL • WINTER

---

## WHC MESSAGE BOARD

---

### President's Message

#### They Don't Teach Family History in School

By David Weaver, WHC Board President

It seems improbable to me that I'm here. Readers of history know well the long sweep of terrors and tribulations that our ancestors had to endure for any one of us to be here now. War. Famine. Plague. Hungry wolves. The variety of ways any one of our family lineages could have been stopped in its tracks is bewildering. But in spite of that, here we are.

And then—after surviving the attacks of wild beasts and malicious microbes—there's the question of how it is, exactly, that we ended up a McRae, Lopez, Yang, Schmidt, Jones, or Red Heart?

On my mother's side of the family, there's the case of Adeline McClure. In 1850, 18-year-old Adeline was living with Samuel Cherry, a tailor, and his wife in Delaware, Ohio, presumably earning her keep as a seamstress. And she wasn't the only one living with the Cherrys. There were two other young women, Mary Goodell and Angeline Arnold, as well as a young black man, Joseph Betts. How exactly it was that she found herself in this situation is unknown. And so, too, how it was, and with whom, she became pregnant and an unwed mother.

There were family whispers, of course. A man was mentioned, a *Lindsey* or perhaps *Lindsley*. I began my own research. And intriguingly, the 1850 U.S. Census for Delaware, Ohio, shows that in Adeline's neighborhood, only a few blocks from Samuel Cherry's tailor shop, was a tavern and inn operated by a 31-year-old married man—a William *Linsley*.

Young, unmarried Adeline gave birth to a son she christened William (after William Linsley?), and with no church-sanctioned father to give him a last name, he was hers. A McClure, not a Linsley or otherwise.

Some years later, Adeline married Canady Brooks and started a new, "official" family, one that could be found in the records and on the record. William, though, was raised in the family of his uncle, a riverboat pilot on the Mississippi. He eventually made his way West to Idaho, married and had children of his own. The rest, as they say, is history—family history.

Few of us learn about our own family history in school. Instead, we're taught the big stories, the national stories, the global stories. But all of our little stories are embedded in these larger ones—and are just as interesting. If we're fortunate, a family member has done the work for us, spending hours in investigation and research, tracing the twists and turns of our personal stories. If not, and if we want to uncover our own history of how we came to be, it can be daunting to know where to start. That's where the Wallowa History Center can help.

We have research tools, collected records, and staff members, like Mary Ann Burrows, who are uncannily good at this. If you're curious about your own story, would like some assistance (and are patient), we're just a phone call or an email away. And if you can't find your own family history in a schoolbook, maybe it will be shared—with your permission, of course—in the pages of the *Wallowa Quarterly*. It's what we do.

**New Wallowa History Book Coming to the Wallowa History Center!**

***Homesteading the North End Ridges & Benches, Volume I* by Linda McCrae Bauck**

---

*Our words define us: They reveal who we are, what we believe, and the times in which we live. As a result, historical material in the Wallowa Quarterly may occasionally contain language considered to be stereotyped or prejudiced. Retaining this language, however, is often necessary for understanding the historical context in which it is used.*

# WALLOWA QUARTERLY

SUMMER 2021

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

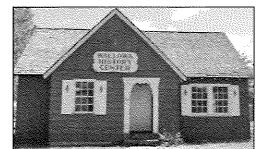
---

• <b>WHC Message Board</b> .....	2
• <b>The Short Life of a Small Town: Evans, Oregon (Part 1 of 2)</b> .....	4
When the train arrived here in 1908, it carried with it the promise of growth and prosperity. But as the town of Lostine was to discover, that promise often came with a price tag attached.	
• <b>Wallowa Portrait: West Wallowa, 1910s</b> .....	9
In the first decade of the new century, Wallowa was growing into a town.	
• <b>The Pilot, the Trappers &amp; the Ranger (Part 2 of 2)</b> .....	10
After the plane crash came the hard part—getting help and getting out of the Minam wilderness.	
• <b>Wild Boat Ride, 1936</b> .....	14
Could the Grande Ronde River be floated from Minam to Troy? In the fall of 1936, two men from Wallowa—a minister and a blacksmith—set out in a homemade row boat to find the answer.	
• <b>Ask the Wallowa History Center: Wallowa’s Last Grizzly</b> .....	16
If you went looking for trouble in Wallowa County, you might just find it in grizzly country.	
• <b>Promise Memories</b> .....	18
Tough to get to and even tougher to live in—that was the Promise country in the late 1890s.	
• <b>The Name &amp; Spelling of Wallowa</b> .....	19
A bit of luck and a chance meeting gave us the name we use today.	
• <b>Then &amp; Now: South Main Street</b> .....	20
What a century of change has brought to one of Wallowa’s Main Street business blocks.	

---

The *Wallowa Quarterly* is a publication of the Wallowa History Center, Wallowa, Oregon. The editor of this issue of the *Wallowa Quarterly* is Mark Highberger. All errors within—factual, historical, technical, and grammatical—are his responsibility. We welcome not only ideas for articles, but also well-written manuscripts of approximately 500-1,000 words. Before submitting, contact the editor for guidelines and requirements at [highberg@eoni.com](mailto:highberg@eoni.com). Unfortunately, payment to authors is limited to copies of the *Wallowa Quarterly* in which their articles appear.

Wallowa History Center  
602 W 1st St • PO Box 481 • Wallowa, OR 97885  
541-886-8000 • [wallhistcenter@gmail.com](mailto:wallhistcenter@gmail.com) • [www.wallowahistory.org](http://www.wallowahistory.org)



*Wallowa*  
*History*  
*Center*

---

*Front cover: The first train coming in to Wallowa meets the last stage going out, 1908.*

---

---

# THE SHORT LIFE OF A SMALL TOWN

---

## Evans, Oregon (1908–1943)

### Part 1 of 2: 1908–1912

“There used to be a town over there. Past those trees. Then the railroad came and they built a stop in the next town over, and our town sort of dried up and fell in and blew away. There’s bushes and trees now, where the town was.” – Neil Gaiman, “October in the Chair,” *Fragile Things* (2006)

When the first train arrived here in 1908, it carried with it the promise of growth and prosperity to towns standing along its tracks. But as the town of Lostine was soon to discover, that promise often came with a price tag attached. To save itself from the same fate as other towns that were bypassed by the railroad in the early 20th century—deserted streets, shuttered businesses, vacant homes—Lostine, Oregon, had a choice: either get the railroad to move to town, or get the town to move to the railroad. The first was too expensive; the second, too unpopular. So Lostine stayed where it was, a mile from the tracks and its depot. Meanwhile, at the other end of that mile, the town of Evans was born.

### Origins of Evans

By R.L. Forsythe, from a 1927 letter to Lewis A. McArthur, author of *Oregon Geographic Names* (1928)

When the branch-line railroad was built from Elgin to Joseph in about the year [1908] the railroad people agreed to run the railroad through Lostine if that city would pay a bonus of \$1,500, the cost of the additional construction by reason of a cut that would have to be made through a small hill east of Lostine. One man, Mr. James Haun, prominent citizen of Lostine, was strongly in favor of paying the sum, but a majority was against him and the proposition was lost. As a result, the railroad missed Lostine by about one mile, and the depot was established a mile away and named Lostine by the railroad company.

Mr. Haun had said that he would leave town if it failed to land the railroad. This he did by moving two good residence buildings out of Lostine and onto land that he owned near the depot. He, together with John McDonald and S.W. Miles, laid out a new townsite at this point, and the name of Evans was selected (in honor of Mrs. Sam Wade). The settlement soon grew to include 10 or 12 houses, a couple of store buildings, three wheat warehouses, a church and schoolhouse, as well as a few smaller buildings. Later, the post office, with the name of Evans, was established at the new townsite.

The last few years has shown a decline in the place. One store building having recently been torn down and hauled away, and a number of residences and buildings stand vacant.

Locally, the place has always been known as Jimtown. Jim is Mr. Haun’s first name. There is, of course, a post office at the original town of Lostine and also one at Evans. The railroad has never recognized the name of Evans and is still called *Lostine* on the map, even though the station is actually [at] *Evans*.

\* \* \*

### Moving to Evans

Adapted from John H. Horner, *J. H. Horner Papers* (1953)

When the railroad was built in Wallowa County, the citizens of Lostine wanted it built close to Lostine and [they] jockeyed with the engineers quite a while over it. But they wouldn’t put up any money to have the survey changed, so James Haun moved his residence with all outbuildings to the new site. James Haun, S.W. Miles, L. Couch, and John McDonald bought 33 acres from George Wood, paying him \$1,000 for it, and platted the town of Evans.

---

*At various times called a bonus, a payment, a fee, a subsidy, a contribution, a gift, or other terms less odious than “bribe,” the land or money a town gave to the railroad in exchange for it laying its tracks through that town was a common practice during the “Golden Age of Railroading” in America.*

---

### 1908 Against New Townsite

Whether or not a new townsite will be platted around the depot at Lostine is the topic of supreme importance down there. The depot is located 1-1/2 miles north and a little east of the center of town on the land of [George] Wood who, it is reported, has no present intentions of laying out a townsite, but J.F. Haun, who owns adjoining land, is reported as having said he would. It is the general belief that the interests of all, including Mr. Haun, was to not make a new townsite but lay out a new street running direct to the depot, making the distance just a little over a mile. General manager O'Brien is quoted as saying that scores of towns in Oregon are farther from their depots than Lostine will be.

– *The News-Record* (September 17, 1908)

### 1908 New Town of Lostine

Dr. Alex Reid was down from Lostine yesterday between trains. He reports that a survey is being made for a new town of Lostine down by the depot. George Wood and J.F. Haun are platting the site.

– *The Wallowa Sun* (November 20, 1908)

### 1908 Train Reaches Wallowa

The railroad has reached Wallowa. At half past nine o'clock yesterday morning, the track-laying crew completed the track to the site of the Wallowa depot. Engineer Brandon

came down from Enterprise and preparations were at once made to tap the city mains and get water for the engines. Crews will be at work this morning putting in sidetracks and a turning Y. Mr. Brandon states that the crew will be laying steel toward Lostine in five days. It will take that time to put in the bridge across the Wallowa.

– *The Wallowa Sun* (September 11, 1908)

### 1909 Depots Finished

C.S. Fisher, of Fisher & Petrie, the depot contractors, was in the city Tuesday after some finishing material for the Joseph depot. He stated that they had finished the Enterprise depot two weeks ago and that the Joseph depot would be complete this week. The two depots are identical with the Wallowa depot. All are constructed substantially with a view of withstanding cold weather. The lower floor contains the agent's office and telegraph room, the waiting room, express closets, and freight room. The upper floor is devoted to living rooms for the agent. All except the freight room on the lower floor are finished in fir, tastefully stained; the upper rooms are lathed and plastered. Throughout, the building is finished to combine comfort, convenience, and attractiveness, and are a tribute to the ability of the contractors. The Lostine depot was finished by other contractors much before any of the others. It is smaller than the rest, but is substantially built.

– *The Wallowa Sun* (January 29, 1909)



Boarding the train at the Lostine depot in Evans

### 1909 Moving Houses

J.H. Walker, a house mover from La Grande, arrived in Lostine the first of the week and announced his business here as the moving of several houses from the Main Street of Lostine down to the depot, says the [Lostine] Reporter.



The houses in question were the McCully store building, the Ed Ruble residence property at the south end of Main Street and now owned by J.F. Haun, and the residence and barn in the north part of town, also owned by J.F. Haun.

Mr. Walker was looking for a house to move his family into. He said he would either buy or rent. Later the report comes that there is no foundation to the rumor about the store building being moved, but that there will be a warehouse erected at the depot soon. Mr. Walker will be here again on Friday of this week to begin work preparatory to the moving of the Haun buildings.

– *The News-Record* (August 7, 1909)

### 1909 Hack for Hire

*Hack to the Depot.*

*Meets all trains.*

*Leave Lostine to meet the morning train 7:30,  
the evening train 2:00.*

– Advertisement, *Lostine Reporter* (1909)

### 1909 Lostine Limits Extended

The [Lostine] city council is having a new charter drawn up, and the city authorities will have the land surveyed north for an extension of the city limits.

– *The News-Record* (April 10, 1909)

### 1910 Naming Evans

For a while, Evans was called Jim Town [or Jimtown] for James Haun. Some suggested calling it Georgetown for George Wood, the local rancher who sold the site for the town. Finally, it was named for Mrs. Louisa Evans Wade, wife of Sam Wade, both Lostine-area ranchers.

– John H. Horner, *J. H. Horner Papers* (1953)

### 1910 New Town Named Evans

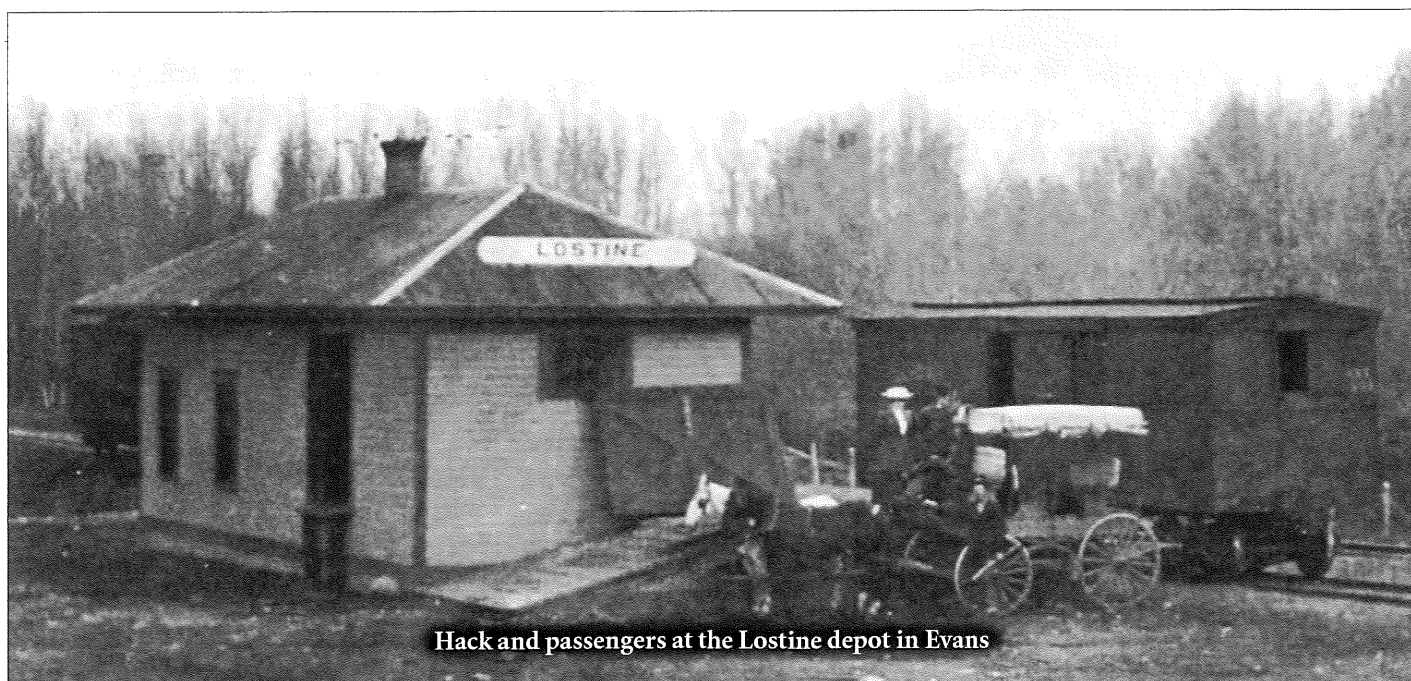
The new townsite laid out at the Lostine railroad station is named Evans. The plat was filed in the clerk's office Saturday.

– *The News-Record* (June 22, 1910)

### 1910 Moving Lostine

Lostine will have a new site. Plans will be definitely closed today whereby 40 acres of the Geo. W. Wood place surrounding the depot will be platted. A portion of the Haun place will be added later.

After more than two years of negotiating, the Wood property surrounding the Lostine depot has been secured by an option, and Couch & McDonald will manage the platting of the new townsite and the marketing of the lots associated with them.



Hack and passengers at the Lostine depot in Evans

In the deal are Messrs. J.F. Haun and S.W. Miles. This will be placed on the market as soon as the services of the county surveyor can be secured.

Many of the businessmen of Lostine realize that their future success depends upon moving to the depot, and the sentiment is entirely changed from what it was a year ago. Strangers have remarked that Lostine was losing many opportunities by not getting to the depot, and this movement means much toward the development of Wallowa County and the growth of the fourth town of the county [Lostine].

– *The Wallowa Sun* (April 29, 1910)

### 1910 Lostine Citizens on Warpath

The citizens of Lostine are on the warpath. According to the signed version of the “removal” story of Lostine to the OR&N station here, the citizens are about ready to demonstrate their determination to remain where they are. Following is the signed communication:

Erroneous statements published in *The Wallowa Sun* under date of April 29, 1910, is considered by the businessmen and citizens of Lostine as false and with vicious intention on the part of a few knockers who live out of town, that have the intent of sacrificing principle and manhood for mercenary motives, thereby retarding the growth and prosperity of our town.

We, the undersigned citizens of Lostine, deny any and all assertions relative to moving to a new townsite or lending any assistance to the so-called promotion of the same, and do hereby proclaim to public our intention of remaining where we are and hope the day is not far distant when our neighboring towns will realize that we are still on the map. [The resolution] is signed by practically all residents of the town.

– *The News-Record* (May 7, 1910)

### 1910 New Town Plat Accepted

The struggle over the new townsite at Lostine has resulted in the platting of a new town, to be known as Evans, near the OR&N station there. The plat was presented to the county court and accepted. The county clerk was ordered to record the plat. Considerable effort has been expended, pro and con, over the matter by Lostine residents. Just what effect, if any, the new town of Evans will have upon the city of Lostine remains to be seen, although to the casual observer the most logical outcome will be the growing together of the two places. Anything that aids in the settlement of the one will aid in the settlement of the other.

– *The News-Record* (July 9, 1910)

### Missing Railroad Launches New Town

There was a complete new town platted on June 18, 1910, by James F. and Mellie Haun, and Leonard and Minnie Couch. It was called Evans. After the railroad came through in 1908, missing the town of Lostine, the Hauns and Couches decided to start a town next to the railroad track and train depot...Over a dozen homes were either moved or built there in the next few years.



Leonard Couch

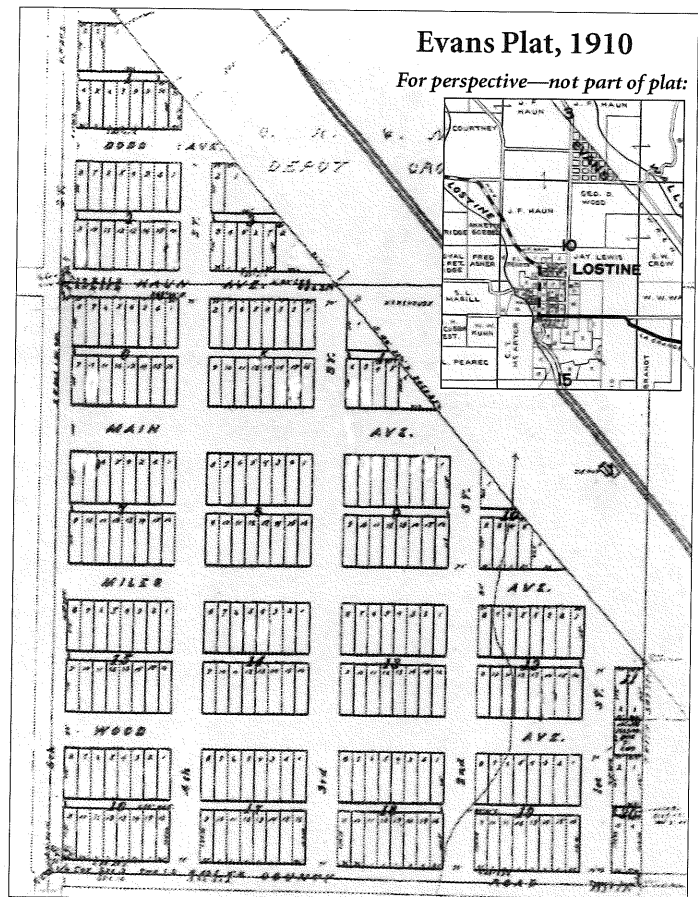
The Hauns had a very large house in Lostine, which they placed on skids and moved to Evans.

– Irene Barklow, *School Days in the Wallowas* (1992)

### 1910 Sale of New Townsite

The plat of survey for the new townsite of Evans, situated adjoining the depot grounds at Lostine, has been accepted by county officials and the sale of lots is now on. If you wish to get in on the ground floor, now is your opportunity. Phone or write Couch & McDonald at Wallowa, Oregon, as they have the handling of the entire tract. Prices reasonable and graded according to distance from depot.

– *The Wallowa Sun* (July 15, 1910)



## **MINNICK & HARRIS New Store**

### **at Evans Now Open for Business**

#### **1910 New Town of Evans Prosperous**

Couch & McDonald, who are marketing the new town of Evans at the Lostine depot, report some lively times at the new townsite. The Evans Mercantile Company, which recently purchased the Fitzpatrick store at Lostine, has moved it to the depot, and F.W. Fitzpatrick is manager of the new concern. Lots have been sold for a livery barn.

Much lumber and lime is being delivered for shipment. The lime company is putting up barrels at the house they rented on the new townsite. Large amounts of hay and grain are promised for shipment from the new townsite, which has a good warehouse already. Residents of Lostine report that the town cows are more generous in their regard for the new town and spend fully half their time there. They predict that this affection will speedily wane, however, unless the new townsite is irrigated.

– *The Wallowa Sun* (August 5, 1910)

#### **1911 Comparing Lostine and Evans**

Lostine is one of the oldest settlements in the valley while the new town of Evans, the railroad station for Lostine, is the youngest. Lostine has a general merchandise store, drugstore, hardware store, livery stable, hotel, and numerous other enterprises. It is surrounded by the richest farming community in the county. Several mines and lime kilns are near Lostine and Evans.

– *The Wallowa Sun* (March 24, 1911)

#### **1911 Evans Busy**

Evans, the new town, is fast assuming the looks of a busy community. New buildings are being erected, and the builders are building well. Among those who are erecting is L.P. McCubbin, who has nearly completed a two-story, ten-room dwelling. Also, E.A. Clark is building a large hotel. S.W. Miles broke ground for a store building this week, and J.T. Haun for a hardware store.

**Part 2 of “The Short Life of a Small Town” will appear in the Fall 2021 issue of the Wallowa Quarterly.**

---

**RAILROAD PAYMENTS** It is true that the railroad company sought gifts of land and money from the communities through which it passed. La Grande was required to furnish a right-of-way from Oro Dell to Hot Lake as a part of its price for having the railroad constructed on the south side of the river and closer to Old Town. In connection with Union's misfortune in being off the main line, it is related that an official of the railroad approached the leading banker of the town with a request that Union donate \$10,940 and a right of way through town to the railroad company. The banker is reputed to have felt that the railroad would have to come through...the town of Union whether any money were paid or not. Upon his refusal, the order is supposed to have gone out that the engineers in charge were to make no effort to bring the line close to Union. – Jim Reavis, “Railroads in Union County, Oregon,” *Oregon Genealogy and History* (undated)

---

Besides these, two other new dwellings are underway. All of these buildings are of a substantial class and will do much toward making the town a place of beauty and prosperity.

– *The Wallowa Sun* (October 20, 1911)

#### **1911 Building Activity at Evans**

[Couch & McDonald] report the sale of many lots in the new town of Evans, more than half of the original plat having been sold. There has been 10 new buildings erected or are now under course of construction or just completed. The buildings consist of business houses, dwellings, and a fine new Union church.

– *The Wallowa Sun* (November 24, 1911)

#### **1912 Evans Resists Annexation**

The controversy over the extension of the city limits of Lostine to include the Evans townsite at the depot promises to get into the courts. Residents of Evans have banded together to resist any effort of the Lostine city authorities to exercise municipal control over them and their property.

The dispute was brought to a crisis by spreading of Lostine city taxes over Evans. Lostine voted to enlarge its territory a year and a half ago. The land thus voted into the city comprises a considerable tract at Evans surrounding the depot and embracing all the available townsite tract, and also a lane a mile and a quarter long and 30 feet wide connecting the two settlements. Thus the map of the city resembles the plat of a farmer's holdings who has two quarter sections more than a mile apart but connected by a highway. Evans people say they were not consulted in the annexation, that only Lostine voted on it. They assert this should give them ground to contest the legality of the vote.

– *Enterprise Record Chieftain* (February 22, 1912)

---

**EVANS TO RESIST  
RULE OF LOSTINE**

---

RESIDENTS OF NEW TOWN PRE-  
PARE TO GO TO COURT OV-  
ER ANNEXATION.

---



## WEST WALLOWA, 1910s

In the years on either side of the first decade of the 20th century, Wallowa was busy throwing off some of the last vestiges of its rough-hewn earlier days: The train had arrived, the sawmill had started, and new homes and businesses were popping up like spring daffodils, especially on the west side of town, which had a new mill, hospital, store, hotel, doctor's office, jewelry store, and high school. The area could even boast of two new housing developments (the Evergreen and East Side additions) and a new plank sidewalk that connected Main Street to the Nibley-Mimnaugh sawmill via Douglas Street (which to this day has no sidewalk at all, plank or otherwise).

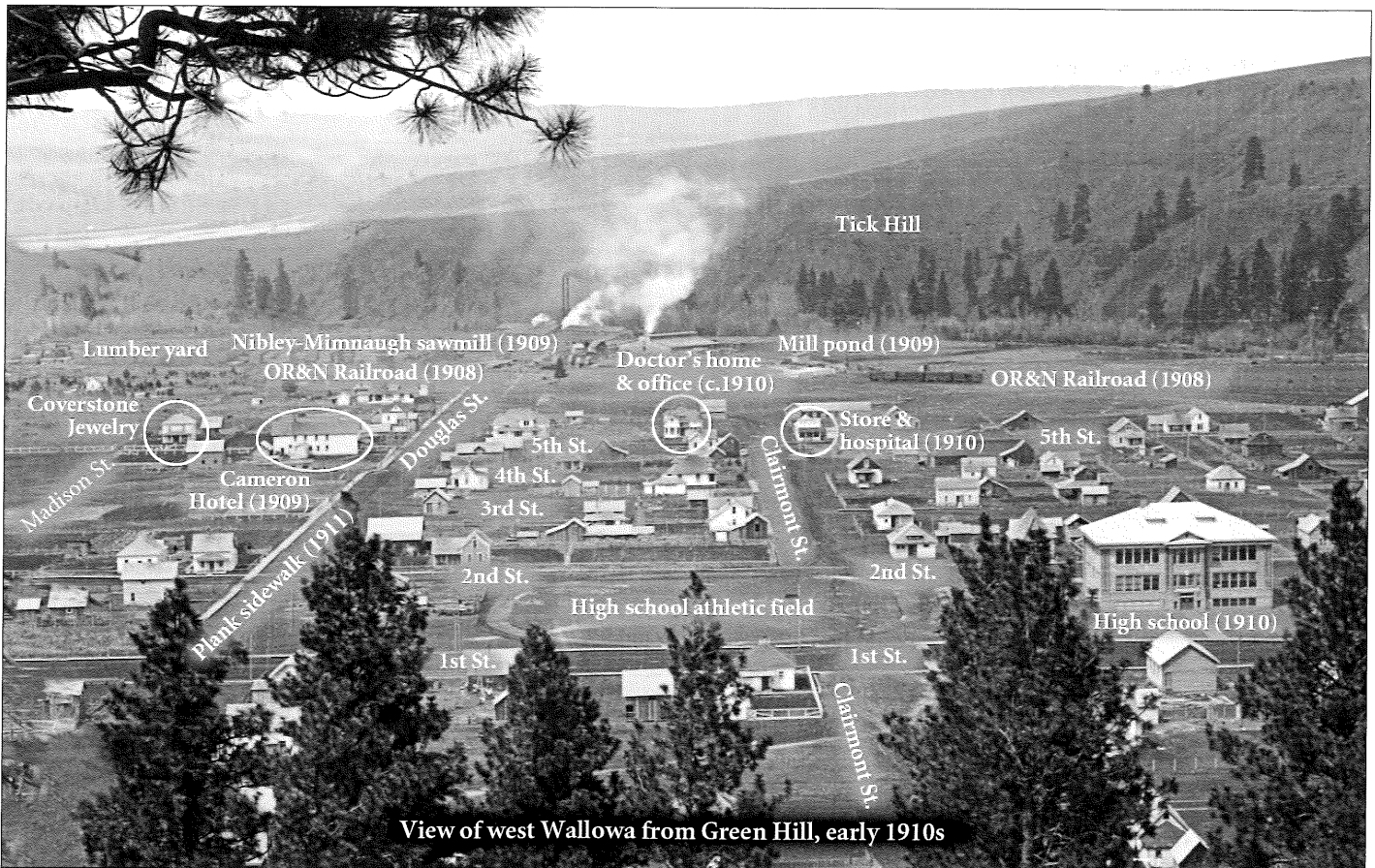
Wallowa... is situated on the Elgin branch of the OR&N railroad, which connects with the main line at La Grande. It was incorporated in 1899, covers an area of 320 acres, and contains 793 people. The altitude is 2,912 feet. The assessed valuation is \$30,000, with an indebtedness of \$10,000. Receipts from the sale of postage stamps for the quarter ending June 30, 1910, were \$742.43.

One school building has a value of \$5,000; three churches, Christian, Presbyterian, and Methodist, \$6,000, and an opera house, public hall, and lodge hall, \$10,000. Five school teachers receive from \$40 to \$125 a month. Common labor receives \$2.50 a day; skilled labor \$4.00, and man and team, \$5.00.

The electric light plant is under private ownership, and the waterworks system is owned by the public. The meter rate for electric light is 20 cents per kilowatt hour, and the flat rate for water service for household use is \$1.00 a month. Lumbering, mining, dairying, farming, and stock raising are the principal industries. All kinds of manufacturing and water power resources are undeveloped near the town.

Wallowa has four general merchandise stores, two hardware stores, three notion stores, two barber shops, three blacksmith shops, three planing mills, flour mill, two livery stables, newspaper, opera house, creamery, real estate agency, two hotels, furniture store, two drug stores, a millinery store, sawmill, and meat market. A bank, a good hotel, shoe store, and a woolen mill would be first-class investments.

– Report of Labor Commissioner, Fourth Biennial Report, 1911 [for the years 1908–1910] of the State of Oregon



View of west Wallowa from Green Hill, early 1910s

---

# THE PILOT, THE TRAPPERS & THE RANGER

---

*Fighting a snow storm and sub-zero temperatures, two trappers work into the night to keep a seriously injured pilot alive—but help is still miles and hours away.*

PART 2 of 2

## The Trappers: Bill Brockham and Jack Hamby

Adapted from “Account of the Rescue and Death of Harold Elwin Buckner”

By William L. Brockham

Ten steps from the trail and there near us was the wreck. Its streamer wires had made the hideous sound. Jack wondered if the pilot had jumped. There had been no sound to our signal. We rushed forward, Jack on one side and me on the other. There was a saddening sight. The boy was fully conscious. His first words were, “My poor legs. Get me out of here.”

The plane was upside down. The pilot had been driven directly onto the head of the engine. His head and shoulders were lying well out of the upturned car with his arms being free. He was trying to raise himself up. Again he said, “My poor legs.”

I had to take it very jovial for I had an idea at this time that Jack was sickening. I shot in around the motor to discover, if possible, how much the pilot had bled. We then began to look for a way to get him from the wreck and over the crumpled and upturned wings, with nearly 4 feet of snow—20 inches just fallen and soft.

We could not twist, break, or move a thing to make it easy to get him out. We took hold of his body, and at the

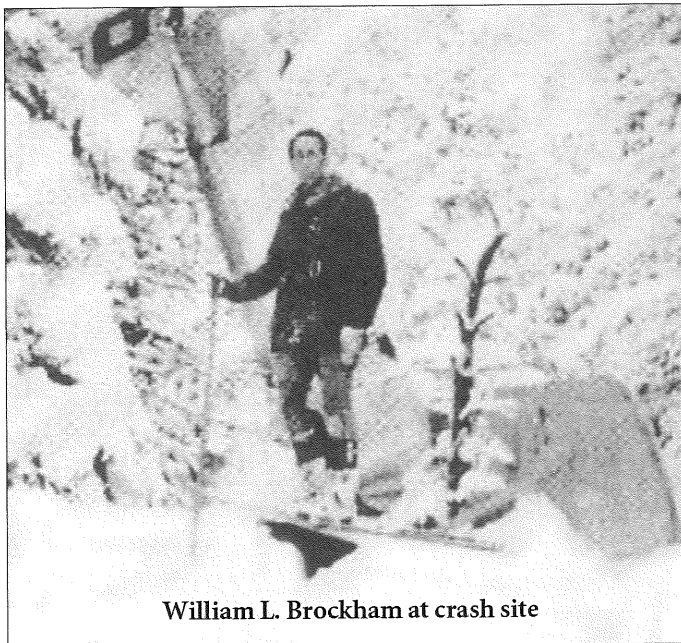
first touch he spoke of unbearable pain. My partner turned away. He told me he couldn’t stand it. I almost laughed aloud. Perhaps I did. I began to inform him that we must disregard all feelings—that it must be done.

Again we got hold, lifting him into our arms. We clambered out, down through the plane, over the wing, and had the lad, Harold, rolled snugly in the parachute in seconds. He asked me for some snow to eat, so I fixed him as comfortable as I could. He informed us where he lived and for whom he was working and wanted to get in touch there, but we said that we were doing everything possible, and at this point he became aware that he did not know where he was. He asked of the [Wallowa] National Forest and Minam River, and begged us not to leave him. He said that he would have died had we not found him.

The circumstance was getting altogether too conversational. I broke it abruptly by relating our whole plan to him of making a stretcher and taking him to our cabin, getting a doctor and aid. He blessed us, saying that we were his saviors and that he knew we were doing all possible, but that he had people in Boise that he must get word to. I again informed him that they would be reached from the outside, so I shall always feel that I deprived the boy from saying something at this time, but he seemed so hopeful of life. When we were ready to put him on the stretcher, he insisted on helping us by putting his arms around our necks and lifting.

We trudged little distances at first, and finally could only go steps at a time without resting. We got to within 150 yards of the cabin and Jack began to pray for strength, for it was indeed a hard trip in the snow.

We took him into the cabin, and he promptly called for a glass of water. I noticed then that he looked very pale. Jack was going to make some coffee so I asked Harold if he wouldn’t join Jack in a cup of coffee. He said that he would appreciate a cup of coffee, that he did not want “to act like a baby” with his injuries, and that he should have jumped [from the plane before crashing].



William L. Brockham at crash site

*They carried him to the cabin, where it was found he was horribly injured. The impact had broken both of his arms, caused compound fractures of his legs, crushed his chest, and bruised him about the head. – Jon M. and Donna McDaniel Skovlin, Into the Minam (2011)*

Some little discussion came up regarding what could be done. There was nothing. We did not have any aid. We dared not remove his clothes. All we could do was keep him warm and give him a little care.

Harold had talked, drunk a cup of coffee, eaten a couple of cookies, related that he did not know anything of the country he was in, had Jack rub his hands and chest several times, explained that he should have jumped, and that he did not want Jack to think “that he was acting like a baby,” and that the little comfort Jack could afford him was soothing to him.

He was going to have the second cup of coffee. Then he asked Jack to rub his chest again. Upon doing so his words

were, “No, no I can’t stand that! Rub my hands.” At that, he said, “That feels wonderful.” A pause, then, “I am going to die” came as heroic and bravely as the brave part he was to play in an awful tragedy, for after the first complaint he never mentioned it again. He knew we were under a heavy burden. They were busy talking as I departed.

*Jack [Hamby], trapper, sat by [Buckner’s] side, unable to relieve the sufferings of the flier, both of whose legs were broken and whose left side was crushed. – Morning Register, Eugene, Oregon (January 20, 1929)*

*Hamby remained in the cabin with Buckner while Brockham strapped on snowshoes and started for the Horse Ranch eight miles away for help. It was a fearsome 10 degrees below zero. The snow, which was several feet deep, slowed his progress. It took him 12 hours to reach the Horse Ranch. At the ranch he telephoned a report of the accident to La Grande. – Jon M. and Donna McDaniel Skovlin, Into the Minam (2011)*

## Editor’s Note

### Tracking History

or

### Historical Discrepancies in the Account of the 1929 Plane Crash of Harold E. Buckman

One problem with history is that it won’t hold still long enough for you to grab hold of it and write it down. Just when you think you might have a grip on the events and characters involved in any story, it wriggles loose or shifts its weight or in some way has you letting it go, then backtracking to the beginning and starting all over again. This is the way it was with the Harold Buckman story: Depending on who’s telling the story, the details of it, some large and others small, get cloudy. It’s as the historian Will Durant says, “Our knowledge of any past event is always incomplete, probably inaccurate, beclouded by ambivalent evidence and biased historians...” None of this cloudiness, of course, is intentional; it’s just the way people remember it after the passage of time and the fading of memory.

Following are some of the various differences in the details of the account of Harold E. Buckman’s airplane crash on a January evening in 1929:

- One trapper’s name was either “Bill” or “Phil” (he signed his written version of the story “William L. Brockham”); the other’s name, Jack “Handy” or “Hamby.”
- The crash occurred either in 1927 [almost certainly a typographical or memory error] or 1929, on either Thursday or Friday, January 17 or 18, soon after 5:05 or 5:20 pm., or at 5:30 or 5:45 p.m. [Most sources use Thursday, January 17, 1929, as the date of the crash.]
- The plane either crashed “into a boulder protruding through the ice” or “dived into a tree.”
- The crash site was two, eight, or fifteen miles upriver from the Horse Ranch.
- The miners’ cabin was either one, two, or eight miles upriver from the Horse Ranch.
- Snow depth at the time totaled either two, four, or six feet.
- The trappers took Buckner either to their cabin or to “the cabin of another trapper.”
- Buckner died the night of the crash at 8:30, 10:30, or “five hours after the crash.”

# The Ranger: Keith H. McCool

## The Rescue Party

A "local" boy who had attended school in Joseph, Ranger Keith McCool (1888–1945) spent his career as a ranger for the U.S. Forest Service, overseeing districts in the Whitman, Umatilla, and Wallowa national forests. It was during his time in Cove—the nearest entry point to the heart of the Minam area—that he received the telephone call from the Horse Ranch about the crash of the airmail plane on the upper Minam River. He immediately set into motion the rescue mission whose objective was to reach the injured pilot and bring him safely home.

### Learning of the Accident

At a time of heavy snows and with temperatures from 4 to 16 degrees below zero, a telephone message was received on January 18, 1929, by Forest Ranger Keith H. McCool at Cove, Oregon, that a Varney mail plane had crashed in the high Wallowa Mountains on the upper Minam River... Upon learning of the accident, Ranger McCool at once organized a relief party to go in over the rough and snowy mountains to bring out the pilot for medical attention.

— *Enterprise Record Chieftain* (June 6, 1929)

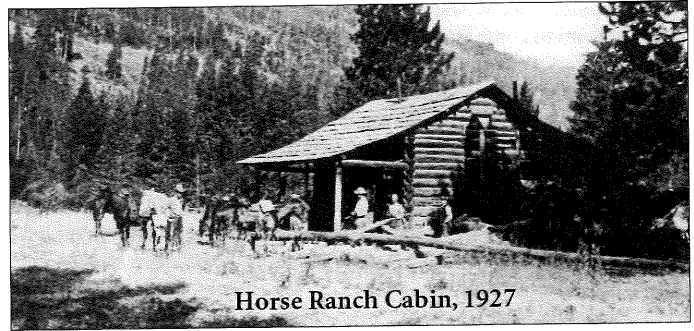
### Plans for Search

Air mail officials reached La Grande during the night and plans were laid for an extensive search to start from both Cove and Minam. A telephone call from Forest Ranger [Keith H.] McCool brought the welcome news that Buckner, though injured, had been found by the trappers and was safe. — *The Wallowa Sun* (January 24, 1929)

### Wife Braves Snow

Ann Buckner, wife of Harold E. Buckner, Varney air mail pilot injured in a crash in the [Wallowa] Mountains near La Grande, Oregon, will brave the deep snow of that region to meet the rescue party returning with her husband, she wired relatives here Saturday [January 19].

Mrs. Buckner left here yesterday for La Grande when she was first told of the crash in which her husband was injured. She informed her relatives that the rescue party expected to drive today by automobile 12 miles of the distance to the



Horse Ranch Cabin, 1927

isolated cabin in which the injured man lies. The remainder of the distance of about 8 miles will be made by team or pack animals because of heavy snow. — *Capital Journal*, Salem, Oregon (January 19, 1929)

### Rescue Party Organized

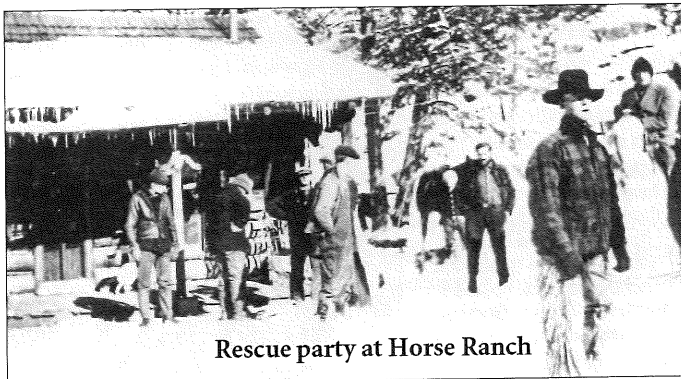
A rescue party was quickly organized, and seven people left Cove on horseback. It took them until 7 p.m. to travel the 16 miles to the Horse Ranch. They fed their horses and rested until 10:30 p.m. and resumed their ride eight miles farther to the cabin, reaching there at 5 a.m. the next day. Unfortunately, they found that Buckner had only survived about five hours after the crash. — Jon M. and Donna McDaniel Skovlin, *Into the Minam* (2011)

### Fate of the Flier

Charles T. Wrighton, Varney company manager, led a search party 20 miles through deep snow on a mission of rescue... Wrighton's party arrived at the isolated cabin at 5 o'clock this morning and immediately sent a message back to Horse Ranch to telephone news of the fate of the flier to La Grande, where the widow of the dead pilot, Ann Buckner, was waiting. — *Morning Register*, Eugene, Oregon (January 20, 1929)

### Sled the Body

The rescuers had a hard time pulling the body of the dead pilot out through the deep snow. They cogitated for some time on how to make the task easier. Finally, they wrapped the body in a heavy canvas manta, tied off the ends, and bent both [ends] up to form a banana-like toboggan.



Rescue party at Horse Ranch

---

**BACKCOUNTRY TELEPHONES** *All these backcountry [ranger] stations were connected by telephone to forest offices in Wallowa, Cove, and Medical Springs. One trunk line even went to the store in Minam. Ranches such as the Horse Ranch...were [also] equipped with phones. These magneto crank-type phones were hung outside the buildings to be available in case of emergency. Where possible, the phone lines were strung from insulators high in trees. Across open ridges where there were no trees, rock cribs were built around poles to hold the wires. The telephone lines were all heavy-duty, number 9 [nine gauge] wire...In the 1920s, about 250 miles of line were required to connect stations on the Minam with outside headquarters. –Jon M. and Donna McDaniel Skovlin, *Into the Minam* (2011)*

---

They lowered the cadaver briefly into the Minam River and brought it out. It took no time for it to freeze in the sub-zero temperatures. They were then able to sled the body along relatively easy. – Jon M. and Donna McDaniel Skovlin, *Into the Minam* (2011)

### **Extraordinary Efforts**

Upon learning of the cool-headedness of Ranger McCool and commending him for [his] extraordinary efforts to rescue the pilot under severe winter conditions...U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Arthur M. Hyde sent the following letter of appreciation to him:

“I have read with great interest an account which has reached me of your leadership of an expedition over the steep and snowy slopes in the upper Minam region of Oregon in the dead of winter in an effort to rescue an air pilot whose plane had crashed.

“Upon receipt of information that the crash had occurred, you organized a relief party which left your station on horseback, and traveled many hours through snow at times five feet deep and along trails from which it was necessary

to chop leaning and fallen trees. It was found that the pilot had died soon after the crash, and the body was transported to your station over the same difficult route.

“That the trip was made without serious accident to anyone in your party is a tribute to your high quality of leadership and organizing ability, and that it was outside the official requirements of your position adds to the meritorious character of your action.”

– [Signed] Arthur M. Hyde, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture (Reported in the *Enterprise Record Chieftain*, June 20, 1929)

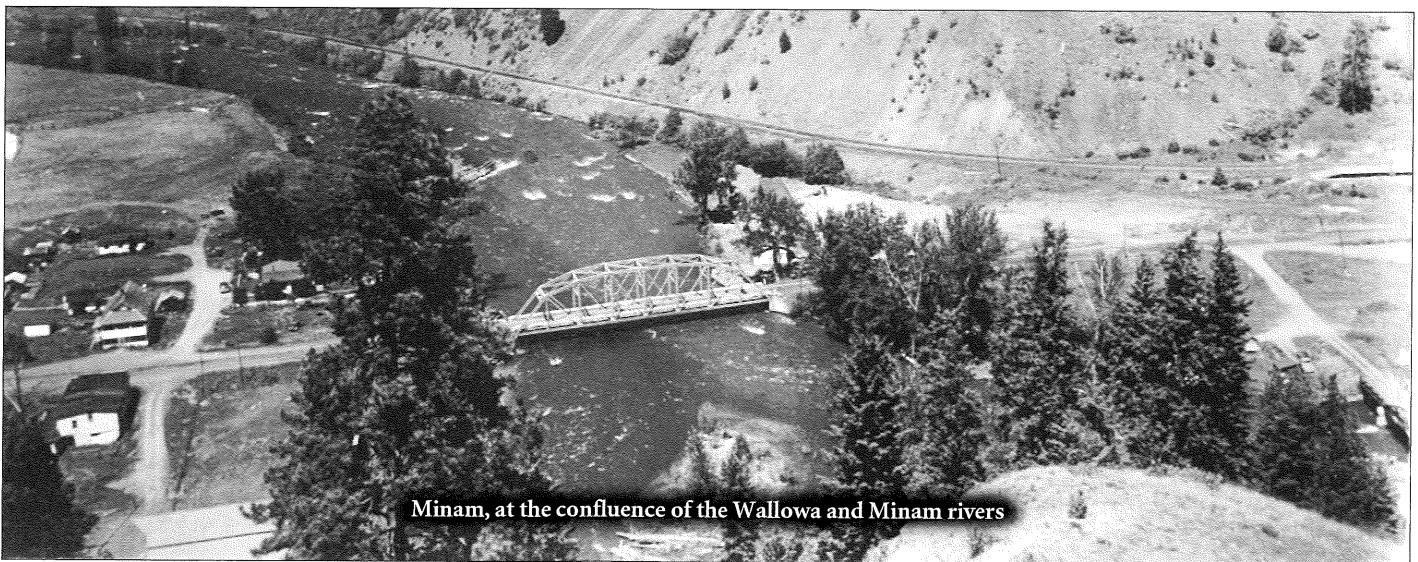
### **Keith McCool Dies Suddenly**

The many friends of Ranger Keith McCool were shocked Saturday morning to hear that he had passed away in his sleep Friday night at the Lick Creek Ranger Station. He had visited with friends and fellow service employees until 11 o'clock Friday evening and had retired in apparent good health and spirits. Saturday morning when he was called to breakfast he did not answer. Investigation disclosed that he had passed away quietly in his sleep, death apparently being due to a heart attack. – *Wallowa County Chieftain* (July 19, 1945)

---

**MORE ABOUT U. S. FOREST SERVICE RANGER KEITH MCCOOL:** *He played Santa Claus in a Joseph community play when he was still a teenager, won a local big buck contest with a 258-pound mule deer, competed in log-sawing events, survived typhoid fever and, at least once, according to a newspaper of the day, “showed how nimble he was with a jig on a table.”*

---



**Minam, at the confluence of the Wallowa and Minam rivers**

# WILD BOAT RIDE

By Russell Myers

From *The Wallowa Sun* (December 3, 1936)

***On a fall day in 1936, two men from Wallowa—one a minister and the other a blacksmith—leave civilization behind when they launch their homemade boat into the unmapped, mysterious Grande Ronde River.***

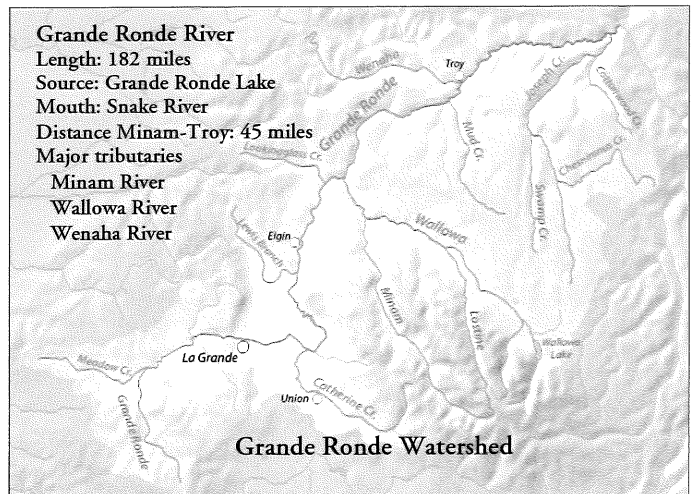
Well, it is going on two years now since we first took an active interest in the Grande Ronde Canyon as the prospective scene of a wild boat ride; for unavoidable reasons the trip had to be postponed last fall and there was just the faintest hint in the tone of voice and the glint of the eye that the trip might never materialize, maybe for the lack of certain qualities of fortitude which, of course, it wouldn't have been polite to voice.

The stream itself remained a mystery in spite of all inquiry, but opinion ran something like this: When you leave Rondowa [at the confluence of the Wallowa and Grande Ronde rivers], you leave the civilized world behind. It is something like fate and there is no turning back.

The old river roars down precipitous walls through a boulder-strewn canyon with thundering cataracts at every turn, where our frail craft would inevitably be dashed to pieces and we be sunk in the green froth-flecked depths of a spinning whirlpool.

A doughty sergeant of state police related a trip to the bottom of the canyon after deer poachers, and he said that a Springfield rifle was all he could manage to reach the canyon top with, and even then he was a fit subject for the convalescent ward. Had a boat ever made the descent of the canyon? Well, maybe two or three had gone through in high water; a survey party had used boats to transport supplies but had left the wreck of one every mile or so.

All sorts of wild things from every section had scurried to the inaccessible depths of the canyon for refuge from the ravages of man; in fact, it was a regular convention ground for every wild creature native to these parts, so that we might expect to see deer feeding nonchalantly upon the first rims and ledges; elk disporting themselves along the gravel bars; wildcats and lynx leering from the thickets, and for certain we would have the opportunity of shooting bear and coyotes



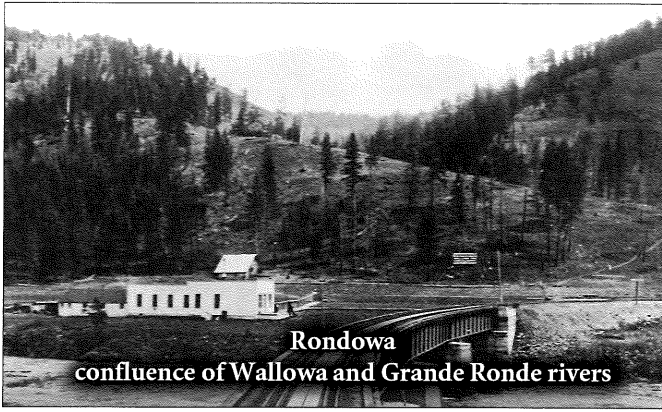
at will, and the fish—well pardon me while I blush. We were afraid to leave the boat in the water the first night. I have purposely eliminated some of the juiciest tidbits from these accounts, to spare the tender feelings of some locals whom I understand fared forth with high hopes and adventurous ardor upon a similar excursion and got their feet wet, so delicacy forbids that I go further into that.

Monday morning, September 21, ye doughty blacksmith and ye hardy parson arose at the unearthly hour of 4:00 a.m. to a copious breakfast of hotcakes, bacon and eggs at the home of the former and by his own hand. Very soon after that arrived the personable chief of police, who condescended to clean up the few remains of the meal to fortify himself for the drive to the old hatchery site below Minam, where the actual descent of the river began a little after 6:00 a.m., if my memory serves me correctly.

I have always wondered how it is that blacksmiths are able to endure the day-by-day drudgery over the glowing forge and the ringing anvil, but one awesome look at the “light” camp equipment was sufficient to explain all: They eat! Space forbids that I enumerate the variety and quantity taken along, so suffice it to say that the boat when loaded looked more like a Venetian gondola, canopy and all, than a rowboat.

For over 10 miles we made our way down the Wallowa Canyon to Rondowa, without incident, except at the falls above Vincent, where it was necessary to unload the boat

*“The two men had shot the rapids of the Grande Ronde through the mountainous gorges without a single mishap... The boat used was one of Mr. Myers’ own construction, an exceedingly light draft, made of plywood.” – The Wallowa Sun, October 1, 1936*



and portage around because of a lack of water. We went under the bridge at Rondowa at just a little before 12:00, and I said to ye doughty blacksmith, "How be ye? Do your feet be getting a bit chilly?"

He made instant reply that on the contrary they were becoming so warm that he feared he might have to hoist them over the side and cool them in the river. So began our descent of the River of Mystery.

Immediately after leaving Rondowa, the canyon walls started rising, and as we proceeded down the river, the walls became rougher. The first night was spent about halfway between Rondowa and Clear Creek. The next was spent about a mile below the mouth of Clear Creek. Here we found elk and bear sign in abundance, and it was here that ye blacksmith killed his deer. We could have killed another, but when this meat was dressed and loaded we decided that we had enough weight in the boat, for the water in places was so shallow that it was with difficulty that we got through even by wading and pushing the boat. So as I say, we decided to forgo the second buck until within easy reach of Troy.

We did a little fishing as we went along, but for some reason the fishing was not good. There was no difficulty in getting all we wanted to eat, but the large ones that we had expected to catch in such numbers were either away on vacation or had hibernated for the winter, so we jettisoned our supply of rock salt and our candy bucket in the interest of a lighter load. An additional six or eight inches more water would have completely relieved the clearance problem and made easy the handling of a much heavier load than we had brought through. The deepest

---

*WALLOWA SUN EDITOR'S NOTE "Herewith, Rev. Russell Myers of the Christian Church of Wallowa, gives a picturesque description of the boat trip he and Joe Rounsavell made through the Grande Ronde Canyon. The boat was made by Mr. Myers. The round trip comprised 75 miles." – The Wallowa Sun (December 3, 1936)*

---

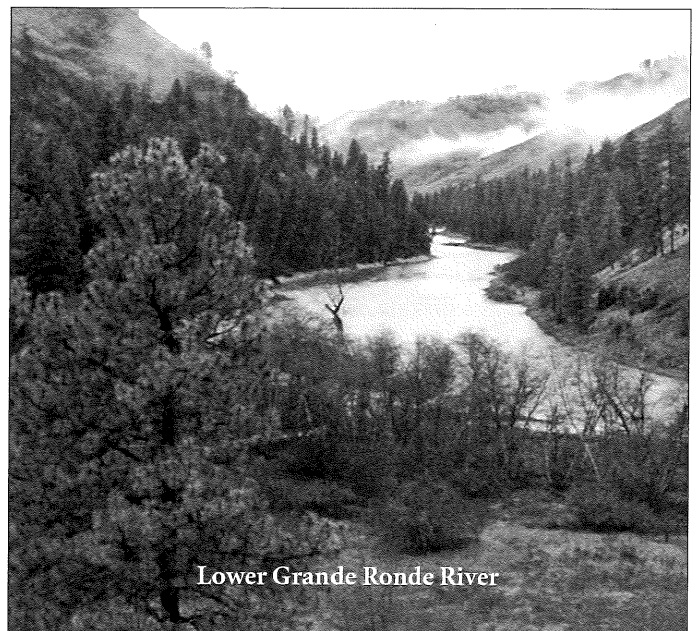
and most spectacular part of the canyon lies between Clear Creek and Elbow Creek. Through this section, nature seems to have taken particular pains to heap chaos upon disorder. There are heaped-up rims upon rims, festooned by all sorts of grotesque spires and pinnacles.

There were resemblances of most every kind of thing, from animals to "what have you," and all of this is screened and accentuated by a beautiful growth of fir, pine, and tamarack, and a great variety of undergrowth.

Several times we climbed to the top of the canyon on one side or the other, and the scene was most beautiful from there, especially in the evening with the sharp, vivid outline of the foreground cleft through the center by the twisting serpentine of the bluish-green river, dying away in the blue and purple and violet of distant ridges, with here and there a zigzagging line of deep shadow that bespoke the unlit depths of a rugged side canyon. The thing was grand beyond description, and to be fully appreciated one must see it.

Expectancy must have a great deal to do with imagination because...well, you would never suspect a blacksmith who deals with the grim realities of iron and wood and kicking broncs of having a highly-developed and perhaps over-zealous imagination, but one cannot deny what one sees. The first day, our friend spotted five bush-elk, four stump-bears, several rock-coyotes, and any number of bush-deer, but in actuality the entire descent was made without having seen anything bigger than a mink from the boat.

The whole trip was made in complete safety, for at no time were we threatened by accident. We had arranged to be met at the Troy bridge at 3:00 o'clock Saturday afternoon, and we beat them there by just three minutes.



## *Ask the Wallowa History Center*

---

# WALLOWA'S LAST GRIZZLY

---

*Did grizzly bears once roam Wallowa County?*

"Although native to the area, there are no longer grizzly bears in the state. The last grizzly bear recorded was killed in the 1930s at Billy Meadows, north of Enterprise in Wallowa County." – Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (2006)

*The Wallowa Country has been not only a longtime home to grizzly bears, but also the location of the last documented grizzly in the state of Oregon. In 1931, government hunter Evan C. Stoneman (1889–1979) killed the bear that was said to have stood three feet taller than Stoneman himself and to have weighed as much as 800 pounds. Before that day, however, local newspapers had long recorded numerous encounters between grizzlies and settlers. (The one with the gun always won.)*

### **Kills Big Grizzly on Forest Range**

The first grizzly bear killed in Wallowa County in 30 years or more fell before E.C. Stoneman, government hunter, in the Billy Meadows district Monday morning. The animal was a female and weighed between 700 and 800 pounds, it was estimated.

Complaints came to Mr. Stoneman last week that a bear had raided the flock of Armand Vigne on the forest range, and the hunter went out there Saturday afternoon. He saw the depredations of the beast and observed that the culprit was no ordinary bear. Traps were set, but nothing developed, and Monday morning Mr. Stoneman started to look up his prey.

He came on the grizzly when she was behind a log, only a few rods away. [A rod is 5.5 yards.] As she reared, he fired a bullet through her throat, breaking her backbone, and she fell and did not rise again. The head and skin were brought to town and attracted a crowd on the street. The pelt will be sent to Portland and sold at auction and the money will be handed over to Wallowa County.

It is hard to say when the last grizzly before this one was killed in the county, but nothing is recalled within 30 years. In August 1901, George Greenwood killed a huge silvertip near his ranch on the Chesnimnus, and stockmen paid him a reward of \$25. They had offered \$50 for the pelt of the grizzly, or bald-faced, bear and so the animal must not have been rated as a grizzly. That incident... is remembered by many older residents of the eastern part of the county.

In recent years, no grizzly has been here, and people wonder where the ancestors of this family have kept themselves. Some suggest they may have come from the forests of northern Idaho, and others think they may have been hidden in draws and canyons of the region between the Chesnimnus and Grande Ronde and Snake rivers.

– *Enterprise Record Chieftain* (September 17, 1931)

### **Huge Bear Caught at Billy Meadows**

Word has been received from E.C. Stoneman that he recently caught a grizzly bear within the Billy Meadows Ranger Station pasture. It is understood that that animal's head from tip of the nose to the top measured 15-1/2 inches. This animal, prior to the time Mr. Stoneman killed it, had been doing considerable damage to sheep on the Armand Vigne place.

Two nights before the animal was captured, it killed 15 sheep and injured 19 more, 3 or 4 of which died later. In addition to the above number, Mr. Vigne is short 33 head, and he believes that the bear is responsible for the disappearance of these sheep. The large grizzly weighed 700 pounds.

– *The Wallowa Sun* (September 17, 1931)

### **Grizzly Pelt to Washington D.C.**

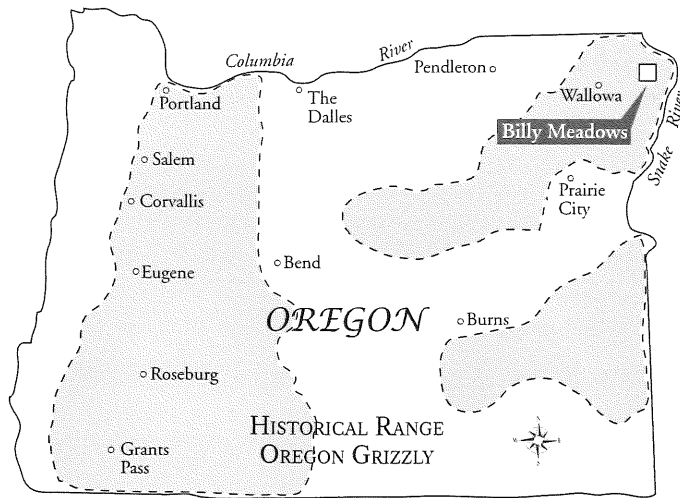
Lured by the sheep which were easy to kill and, fattened on the upland meadows, a lumbering female grizzly bear crossed the Snake River early in July into the Wallowa Mountains. Now, crossing the Snake River into Oregon is just plain suicide for grizzly bears. The last two that crossed—that was in 1907—and stayed in those mountains for any length of time were killed.

For more than 24 years, no grizzly bear has been killed in Oregon, principally for the reason that there have been none in the state. The Snake River has come to be the natural western boundary of the grizzly country—a deadline which these mountain dwellers to the east appear to respect.

Before 1900, grizzly bears roamed over the Wallowa Mountains, sometimes all over Oregon. But their inroads into herds aroused the stockmen so that with concentrated effort they literally killed and drove the bears out of the state and cleaned them out of the Wallowa Mountains in much the same manner as St. Patrick rid Ireland of Snakes.



Have a question about Wallowa history? Send it to the Wallowa Quarterly editor ([highberg@eoni.com](mailto:highberg@eoni.com)), and we'll do our best to answer it.



This brindled-colored adult female who swam across the Snake River probably didn't know or care about the history of bears and the eastern Oregon bear war when she ventured into the Wallowas. She announced her arrival by killing two sheep out of an isolated band. After that, killing sheep was easy. In July, August, and September she killed 65. What a great vacation that was for the grizzly, all alone in the midst of plenty!

Stockmen appealed to E.C. Stoneman, hunter in the Wallowa country for the U.S. Biological Survey. The evidence against the grizzly was sufficient to make her an outlaw and likely to be shot at sight. Stoneman set traps, but the old visitor knew all about bear traps and carefully avoided them.

One day he found her tracks in the mud of Chesnimnus north of Enterprise. A short distance away he found her on a trail. She raised up on her hind feet, towering three feet above the hunter. It was a tense moment for Stoneman, for if he missed or his shot failed to hit vulnerable spots he could not escape being mauled and probably killed by the aroused 800-pound grizzly, which would have no difficulty in killing a big steer.

His first shot put an end to the suspense, for it crashed into exposed neck of the animal, breaking it and bringing her down in a heap. So now, once again, there are no grizzlies in Oregon.

– Webster A. Jones of *The Oregonian*  
in *The Wallowa Sun* (October 8, 1931)

### Big Grizzly Put in Museum

The big grizzly bear shot by E.C. Stoneman, a few weeks ago, has been mounted and set up in a government national museum at Washington, D.C. [Possibly the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.] Visitors there can see what nature of beast roams the forest of Wallowa County, sometimes. Mr. Stoneman killed the bear after it had raided the flock of Armand Vigne on the Chesnimnus. He sent the head and hide to Stanley Jewett of the U.S. Biological Survey at Portland, who forwarded it to Washington. Mr. Jewett wrote last week that the big bear had been reconstructed in the museum. . . Mr. Stoneman has disposed of more than half a dozen bears on his beat this season. Through the summer he used his car to get to the threshold of the back country, but from now on he will go about all his traveling horseback.

– *Enterprise Record Chieftain* (November 5, 1931)

### Wallowa Newcomer

The grizzly bear killed by the government hunter, E.C. Stoneman, near Billy Meadows Ranger Station was said to be a newcomer to the Wallowa Forest. This animal, a female, had with her two young bears, one of which was still a suckling cub. The old bear, prior to the time she was killed, raised havoc with a large number of sheep, killing 30 or more within a very short period. In addition to the sheep-killing habits, this female bear was also responsible for the death of no less than four or five elk this summer.

– F.W. Furst, Forest Supervisor,  
*Enterprise Record Chieftain* (November 26, 1931)

## Other Grizzly Encounters

**1872** A.C. Smith killed a grizzly bear one-half mile north of Minam with his first shot. The bear weighed 900 pounds. – John H. Horner, *J.H. Horner Papers* (January 1, 1901)

**1888** Perry Loy, A.M. Austin, and J.R. Pratt returned from a bear hunt in the north-end woods. They killed a big grizzly bear. – *Wallowa County Chieftain* (June 21, 1888)

**1908** Joseph Carper, the government hunter, killed another big grizzly in the government pasture at Billy Meadows. The bear measured over seven feet in length. – *The Wallowa Sun* (July 24, 1908)

**1915** Two of the largest bear skins seen in town in many months were brought in yesterday morning by E.M. Pratt. They were mountain grizzlies. . . One bear was downed only a few feet from him, as it was rushing at him. The other had 12 bullet holes in its hide. – *Enterprise Record Chieftain* (May 6, 1915)

# PROMISE MEMORIES

Adapted from *The Wallowa Sun* (July 9, 1936)

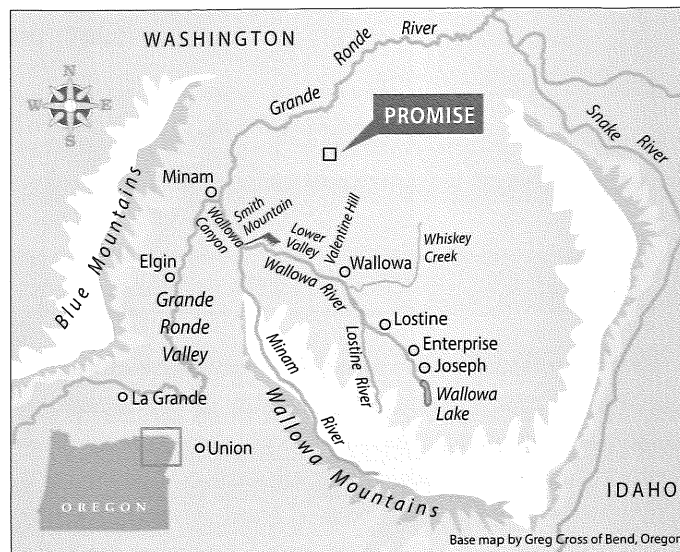
The Wallowa region was very thinly populated in 1896 when Mrs. Candace Miller came here with her husband, T.C. Miller. Mrs. Miller is now 78 years old and has a very vivid recollection of the early conditions.

The family, after arriving in La Grande, decided to come to Wallowa country, making the trip by team and wagon. The first night was spent at Imbler, which at the time was Jesse Imbler's farm.

The next day the route was down the Wallowa Hill by the switchback road, where travel was almost impossible. There were a number of families in the party, and some had to tie trees to the wagons to prevent the vehicles from turning over. Passengers walked down the hill because of the danger. The night was spent in the Wallowa Canyon.

The Miller family went to the Promise country by way of Valentine Hill in Lower Valley. The hill at that time was very dangerous and difficult to travel. The third night of the trip was spent at Bishop Meadows.

The family took up a homestead [near Promise] and lived there about 16 years. The first winter was spent under great difficulties. There was little food in the house to feed the family, and Mr. Miller and his oldest son, accompanied by



a number of other Promise men, went hunting. The snow was deep. The men crossed the Grande Ronde River in rafts, and on that trip they killed 14 deer, which were brought home for their winter's meat. The country was new, and they knew nothing of the dangerous and treacherous places in the river, but they met with no mishaps.

One evening while the family was in the house, a cow was heard bellowing, and fearing to go outside, the family waited until the next morning, when they found that a grizzly bear had killed the cow and dragged it some distance from the house. The bear was later killed by a man in the Garden of Eden country.

There were only a few families residing in this neighborhood at this time. The Carpers and the Phillips families, who had come from Virginia, were about the only other people in the vicinity.

Indians had gathered at Wallowa Lake in 1897 and were threatening trouble, but only a few wandered over into the Promise country. When the men folks went to work in the hay fields away from the house, Mrs. Miller and her three children would pull down the blinds and hide.

The first summer the Millers lived on their homestead, Mrs. Miller and her children picked 300 gallons of huckleberries and brought some of them to the Wallowa stores, where they were sold. At this time, there were but two stores, a post office, and a blacksmith shop in Wallowa.

After some time spent in the Promise country, the Millers removed to Wallowa and built a house. Mrs. Miller still lives in the same house, having been there for 24 years.



---

# THE NAME & SPELLING OF *WALLOWA*

---

## The Name

From the *Wallowa Chieftain* (September 2, 1909)

Now that there are many parties fishing on Wallowa River, and on the Minam, it is interesting to note that the word “Wallowa” means “fish trap” in the Indian tongue, says the *La Grande Star* [newspaper].

Years ago, during the time of the Josephs In [what is now] Wallowa County, the Indians were accustomed to catching many fishes in Wallowa River with traps. These traps were left from one season to the next on the banks of the river, and the old timers say that the traps looked like crosses standing out in the distance. The present spelling of the word “Wallowa” was adopted in 1866.

A party of surveyors under William H. Odell, afterwards Surveyor General of Oregon, had set out from where Elgin is now built to survey the Snake River. However, on account of hostile indications of the Indians, they got as far only as “Cliff River,” now known as Big Sheep Creek. At one time the surveying required that they place a stake in the center of a brave’s tent near the present town of Wallowa. This caused much anger and threatenings among the Indians.

On their return from “Cliff River,” the surveyors met a party of Indians at the head of the canyon indicated on their map by “Wilhow.” Knowing that the intruders were leaving the valley, the redskins showed no hostile intentions, and stopped their ponies for a short “pow-wow” with the whites.

“What is the name of this river?” asked one of the surveyors, pointing to the majestic waters thundering below them.

“*Wal-lo-wa*,” replied a brave in guttural voice, making three distinct syllables of the word.

“Take out your pencils and write that down, boys,” said William H. Odell.

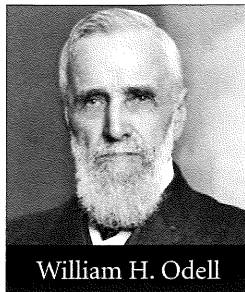
Almost every member of the surveying party did as requested, and handed his word to Odell. Two men had spelled the name “Wallowa,” and this orthography was accordingly adopted.

One of those who spelled the name “Wallowa” was L.J. Rouse, one of Enterprise’s most esteemed citizens, who died in Portland two years ago last spring. His memory is honored in reverence as one who gave the better part of his life to the development of the county whose name he first transferred from the Indian to the English language.

## The Spelling

L.J. Rouse to Fred Holmes (June 17, 1931), as recorded in *The Wallowa Country 1867-1877* (1976) by Grace Bartlett

I was returning from school in Portland in June 1906. Mr. L.J. Rouse was on the stage, and as we were descending Wallowa Hill he told me the following story:



William H. Odell

“In the early summer of 1867 I hired out as bookkeeper and general clerk to W.H. Odell, who had taken a contract to survey government land in what is now Wallowa County. We were camped at the junction of Minam River with another river shown on the map as ‘*Wilhow*’ or some similar name.

“Odell felt that the name was incorrect, and one evening an old Indian came to our camp. Odell said, ‘Boys, this is our chance to get the correct name of this river. Get your pencils and pads and write it down as it sounds to you.’

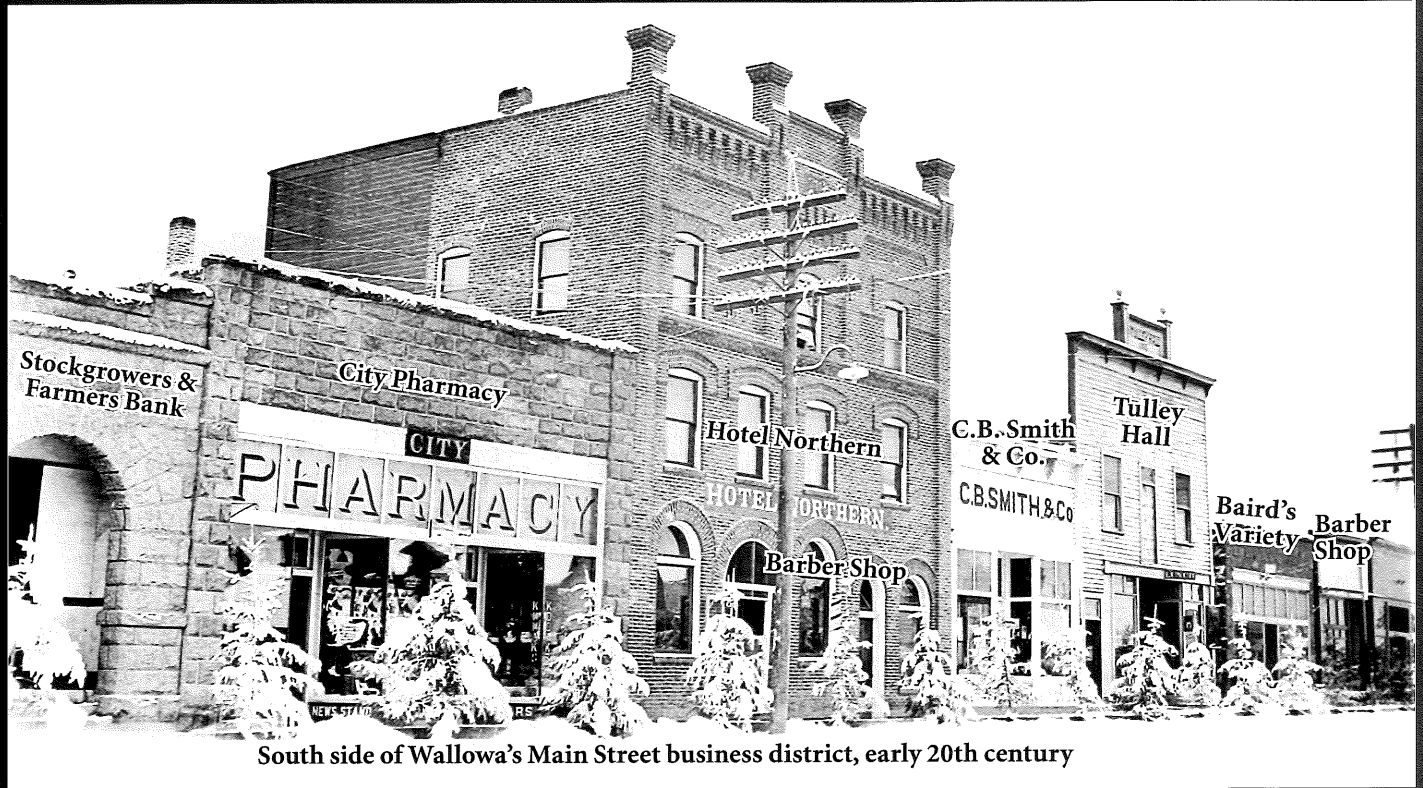
“He then asked the Indian for the name of the river, and the Indian, in his deep guttural accent, said, ‘*Wal-low-a*.’” Mr. Rouse wrote it just as it is spelled now, and his spelling was accepted, and the name on the map changed accordingly.



Nez Perce fish trap: a “wallowa”

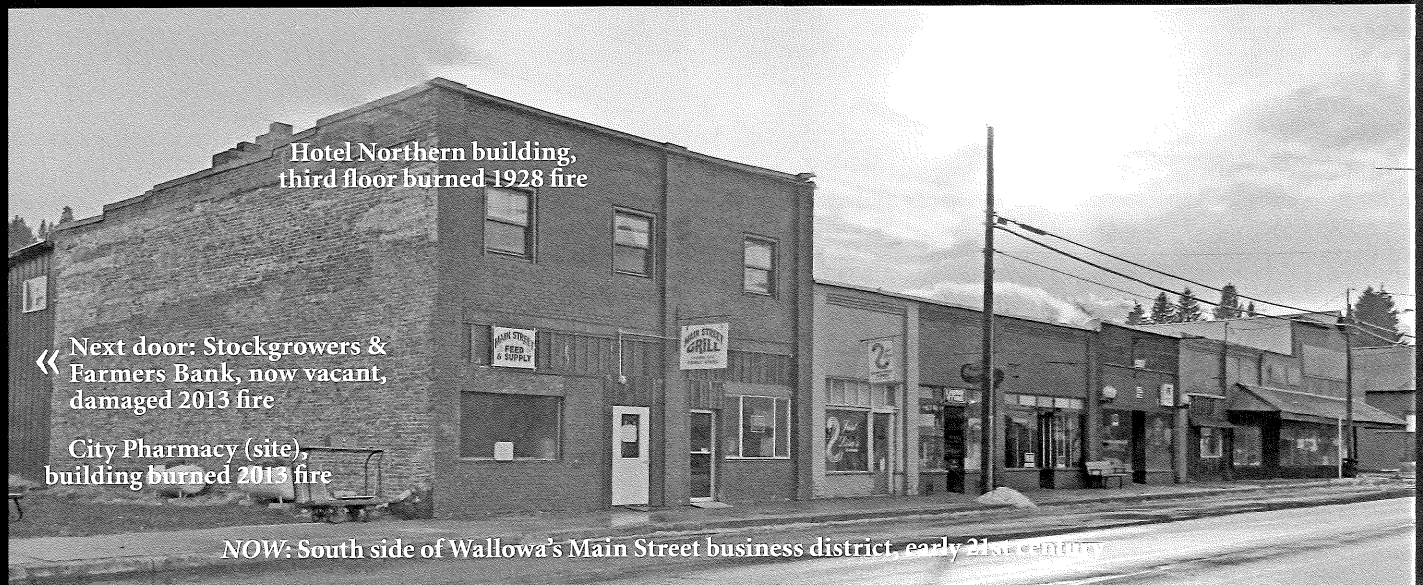
# Wallowa Then & Now

## SOUTH MAIN STREET



South side of Wallowa's Main Street business district, early 20th century

**THEN** (above, from left): Stockgrowers & Farmers Bank (built 1905); City Pharmacy (built 1909); Hotel Northern (built 1911, replacing McCrae Hotel, which burned 1905); inside hotel: Fisher's barber shop; C.B. Smith & Co. (men's clothing) and, later, W.F. Poole Jewelry; Tulley Hall (built 1906); Baird's Variety (built 1910); Vaught's barber shop.



**NOW:** South side of Wallowa's Main Street business district, early 21st century

**WQ is provided free, four times each year, to members of the Wallowa History Center.**