

WALLOWA QUARTERLY

Magazine of the Wallowa History Center

— Preserving Our Past for the Future —

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Pig Problems

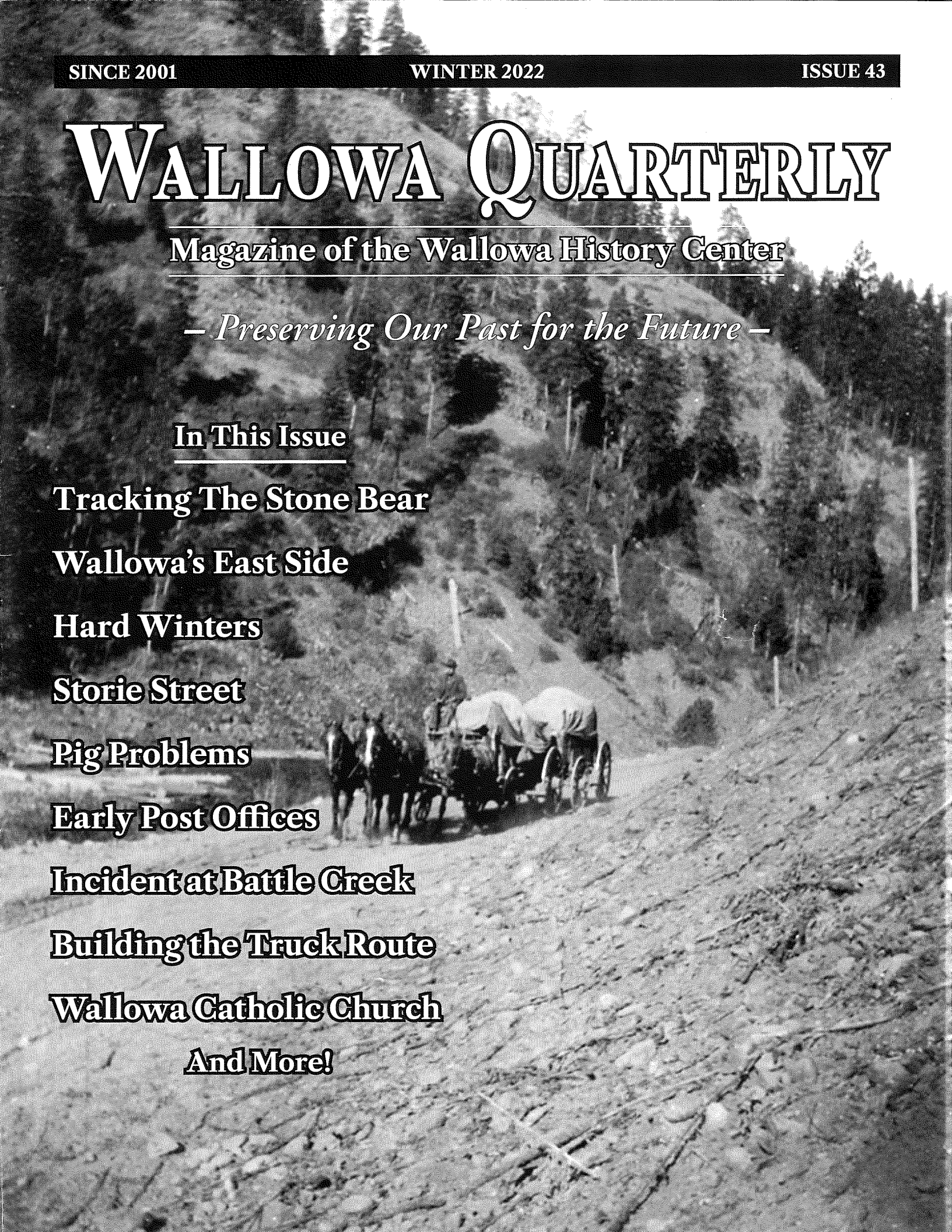
Early Post Offices

Incident at Battle Creek

Building the Truck Route

Wallowa Catholic Church

And More!



WALLOWA QUARTERLY

WINTER 2022

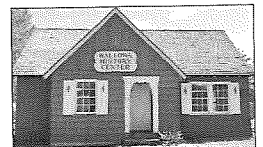
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Historical material in the Wallowa Quarterly may occasionally contain language considered to be stereotyped or prejudiced. Retaining this language, however, is often necessary for understanding the historical context in which it is used.

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Front cover: Freighter on the Wallowa Canyon Road (c. 1909), which was built by Wallowa settlers in 1879.
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TRACKING THE STONE BEAR

By Alex Arthur and David Weaver

Adapted from “Object History,” *Tribal Art Magazine* (undated)

“The life of a culture is told by the life of an object.” – Alex Arthur

It was the mid-1990s when we set up a stand at the World of Tribal Arts at the Native American Art Show in San Rafael, California. In those days, this was a “hot” event; business was being done from car boots and all the rooms of the hotel were being used as alternate stands. I remember us being placed right at the entrance. To my left, a dealer from Oregon and to my right, another from New Mexico. I will always regret not buying a great Pueblo Kachina from him, for a mere 450 bucks, but I was distracted by a stone sculpture to my left. A stone animal effigy that the owner said had been “dug up” in Wallowa, Oregon. He even had a location: “The Bramlet homestead.”

But regardless of the “provenance,” or origin, this was clearly a magnificent sculpture, carefully crafted from the hardest of basaltic rocks into a smoothly-rounded animalistic form. While it might be impossible to date such an item, it possessed a timeless quality that points toward a prehistoric past. Needless to say, I bought the bear. I retained the information that it had been ploughed-up on the Bramlet homestead in Wallowa, Oregon, and moved on.

In 2001 I reluctantly sold the bear to the renowned Belgian dealer-collector, Pierre Darteville. But 18 years later, I managed to get it back! Jumping forward another 20 years, thanks to the internet and, more specifically, to a post I made on Instagram, I was contacted by David Weaver. It turned out that the bear in question had been in his father’s collection for many years. It is not clear as to when it was originally acquired, but it was sold by Wendell Weaver in the 1990s to the guy to my left! The bear is the same beautiful creation it always was, but the new information adds an extra interest that sheds further light on its origins. Wendell Weaver was an official state trapper, and David’s memories of the bear are still vivid:

My father was a collector of Indian artifacts and amassed quite a collection over his lifetime, most of which came from this corner of northeast Oregon. Towards the end of his life, he began selling some of his collection...I forget the year exactly, but it would have been about twenty years ago, my dad called me over to his house to ask me if I had any objections to his selling the bear. I did, I but knew that he would do it anyway, regardless of any objections I might have.

Not long afterwards, a man arrived at my dad’s cabin to buy the bear. I happened to be there at the time. As I recall, he was a dentist, or perhaps an orthodontist, from Troutdale, Oregon. I don’t remember his name—it’s been too many years.

In any case, that was the last I saw of the bear until I ran across it among your posts. After my dad died, my brothers and I split what was left of his collection among us. In discussing what had happened to the stone bear, we also talked about our memory of how Dad had acquired it. My older brother thought Dad had found it on Smith Mountain (in Wallowa County, Oregon) in a plowed field. My memory of how it came to be in his collection was that he had traded for it with a friend of his for a five-pound coffee can full of arrowheads. I, too, remembered hearing that it had originally been found on Smith Mountain.

David Weaver’s memory and diligence also unearthed two mentions of the creature in local newspaper articles from the 1920s and 1930s, and one of the original owners: C.D. [Charles David] Bramlet. The first public mention of the object is on the 9th of September 1926, with a paragraph on the front page of the *Enterprise Record Chieftain*:

Gets Curious Relic

J.H. Horner has a curious relic at his office in the courthouse which he received from C.D. Bramlet of Wallowa. It is a stone animal, resembling a bear, about six inches long, and it was



The Wallowa Stone Bear

plowed up, along with many Indian arrowheads, in Mr. Bramlet's garden. There is no way of telling the origin or date of the stone, or for what purpose it was made, but it is assumed that it is of Indian origin.

On April 14, 1938, the sculpture was mentioned again, this time as a "Pig" on page one of *The Wallowa Sun*:

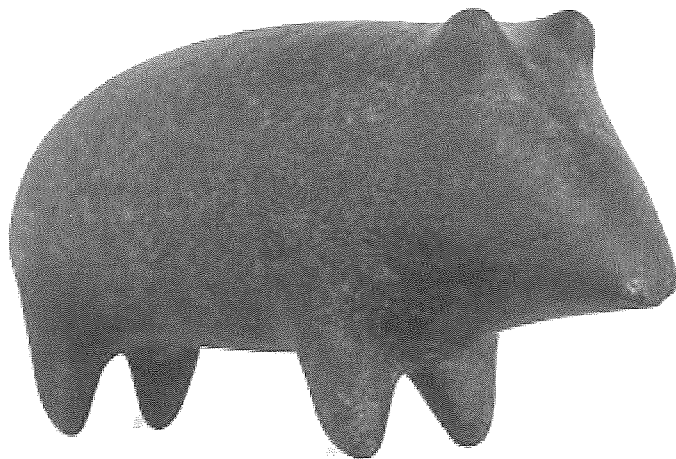
Hobbies and Antiques Draw Admiring Throng

An admiring and curious throng of people flocked the Legion club rooms all last Saturday afternoon, viewing the innumerable antiques and hobbies of local people, the first annual display of its kind presented locally under the auspices of the Wallowa Woman's Club. So interesting did the display prove to be that an "encore" is being sought. A list of the articles shown included...an Indian war club, by C.D. Bramlet; a Civil war gun, by W.F. Barklow; a dueling pistol, owned by the McDaniel family; Indian pestles used to grind corn and roots, by C.D. Bramlet; a stone Indian pig, only one known to be in existence, by C.D. Bramlet.

J.H. Horner also made reference to the stone bear on page 408 of his 1,500-page *J.H. Horner Papers, 1889-1985*, which were recently digitized for the Oregon Historical Society:

...Near the mouth of this creek in a little bottom, near where the large Warm Springs are, Arthur Johnson plowed up a small stone pig or bear. The plow grazing it on one side slightly. And William Bramlet [brother of Charles Bramlet], gave him \$2.00 for it. This image is a mystery to the oldest Indians. And when asked about it, all they would say was it belonged to some Medicine Man.

It was plowed up on one of the oldest and largest Indian summer campgrounds in Lower Wallowa Valley. I showed this image to Old Joe Albert, who was an old Indian Medicine Man. And he said it was long before his time. But he thought it belonged to some Medicine Man a long time ago.



The Wallowa Stone Bear

There had been a black enamel or paint on the leg, but it had all corroded off except on the point of the nose and stubby tail. This secret of enameling or painting must have been a lost art to the Indians. If they made the image, as no enamel or paint of the present day would stay on as long as this has. As it would take a great many years for the soil and sediment to cover it to the depth it was covered...

It resembled a pig or bear without any tail. And was made of stone, same as the stone used in Indian pestles, though a little darker, and was polished very smooth and as perfect as if it had been cast. It is about four inches long. The point of the plow scraped one side a very little which proved it was imbedded in the soil, very solid. This image is one of the mysteries to both Indians and whites.

Horner refers to "Dry Creek," a small, seasonal stream that flows into the valley from the northeast. He also states that it was Arthur Johnson who plowed up the bear. As it turns out, Johnson bought a portion of the Bramlet homestead in 1920. He had been living in California for the previous ten years and returned home at the urging of his brother in the spring of that year. The Bramlet and Johnson families were neighbors and among the first settlers to homestead in the valley. We know that Horner had the bear by 1926, so that narrows down the date of discovery to somewhere between 1920-1926.

By comparing the Bureau of Land Management homestead claim of F.C. Bramlet (the father of William and Charlie) with a local tax-lot map of Arthur Johnson's property, the possible area of discovery is about 100 acres—and is, indeed, "near the mouth of this creek in a little bottom, near where the large Warm Springs are."

J. H. Horner passed away in 1953 and C.D. Bramlet the following year, but sometime thereafter, the stone sculpture changed hands and became part of Wendell Weaver's collection, in exchange for the arrowheads, where it stayed until he parted with it in the 1990s.

And what of its origins? The "style" does not correspond to the well-known Northwest Coast groups nor to the distinctive Columbia River artifacts, which often depict animals. My feeling has always been that this sculpture originates from Plains Indian culture. Figural carvings are rare amongst the Plains Indians, as the focus was mostly on portable items, but the choice of stone and the purity of the form pointed this way.

The 1926 article makes a reference to the bear being found alongside many Native American arrow points, so perhaps all the items were originally the property of a Plains hunter who crossed the Rockies to Oregon. And, of course, they did this.

The Nez Perce had already inhabited the Wallowa region since at least the 1800s but probably long before. The correspondence with David confirmed the presence of many different groups in Wallowa:

The Wallowa country was primarily claimed by the Nez Perce and Cayuse, but was also frequented by their allies and relations—the Umatilla, Walla Walla, and Palouse. As you're probably aware, the Nez Perce under Young Chief Joseph lost their bid to hold on to the valley and were forced out by the U.S. Army under General O.O. Howard in 1877.

The stone itself may also be a clue to a local origin, as the hard basalt that it was fashioned from is abundant locally. A stone club in [another] collection, with abstract shape and clearly related in form to the Columbia River “Slave-Killers,” is also fashioned from a similar basaltic stone and was found locally. And a visit to the local [Wallowa County] museum revealed another exciting find: another polished and stylized basalt stone bear.

An additional photograph in the same museum unmistakably depicts the “Wallowa Stone Bear” of this article, perhaps in the Bramlet backyard. And what of its function? Fetish or tool? Or perhaps both? While hunting charms and magic stones exist in many Native American cultures, they are not prevalent amongst Plains Indians who favored leather and beaded charms that could be sewn to clothing or perhaps hung from a weapon or shield.

I had originally thought the sculpture was a fetish associated with “Bear Magic,” but perhaps instead it was actually an ingenious weapon. A mace-head, that when strapped on a leather-covered grip, would become a fearsome killing tool. Stone-headed clubs are common throughout the plains, and this wonderfully balanced sculpture could easily double as a club, with the added advantage of being able to stand upright when placed to rest!

Needless to say, the choice of animal would also have been symbolic, as Native Americans often chose an emblem that encompassed the qualities they sought for themselves.

WALLOWA'S EAST SIDE, 1908–1932

Note: The East Side Addition consisted of land lying east of the Wallowa River and north of Whiskey Creek Road. The Riverside Addition, lying south of Whiskey Creek Road, was annexed into the city in 1908, but the East Side Addition—once home to a sawmill and, later, the town's baseball field— never grew into a neighborhood with homes. It was vacated in 1932.

City Boundaries, 1908

The session of the city council last Tuesday night was spirited from the first. A number of citizens were present in the interest of various sections of the proposed boundary extensions, but the question most discussed was the proposed East Side Addition. Two petitions were presented to the council in the matter. The one...asked that the property on the east side of town, owned by the petitioners, be left out of the corporate limits of the city. The other... begged that the council extend the limits along the lines formerly considered by the council [which annexed the East Side Addition to the city]. Considerable friendly banter was passed back and forth, and before the session closed, several short speeches were indulged. Until some steps are taken toward the legal work of enlarging the city limits, the boundaries may be amended at the discretion of the council. – *The Wallowa Sun* (February 18, 1908)

New Additions, 1909

Real estate is beginning to move in Wallowa. Two new additions have been platted and the plats filed. Evergreen Addition is in the northwest part of town near the big

sawmill [Nibley-Mimnaugh]. The East Side Addition is across the river and adjoins the ball park. It was formerly the site of the Wallowa Lumber and Manufacturing Company's mill and lumber yard. Couch & McDonald are putting both additions on the market, and in their well-known hustling manner are disposing of the lots rapidly. – *The Wallowa Sun* (June 4, 1909)

East Side Vacated, 1932

It appearing from the report of the county roadmaster that the streets and alleys in the East Side Addition to the town of Wallowa are not in use and are of no value whatever to the landowners in the addition or to the traveling public and there is no apparent reason why these streets and alleys would be of any future benefit, ordered that the roadmaster's report be heard by the court.

– *Enterprise Record Chieftain* (February 18, 1932)



LOTS On The Installment Plan . . .
We have lots for sale in every one of the old additions to Wallowa and we have recently platted
Two new additions . . .
We will sell lots anywhere in town at living prices and liberal terms
on the installment plan.
A small payment down, the balance terms to suit. Own a home and be independent of the rent collector.
East Side Addition
Across the river, adjoining the ball park. A choice residence district.
Evergreen Addition
Southeast of town. Close to the big mill. Ask us
Couch & McDonald.

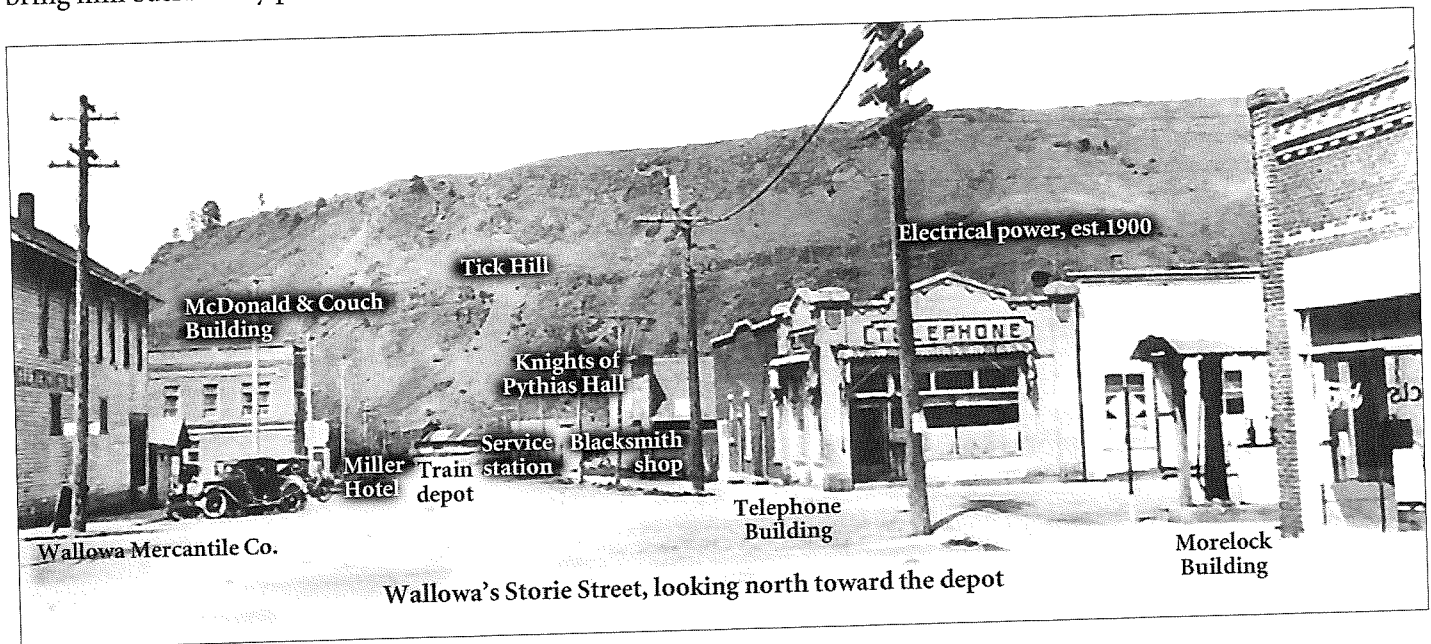
STORIE STREET

Storie Street Impressions

From *The Wallowa Sun* (March 5, 1909)

Now that the railroad company has fixed up the depot grounds in a very presentable shape, the city and citizens should see that Storie Street, the main thoroughfare from the depot to town, is improved so that it will impress the newcomers favorably. First impressions are lasting, and the first thing the newcomer sees in Wallowa is Storie Street.

It is to the interest of every businessman to see that the street is graded and given a hard surface of shell-rock gravel. Then the sidewalks should be made uniform and gravel thrown up at the crossing. Residents along the street should see that yards and fences are put in good shape and that each new arrival in the city is given a good impression that will bring him back. Every part of the town should be made to look its best, but Storie Street is the place to begin.



Storie Street Businesses & Buildings, 1889–1937

In the late 19th- and early-20th centuries, if you started near the intersection of First and Storie streets in downtown Wallowa and walked toward the train depot, here are some of the businesses and buildings you'd see along the way.

On Your Left (in order, near to far)

- Stockgrowers and Farmers Bank, 1905
- Wallowa Mercantile Company (general store), 1889
- McDonald & Couch Building (real estate, insurance, Masonic Lodge, U.S. Forest Service), 1911
- City jail, 1899
- Blue Tea Room, 1925
- Miller Hotel, 1911

On Your Right (in order, near to far)

- Morelock Building (auto dealership and garage), 1916
- Telephone Building, 1917
- Blacksmith shop (undated)
- Knights of Pythias Hall, 1925
- Miller service station and garage, 1920
- Allen Garage, 1925
- Wallowa Valley Lumber Company (sawmill), 1937

At the far end, near the corner of Storie and Fifth streets

- Wallowa Mercantile Co. warehouse, 1908
- Train depot, 1909

Storie Street was also home to a photographer's studio, a milliner's shop, a heating and plumbing store, a second warehouse, and a number of "fine" residences. It was also a leg on Wallowa Lake Highway No. 10.

HARD WINTERS, 1861–1893

From *An Illustrated History of Union and Wallowa Counties*, 1902 (unless otherwise noted)

It is of note that in the **winter of 1861** the snow fell in December to a depth of two feet and then crusted with rain and sleet so that it was almost impossible to handle stock.

The **winter of 1861–62** was an unusually severe one in Oregon and Washington, cattle perishing by the thousands in many parts. Though the cold in the Grande Ronde was not especially severe, the winter was of long duration, with much snow and rain. One of the miners who wintered in Baker County found by actual measurement that 14 feet of snow fell in Griffin's Gulch, and it is probable that the snowfall in Grande Ronde Valley was not very much less.

The **winter of 1874–75** was an unusually severe one. Cold weather commenced about the 14th of January and lasted three weeks, during which time the thermometer once registered 18 degrees below zero at La Grande. and for 10 days ranged between 10 and 12 degrees below. The mercury is said to have fallen at Island City as low as 24 degrees below zero, Fahrenheit. During a part of the time Grande Ronde towns were in a state of blockade owing to the depth of the snow.

The **winter of 1877** is remembered by those who lived in the Wallowa Valley at that time as the severest ever experienced since the advent of white men. Cattle perished by the score, and disastrous losses were sustained by nearly all who owned stock. Horses fared better, being more adapted to reaching the bunchgrass by pawing, but the loss of cattle proved a severe blow to the settlers. One good result, however, was the erection of more and better barns in the future and the preparation of more feed to provide against the necessities arising out of long continued cold weather with deep snow.

The **winter of 1880–81** proved unusually severe, and cattle perished in great numbers throughout all eastern Oregon. Early in February the loss was estimated at 70 percent of cattle and sheep, though some men lost their entire herds. The ranges, we are informed, were covered with carcasses... It became evident to all stockmen that a change must be made in the manner of conducting their business and that the only safe way in the future would be to prepare for feeding their animals during the winter months.

When the cattle industry was in its incipiency in eastern Oregon, the bunch grass was so tall and luxuriant that only a very deep snow could cover it, and the cold alone in a severe winter was never extreme enough to cause serious loss.

But for a decade, herds had been multiplying until some men were rich in cattle who were poor in every other kind of property. The result was that the bunch grass was pastured down until a very shallow snow would cover it, and when a winter came in which snow lay on the ground to a considerable depth for a long time, cattle must perish by the thousands. The experience taught the stockraiser prudence in the matter of procuring winter feed. Cattle owners in Union County suffered with their neighbors... and by a strange compensation the same snow which brings disaster to the stockman almost invariably brings bountiful harvests to the farmer.

Joseph Pern Averill...came to Wallowa Valley in the latter part of July 1884. He and "Alter" Jack took 800 head of sheep, in which they had put all their savings, to upper Camp Creek on the winter range, the **winter of 1884–85** and it being a very severe winter—30 below zero and 4 feet of snow—and having no hay, they lost over 500 head of the 800. They tried to get them to the valley where they could get hay, and the settlers in that whole district went to the canyon and helped tramp a trail to the Buttes. But the sheep were too weak to save. — John H. Horner, "Wallowa River and Valley," *J. H. Horner Papers*, 1953

The year 1887, though not an especially prosperous one for the stockman, as the **winter of 1886–87** was a rather severe one, yet witnessed much progress along many lines. The hay crop of the county was good and the wheat yield up to the average. All the towns experienced a healthy growth.

The **winter of 1889–90** was a rather severe one, not that the thermometer registered an especially low temperature, but the snowfall, not alone in Union County but elsewhere throughout the state, was unusually great. For 8 or 10 days, railway communication with the outside world was interrupted, so that no letters or papers could be received or sent, but on January 20th the blockade was broken and the glad sound of the locomotive's whistle once more awoke the echoes in Grande Ronde Valley.

All who lived in Wallowa County in 1892 recollect what a severe winter visited this portion of the state, and they will remember that this valley suffered particularly. [During the **winter of 1892–93**] snow fell to the depth of several feet here, while on the hills, 15 and 20 feet was an average depth, varying with the locality. Much stock perished, though there was no such heavy loss as in 1877.

The Winter of 1886–1887: The Great Die-Up

By Mark Highberger

Adapted from *Untamed Land: The Death of Pete French & the End of the Old West* (2006)

“The winter of ’86 and ’87, all men will remember. It was the hardest winter the open range ever saw. An awful lot of cattle died.”

– Charlie Russell, artist and cowboy

Starting in 1886, several consecutive winters clobbered the nation with historically unprecedented deep snows, frigid temperatures, raging blizzards, and crusted ice. Even though the Wallowa Valley suffered along with the rest of the Pacific Northwest, nowhere did winter strike harder than in the Plains states. “Stock raising on the Plains,” said future President and then-cattleman Theodore Roosevelt, “is doomed.”

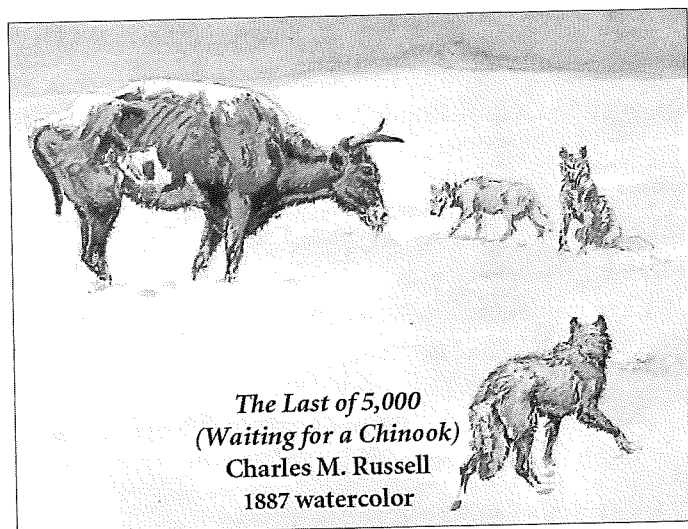
Throughout eastern Oregon, the severity of the weather had been made worse by the ranchers’ method of raising their cattle. “Everyone accumulated some livestock, but few put up much hay,” wrote eastern Oregon homesteader Reub Long. “Most persons turned out their stock in the winter... But about once in 10 years would come a winter that killed all the stock. That was called an ‘equalizer,’ and everyone started even again.”

Perhaps the winter of 1886–1887 was the West’s *great* equalizer, taking a fearsome toll on cattle herds from Texas to Canada, and hitting hard in the Northwest. By the tens of thousands cattle died—frozen against fences, starved in snow drifts, drowned in rivers. When spring finally arrived, melting snow revealed so many carcasses strewn across the range that the period is sometimes called “The Great Die-Up.”

[The cattle] stand around moping and listless, utterly weak and exhausted, mere skin and bone, with no flesh at all, although they were in fine condition in the fall. – The Colorado Daily Chieftain (January 24, 1886)

In the Northwest, subsequent winters were almost equally devastating, caused at least in part by their following dry summers that left little grass on the overgrazed range. In many cases, homesteaders and ranchers could do nothing except wait for their cows to die.

“It is heart-rending to see and hear cattle on the feed yard with hay short,” wrote eastern Oregon rancher Earl R. Smith. “How they stand humped on the lee side of a fence post, their backs covered with frost, bawling in hunger and cold.” The following winter was no better. Before it ended, hay prices rose from 20 dollars to 40 dollars per ton, and



*The Last of 5,000
(Waiting for a Chinook)*
Charles M. Russell
1887 watercolor

the death rate of cattle at Harney Lake, near Burns, was an estimated 100 per day. “That is the winter that has been known ever since as the ‘Hard Winter,’” said Harney Basin homesteader Reuben T. Hughet. “There was a shortage of feed in the country. That winter followed a very dry period, and it was quite severe. The snow was deep and the snow came early and the grass was late in starting the next spring. That is what made it what we always called the ‘Everner.’ Made the big fellows slow down as the little fellows.”

After losing either their cows or their heart for the cattle business, many of the “big fellows” went bankrupt or closed down. “The cowmen of the West and Northwest were flat broke,” said rancher John Clay. “Many of them never recovered.” The same was true in northeast Oregon: For some stockmen in the Grande Ronde and Wallowa valleys—especially the “big” operators—it was a winter that marked the end of a way of life.

“It was all so slow, plunging after them through the deep snow that way...The horses’ feet were cut and bleeding from the heavy crust, and the cattle had the hair and hide wore off their legs to the knees and hocks.” – Teddy Blue Abbott

“[I saw] countless carcasses of cattle going down with the ice, rolling over and over as they went, sometimes with all four stiffened legs pointed skyward. For days on end...went Death’s cattle roundup.” – Lincoln Lang

HOGS DRIVEN, DEFIANT & DRUNK

Hog Drives

By Ben Weathers

From the *Wallowa County Chieftain* (March 3, 1964)

Before the advent of the railroad and before automobiles had been dreamed of, the farmers of the north end marketed their crops mostly in the form of livestock, especially hogs. In the early part of this century, Wallowa County produced more hogs than any other three counties [combined] in the state. By feeding their grain to hogs, the farmers could drive the hogs to market and save many trips hauling grain to faraway markets. At times, farmers would haul their hogs to Elgin, the nearest railroad point for many years, with team and wagon, but a large part were driven on foot all the way to the railhead.

On these hog drives, all the neighbors put their porkers in a large band of several hundred and accompanied them with chuck wagons and feed for the trip. It was something like the old Chisholm Trail, except that it was a hog drive instead of a cattle drive. At that time, the price of hogs ranged around six cents per pound, so you can understand that these old-time farmers put in a lot of work for their money. As all the merchandise for the stores in Flora and Paradise had to be freighted in from Elgin, nearly all the North-Enders hauled freight back from Elgin after completing a trip there with their livestock.

Hog Attack

From the *Enterprise Record Chieftain* (December 26, 1912)

C. Murdock had a recent experience at his farm on Day Ridge in warding off an attack from an ugly three-year-old Duroc Jersey boar that he will remember for a long time. While driving the animal, he had occasion to tap him with a small stick, when the hog came back at the driver in a very defiant manner. Whereupon Mr. Murdock armed himself with a pitchfork which was near at hand, the boar starting in for a prize fight. The first bout resulted in the tines striking astraddle the nose of the animal which nearly threw its antagonist to the ground. In the second charge, one tine struck the hog in the lower lip, checking him slightly but only resulting in his coming at his intended victim with renewed fervor. In the third charge, one tine struck the animal in the eye, which enraged it still more, and it started on the fourth bout. Mr. Murdock suddenly concluded that discretion might be safer than valor and scaled a fence with an alacrity that would have done credit

to a Ringling circus performer, leaving his hogship master supreme of the arena. The maddened and frothing animal then started to follow his antagonist by rearing up on the fence, ready to spring over. But his antagonist, being on the upper side, was able to stand him off with the trusty pitchfork. The hog is a very lively three-year-old which has proved a valuable stock animal, but with the dangerous agility of a lion and the strength of a grizzly bear. Mr. Murdock says he beats any boar he ever handled and he has owned many such animals, and for pure cussedness he takes the prize. His tusks were taken off over a year ago, but have grown out again and are very formidable weapons. Mr. Murdock considers himself lucky in escaping with only a slight tear in his trousers.

Hog Bulldogging

From *The Wallowa Sun* (September 11, 1913)

Last Sunday morning just after the incoming passenger train pulled out of Palmer Junction, Harry Grady, the popular conductor on the branch line, went into the baggage car, where there was a hog weighing close to 300 pounds contained in a crate. Just how Mr. Hog obtained his freedom is not known, but it is certain that he came charging down the car, and everybody in the car took the shortest route to the roof. That is, everybody except the conductor. He took a flying leap for Mr. Hog, and when he got through with him, the porker was glad to retire to his modest crate.

Hog Slopped

From *The Wallowa Sun* (December 4, 1925)

Tuesday in Enterprise, one little pig went to court to testify for his master in the case of the state against Beecher Trump on a charge of owning and operating a still. When prohibition officers arrested Trump, they found a dismantled still concealed about the farm, 15 gallons of moonshine, and two barrels of mash buried in the hog pen. They noticed that the pigs, and one in particular, were acting funny. One, it was said, was unable to walk straight, but would reel from side to side and constantly fall down. The state charged that these pigs were drunk from eating mash that had been fed to them after the whiskey had been run off. The defense, contending that the pig in question had been deformed and could not walk straight for this reason, brought the little porker into court to prove their claim, but Judge Knowles refused admittance to the pig.

19TH-CENTURY WALLOWA COUNTY POST OFFICES

By Richard W. Helbock (1938–2011)

Adapted from *La Posta: The Journal of American Postal History* (September-October 1969)

Locations listed for post offices still operating—Wallowa, Lostine, Enterprise, Joseph, Imnaha—are as of 1969; some have since moved.

In any discussion of the West's ruggedly beautiful and isolated places, the name of Wallowa County should certainly be mentioned. Tucked away far in the northeast corner of Oregon, Wallowa County contains some 3,178 square miles of land area, most of which lies within the boundaries of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. As of 1965, the county had an estimated 6,151 inhabitants, or an overall density of less than 2 persons per square mile. The three Wallowa River Valley towns of Enterprise, Wallowa, and Joseph accounted for well over half of the county's total population.

Wallowa County was created February 11, 1887, from territory which had formerly been part of Union County. The name of the county is a Nez Perce Indian word which was used to describe a triangular structure of stakes supporting a network of smaller sticks for trapping fish. This type of trap was used by the Nez Perce extensively in the Wallowa River below the outlet of Wallowa Lake.

There were eight post offices established in the territory destined to become Wallowa County before the county was created in 1887. Bancroft cites Lostine, Alder, and Joseph as the largest communities of the Wallowa Valley in the late 1880s, but the census of 1890 lists populations of 150 for Lostine and 17 for Alder, while the only other Wallowa town enumerated was Enterprise, a newly founded community which boasted a population of 500.

The following list details the Wallowa County post offices which were established prior to 1900. Offices are listed in the chronological order of their dates of establishment.

WALLOWA (1873–Today)

Established April 10, 1873. The Wallowa post office was named for the Wallowa River, upon which it was located. The site of this post office was near the junction of the Lostine and Wallowa rivers in section 14, township 1 north, range 42 east.

19th-Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates

John Snodgrass: April 10, 1873

John McCall: February 5, 1874

James Masterson: February 13, 1874

Francis Bramlet: July 22, 1874

Isaac Baston: December 31, 1880

Martha Ann Dougherty: April 26, 1881

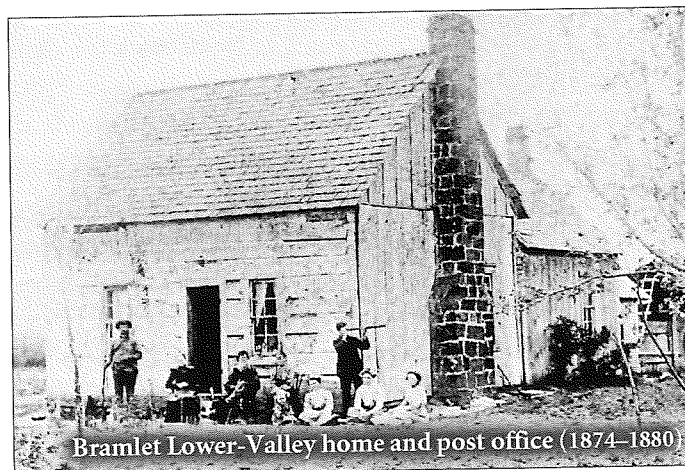
Lucian J. Cole: May 19, 1884

Samuel B. Willett: June 23, 1886

Samuel Sproston: August 6, 1887

Maggie Bunnell: December 12, 1894

The Wallowa post office was not in service during the following periods: February 1 to April 26, 1881; November 21, 1881 to May 19, 1884; and, June 30, 1885 to June 23, 1886. The office is currently operating, ZIP Code: 97885. Based upon the level of compensation received by Wallowa postmasters, postal markings from this office may



theoretically be evaluated in the following groupings: 1873 to 1881—very scarce; 1884 to 1889—moderately scarce; and 1890 to 1899—fairly common.

PRAIRIE CREEK (1876–1893)

Established January 10, 1876. This post office was named for the stream upon which it was situated. Prairie Creek bears a descriptive name applied by Robert M. Downey, an early settler who admired the fine stands of bunch grass covering the surrounding prairies. The Prairie Creek post office was located about 2 miles east of Wallowa Lake, and in section 11, township 3 south, range 45 east.

19th-Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates

Robert M. Downey: January 10, 1876

Francis X. Musty: October 24, 1882

Thomas F. Rich: November 22, 1883

Rebecca A. Davis: September 7, 1887

Francis X. Musty: March 29, 1892

The Prairie Creek post office was discontinued July 8, 1893, papers to Joseph. Postal markings of Prairie Creek should be considered very scarce from the 1876 to 1879 period, and moderately scarce from the 1880 to 1893 period.

ALDER (1878–1890)

Established April 5, 1878. The Alder post office was named for the grove of alder trees which provided shade for the cabin of Henry Beecher, the first postmaster. This office was located on Alder Slope about 2 miles southeast of present-day Enterprise, and in section 27, township 2 south, range 44 east. After the community of Enterprise was founded, most of the residents of Alder moved to the new town, abandoning the older community to memory and history.

19th-Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates

Henry Beecher: April 5, 1878

William McConnell: July 19, 1878

E.J. Hambleton: August 30, 1880

William P. Simms: December 23, 1881

Albert C. King: November 13, 1882

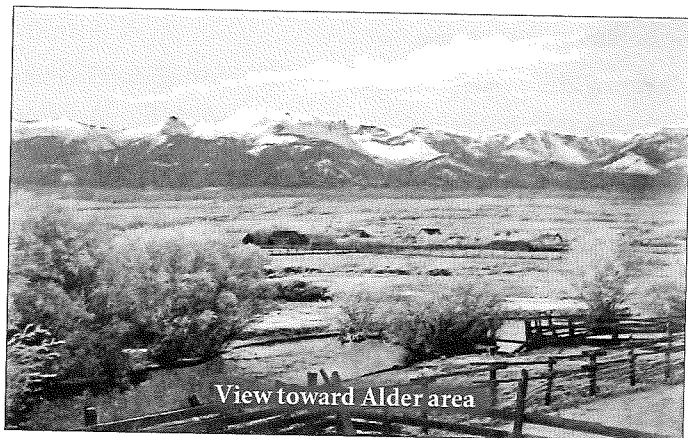
Cathrin Akin: September 29, 1884

Edgar M. Simms: August 26, 1886

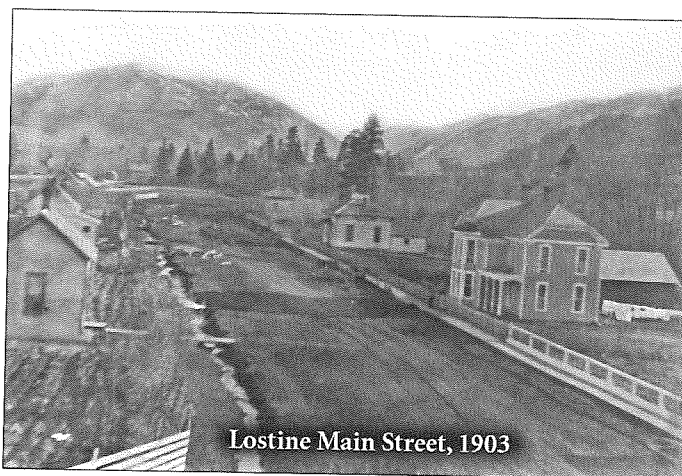
Cathrin Akin: November 9, 1886

Frances Cobbs: October 11, 1887

The Alder post office was discontinued October 9, 1890, papers to Enterprise. Based upon compensation of Alder postmasters relative to the annual compensation of other



View toward Alder area



Lostine Main Street, 1903

Oregon postmasters of the period, postmarks from this town may be rated scarce to moderately scarce for the entire period of its existence.

LOSTINE (1878–Today)

Established August 6, 1878. This office was named for Lostine in Cherokee County, Kansas, by an early settler from that Midwestern community. Lostine post office is located on Lostine River —named for the town—about 9 miles northwest of Enterprise, and in section 15, township 1 south, range 43 east.

19th-Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates

William R. Laughlin: August 6, 1878

Guly Laughlin: September 14, 1880

John H. McCubbin: September 29, 1888

Jacob H. Haun: October 25, 1889

John Luttrell: March 24, 1890

Jacob H. Haun: December 15, 1890

William Pullen: June 30, 1892

George W. Cray: March 15, 1894

Bessie C. Poley: August 30, 1899

The Lostine post office is currently operating, ZIP Code: 97857. Postmarks 1878–1879, very scarce; 1880–1883, moderately scarce; 1884–1899, fairly common, with those in the late 1890s rated as quite common.

JOSEPH (1880–Today)

Established April 23, 1880. The Joseph post office is named for the famous chiefs of the Nez Perce Indians. It was the younger Chief Joseph who, after making threats to the settlers of the Wallowa Valley, led the U.S. Army on an epic chase to Montana where he finally surrendered in 1877. This post office is located about a mile north of Wallowa Lake, and in the southwest corner of township 2 south, range 45 east.

19th-Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates

Matthew Johnson: April 23, 1880

John D. McCully: February 3, 1882

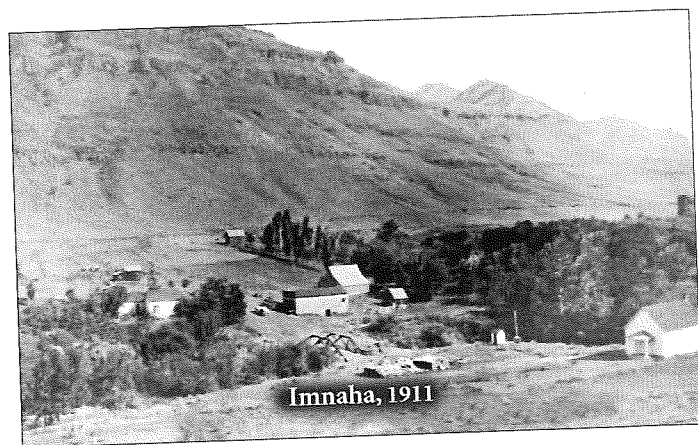
Albert W. Gowan: July 23, 1883

John A. Rumble: November 15, 1890

William Wurzweiler: December 12, 1894

George F. Conley : July 22, 1897

The Joseph post office is currently operating, ZIP Code: 97846. Joseph postmarks may be considered moderately scarce from the 1880 to 1883 period, but between 1884 and 1899, postmarks should be fairly common.



IMNAHA (1885–Today)

Established January 4, 1885. This office was named for the Imnaha River, along which it is located. Imnaha is a Nez Perce word which means "Land ruled by *Imna*," who was a minor chief of the Nez Perce. The Imnaha post office is located at the mouth of Little Sheep Creek, deep in the gorge of Imnaha River, and in section 16, township 1 north, range 48 east.

19th-Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates

Alexander B. Findley: January 4, 1885

Orintha N. Chase: May 1, 1891

The Imnaha post office is currently operating, ZIP Code: 97842. Imnaha has never been a very busy place, and from 1885 to 1893 its postmarks should be considered very scarce. From 1894 to 1899, Imnaha postmarks are rated moderately scarce.

TEEPY SPRINGS (1886–1890)

Established August 3, 1886. The Teepy Springs post office was in operation briefly at or near a natural spring, which is locally spelled Tepee Springs. The office was named for the springs, but the variation in spelling is a mystery. The

springs were so named because a group of tepee poles were found standing nearby. The poles were apparently left by Indians who had used the area as a campground. This post office was about 6 miles north of Enterprise, and about 1 mile west of the Lewiston Highway.

19th-Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates

Chauncy Akin: August 3, 1886

Sarah A. Akin: December 7, 1887

William A. Tope: May 5, 1890

The Teepy Springs post office was closed from September 14 to December 7, 1887, and finally discontinued August 14, 1890, papers to Enterprise. Postal markings from Teepy Springs with any year date should be considered exceedingly scarce.

ARCADIA (1887–1897)

Established January 8, 1887. The name of this office represented an attempt by its first and only postmaster to express his awareness of the impressive landscape of the region. Arcadia comes from a pastoral area of Greece, which was noted for its peaceful simplicity. The Arcadia post office was located about 10 miles northwest of Imnaha, and in the west central portion of township 2 north, range 47 east.

19th-Century Postmaster and Appointment Date

Thomas Gwillim: January 8, 1887

The Arcadia post office was discontinued January 25, 1897, papers to Winslow. An Arcadia postmark from any year of the office's 10 year life should be considered exceedingly scarce.

LOST PRAIRIE (1887–1900)

Established August 17, 1887. The Lost Prairie post office took the name of the general locality in which it was located. A.C. Smith and a group of pioneer settlers were chasing a band of renegade Indians who had stolen some stock, and when the posse lost the trail in this area, it became known as Lost Prairie.

The post office was located just a little south of the Oregon-Washington boundary on or near the Grande Ronde River, and in section 19, township 6 north, range 44 east.

19th-Century Postmaster and Appointment Date

Rion H. Bacon: August 17, 1887

The Lost Prairie post office was discontinued March 30, 1900, mail to Arko. All postmarks of Lost Prairie should be considered moderately scarce to scarce, with the 1890 to 1895 period probably the easiest to find.

ENTERPRISE (1887–Today)

Established November 9, 1887. Enterprise was named by a majority vote of those early settlers who were appropriately gathered in a mercantile company's tent in 1887. The name was suggested by R.F. Stubblefield, and relative to the growth of other Wallowa Valley towns, Stubblefield proved something of a prophet. The Enterprise post office is located on the Wallowa River about 6 miles north of Wallowa Lake.

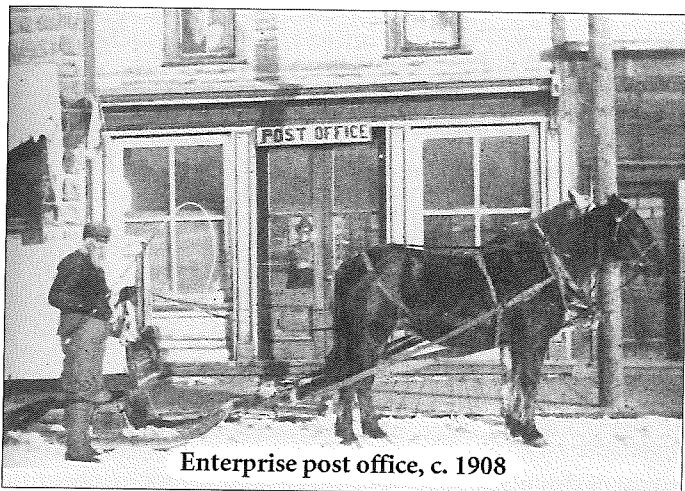
19th-Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates

Cathrin Akin: November 9, 1887

Joseph C. Reaves: April 22, 1893

Levi J. Rouse: April 21, 1897

The Enterprise post office is currently operating, ZIP Code: 97828. All postmarks from Enterprise should be considered fairly common.



Enterprise post office, c. 1908

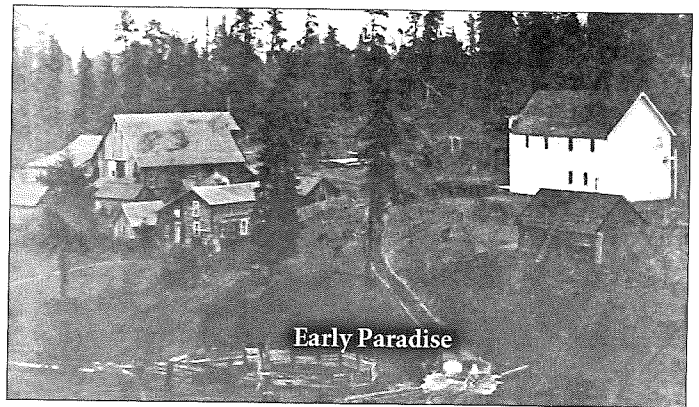
JOY (1888–1895)

Established November 3, 1888. The Joy post office is reported to have been so named because the residents of the locality expressed joy at the possibility of having local mail service. This office was located west of the Findley Buttes, about 15 miles northeast of Enterprise, and in the southeastern part of township 1 north, range 46 east.

19th-Century Postmaster and Appointment Date

Newton W. Brumback: November 3, 1888

The Joy post office was discontinued September 25, 1895, papers to Imnaha. An attempt was apparently made to re-establish the Joy office in June, 1901, but records indicate that the attempt was not successful. Any postmarks from Joy should be considered exceedingly scarce, i.e., if you find a postmark from Joy you have a right to be joyous. (Sorry.)



PARADISE (1889–1942)

Established August 22, 1889. This office was named as the result of an expedition seeking winter range. Starting from the Wallowa Valley in 1878, Pres Halley, Sam Wade, and William Masterson scouted the area and reported finding a regular paradise covered with fine grass. The Paradise post office was located about 4 miles south of the Oregon-Washington border, and about 2 miles east of the Lewiston Highway in section 5, township 5 north, range 45 east.

19th-Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates

John Calvin: August 22, 1889

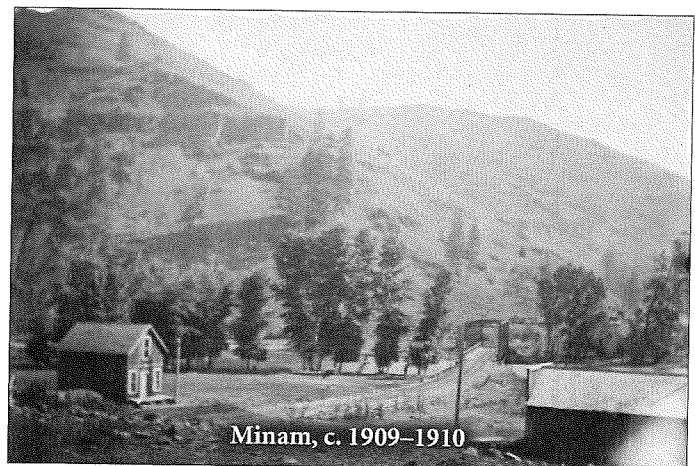
J.S. Applegate: March 21, 1895

Henry C. McNeal: April 20, 1895

The Paradise post office was discontinued in August, 1942. Postal markings from Paradise for any year between 1889 and 1899 should be considered only moderately scarce.

MINAM (1890–1891, 1910–1945)

Established June 25, 1890. The Minam post office was located at the mouth of the Minam River from which it took its name. The stream's name comes from the Indian word "*E-mi-ne-mah*," which referred to this river as a place



where a certain type of food plant grew. The Minam post office was situated at the junction of Wallowa and Minam rivers in section 29, township 2 north, range 41 east.

19th-Century Postmaster and Appointment Date

Elizabeth Richards: June 25, 1890

The Minam post office operated for less than one year during the 19th century, as it was discontinued February 4, 1891, mail to Elgin. During June in 1910 the office was re-established, and it continued to operate until the autumn of 1945, when it was converted to a rural station of Elgin. The rural station was finally closed in the early months of 1963. Nineteenth-century postmarks of the Minam office must be considered very rare due to the extremely short life of the office.

FLORA (1890–1966)

Established October 6, 1890. This office was named for the daughter of its first postmaster, Adolphus D. Buzzard. The Flora post office was situated in the north-central part of Wallowa County, about 3 miles east of Courtney Butte and 3 miles west of the Lewiston Highway in section 21, township 5 north, range 44 east.

19th-Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates

Adolphus D. Buzzard: October 6, 1890

William H. Baker: February 24, 1899

The Flora post office was discontinued December 27, 1966, mail to Enterprise. Flora postmarks from 1890 to 1893 may be considered moderately scarce.



DIVIDE (1891–1893)

Established January 31, 1891. This office bore a descriptive name which pertained to its location on the ridge dividing the waters of Big Sheep and Little Sheep creeks. The Divide post office was located about 10 miles east-southeast of Joseph, and in section 11, township 3 south, range 46 east.

19th-Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates

Annie E. Shaw: January 31, 1891

Christina Needham: June 30, 1892

Guilla A. Kutch: August 12, 1893

The Divide post office was discontinued November 28, 1893, papers to Joseph. Any postal markings from Divide should be considered extremely scarce due to its short life and low volume of business.

FRUITA (1891–1936)

Established December 23, 1891. The Fruita post office was named for Fruita, Colorado, by T.F. Rich, who had formerly lived in the Colorado town. This office was located on Imnaha River near the mouth of Grouse Creek in the north-central part of township 3 south, range 48 east. The *Official Highway Map of Oregon* dated 1956 indicates the site of Fruita about 9 miles south of the mouth of Grouse Creek, or nearer the mouth of Gumboot Creek, and it can only be assumed that the office was moved farther south sometime during the 20th century.

19th-Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates

Ellen A. Rodriguez: December 23, 1891

Sarah M. Rich: December 12, 1894

The Fruita post office was discontinued July 15, 1936. Fruita postmarks from the period 1891 to 1899 should be considered very scarce.

LEAP (1892–1904)

Established April 22, 1892. When Fairview, the original name of this place, was rejected by postal authorities because of duplication, it was decided to call the post office Leap because it was Leap Year. The Leap post office was located about 9 miles east of Wallowa near Middle Fork Whiskey Creek, and in section 8, township 1 north, range 44 east.

19th-Century Postmaster and Appointment Date

Lizzie Heskett: April 22, 1892

The Leap post office was discontinued May 10, 1904, papers to Wallowa. Based upon postmaster compensation, Leap postmarks should be considered only moderately scarce for the period 1892 to 1899.

WINSLOW (1892–1900)

Established May 9, 1892. This office was named for Edward Winslow Rumble, who taught school in the area. The Winslow post office was located about 10 miles northeast of Enterprise, and less than a mile west of Crow Creek in section 13, township 1 north, range 45 east.

19th-Century Postmaster and Appointment Date

Fannie Root: May 9, 1892

The Winslow post office was discontinued December 13, 1900, mail to Joseph. Winslow postal markings should be considered moderate to very scarce.

ARKO (1895–1902)

Established February 12, 1895. The Arko post office was named by the wife of its first postmaster for her former hometown, Arkoe, Nodaway County, Missouri. Somehow the spelling was slightly altered. This office was located in the far northern part of Wallowa County, only a mile or so from the Oregon-Washington border, and about 3 miles northwest of the present-day community of Troy. Arko was in section 19, township 6 north, range 43 east.

19th-Century Postmasters and Appointment Dates

Perry Loy: February 12, 1895

Caleb I. Weaver: November 29, 1899

The Arko post office was discontinued November 5, 1902, mail to Flora. Arko postmarks should be considered moderate to very scarce.

GROUSE (1896–1919)

Established January 28, 1896. The name of this office reflected the local abundance of this game bird. The Grouse post office was located in the extreme northern part of Wallowa County on the Grande Ronde River in section 13, township 6 north, range 45 east.

19th-Century Postmaster and Appointment Date

Samuel M. Silver: January 28, 1896

On February 20, 1917, the site of this office was moved to Asotin County, Washington. The Grouse post office was discontinued October 3, 1919, mail to Bartlett. Grouse postmarks from 1896 to 1899 should be moderately scarce.

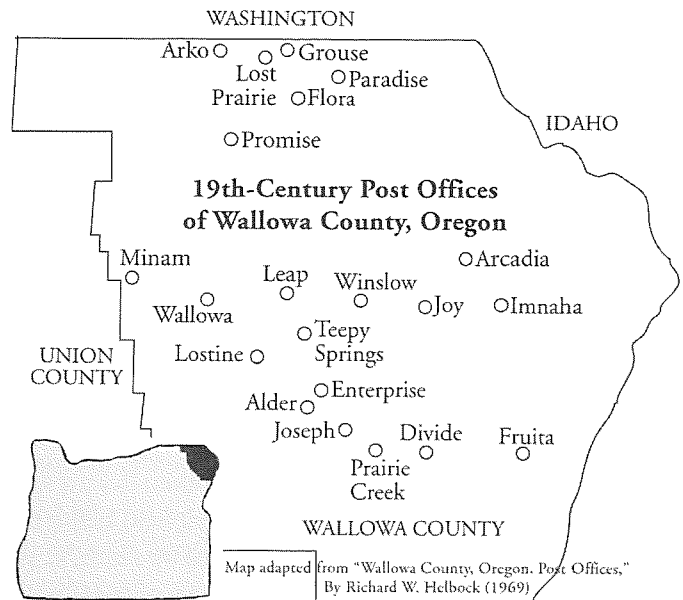
PROMISE (1896–1944)

Established December 22, 1896. W. Mann, one of the original settlers in this locality, called the area “Land of Promise,” and when the post office was established it was named Promise for that reason. The Promise office was located about 19 miles north of Wallowa, and in section 10, township 4 north, range 42 east.

19th-Century Postmaster and Appointment Date

Thomas C. Miller: December 22, 1896

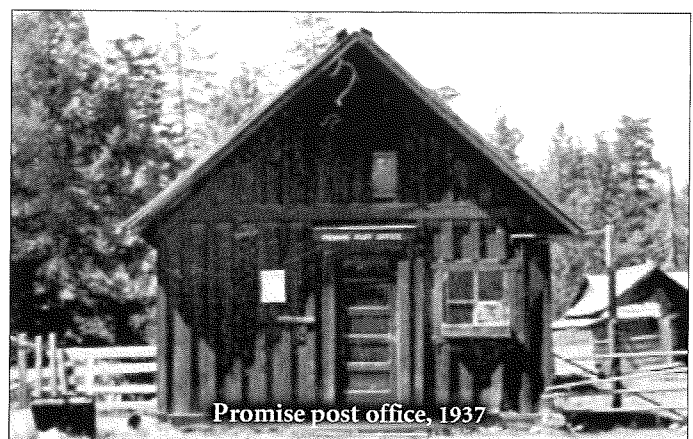
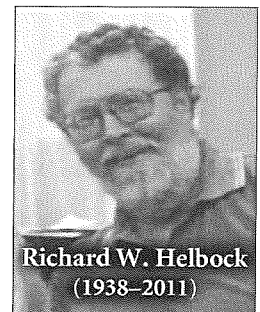
The Promise post office was discontinued in April, 1944, mail to Wallowa. Promise postmarks should be only moderately scarce for 1896 to 1899.



Author's Notes

Wallowa County is now, and always has been, a rugged, undeveloped region populated by hardy pioneer folk who prefer the quiet beauty and isolation to the hustle-bustle of city life. Material rewards are limited and certainly many of the sons and daughters of early settlers have been drawn away to brighter opportunities, but the names of some of these pioneer post offices—Arcadia, Joy, Paradise, Promise, and Enterprise—remain as poetic reminders of the spirit and determination which characterized many a settler of our 19th-century Western frontier.

Dates of establishment and postmaster appointments, as well as dates of closing, name change, etc., ... should not be considered to be actual dates of establishment for a post office, but merely dates of record.



INCIDENT AT BATTLE CREEK

Wol-ah-ask-in-i-mati's Story

By Clinton T. Stranahan (1859–1950), as told to Clara A. Richardson

From “Nez Perces Adopt Grown Orphan,” the *Lewiston Morning Tribune* (November 18, 1945)

Battle Creek is a short creek which comes tumbling down a very steep canyon into Snake River from the Oregon side of Hells Canyon...It is not known just why this creek came to be known as Battle Creek except for rumors that an Indian battle had been fought there many years ago...It may well be that the old Indian camp at the mouth of Battle Creek was the theatre where this stark tragedy was enacted.

– Gerald J. Tucker, *Historical Sketches of Wallowa National Forest* (1954)

When you were little, did you ever waken from a sound sleep to find a totally strange face bending over you? Did you ever know the awful terror of being held helpless by an unknown grown person who spoke a language you could not understand? Were you ever confronted by death, in your own family, before you knew what it meant? If so, you may be able to understand the feelings of a tiny Indian maid who, in a few short moments, lost everything in life except life itself.

It was June in the year of 1892 that Miss Alice Fletcher was commissioned by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior to allot the lands of the Nez Perce Indians in Idaho. During this procedure, Miss Fletcher came across an Indian woman applicant [*Wol-ah-ask-in-i-mati*, c. 1842–1892] who was not a Nez Perce. The law and the secretary's ruling—not withstanding, she had lived all her life among the Nez Perces—made it impossible for her to receive an allotment. Her many Indian friends were indignant and called a council of the tribe for the purpose of adopting her as one of their members. This adoption would cure the objection.

My duties as a government officer frequently called me into Indian country. I made it a point to attend this council. At that time I did not understand the Indian language, but I was much impressed by the gestures and attention given that famous orator James Reuben. His eloquent appeal to the tribe on behalf of the rejected woman was said to have resulted in a unanimous vote to adopt her. This so aroused my curiosity that I secured a competent interpreter and interviewed her for the sole purpose of learning her story first-hand. I judged that she was a woman of about 50 years of age. Her features clearly revealed that she was not a Nez Perce. She was reticent at first, but gradually relaxed to give me her story.

Wol-ah-ask-in-i-mati's Story

I was very small when my father and mother with many other Indians traveled several days from where I do not know. We came to a river and all camped there. I was very tired. I had been tied to an old fashioned Indian saddle on an Indian pony my mother led.

The next day my father and mother left the other Indians and crossed a mountain to another river. They pitched camp close to the water's edge. My father, from a large boulder, dipped up a couple of salmon.

After that he hunted several days with his bow and arrows. One day he came into camp and got a pony. He soon returned with a deer.

Down in that deep canyon the sun had been gone for some time and it was getting dark.

My mother was cooking the evening meal and smoking salmon. The smoke spiraled toward the darkening sky. Father was skinning the deer. I was sitting near the water pouring sand in my dog's ear and watching him flip it out.

Suddenly there was yelling and shouting from many Indians. I saw my father running for his bow and arrows. There was an arrow sticking in his side. My mother grabbed me, pushed me toward the bushes and said, “Run to the brush, my child.”

THE DAWES ACT OF 1887—named for its main sponsor in Congress, Senator Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts—authorized the federal government to confiscate tribal land in the West and subdivide it into individual plots. These subdivisions were then to be either “allotted” to registered tribal members in chunks of 160 acres (for farmland) or 320 acres (for grazing land), or sold to the general public. The intent was to “assimilate” Native Americans into mainstream society, to make them “true Americans” by turning them into farmers. Only tribal members who accepted their allotments were eligible to become U.S. citizens. After allotments were distributed to tribal members, the land that remained was sold to white settlers. The result was that approximately 90 million acres of tribal land—more than 140,000 square miles, 60 percent, of the almost 235,000 square miles that tribes controlled before the Dawes Act was passed— was sold to non-natives.

Even as I obeyed her, I looked back and saw her fall. How far I ran I do not know.

I could hear yelling and loud talking all night. I was terribly frightened and finally cried myself to sleep.

The next morning I crawled through the brush to where our camp had been. Our horses were gone, our teepee, the deer, everything was gone. My father, my mother, and my pet dog lay on the ground. They were dead, but I didn't know about death then, I just knew that my mother would not speak to me, and I cried and cried. I didn't know what to do. At last, I lay down with my head on her breast and cried myself to sleep.

How long I slept I do not know. I felt someone lifting my head and I opened my eyes. There, towering over me, was a strange Indian. He spoke to me in a language I could not understand. I was almost suffocated with fright.

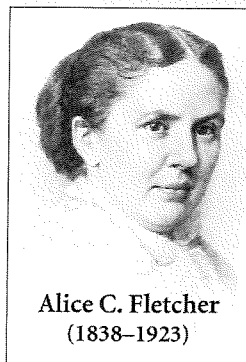
Then he picked me up. I bit, scratched and kicked him, but he carried me away on a horse to a camp where there were many Indians. He gave me to an Indian woman who fed me and I was very hungry. I tried many times to run away but I was always stopped.

The woman was kind and very good to me. A few days later they brought me up to this country where I have lived all these many years.

The family who adopted me had a son, Tia-kas-wa-wa-ah-mae, who was a little older than me. We grew up together and were great chums. I would have married him if he had asked me but he married another. It was a bitter disappointment to me. (She later married but had no children.)

Since I have grown up, I have tried to locate that old camp but I have failed. I do not even know whether my parents were properly buried or whether I have any living relatives, or to what tribe I belong.

ALICE FLETCHER was employed for 10 years by the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a Special Indian Agent to carry out allotment on Indian reservations under the Dawes Act of 1887. Allotment entailed three objectives: to register every Nez Perce man, woman, and child; to grade the reservation land as to agricultural or grazing; to allot land to each registered Nez Perce.



Alice C. Fletcher
(1838-1923)

To each male head of family, 160 acres would be allotted; to each child over 18, 80 acres; and to each child under 18, 40 acres. Land graded "grazing" would be double in size.

— Northwest Anthropological Research Notes (2001)

The old Indian woman *Eptkae-tae-mae-koo* said the child was about three years old when her husband found her. His curiosity to see where this tragedy had occurred—it was about 30 miles above Whitebird on the Salmon River—saved the child from slowly starving to death.

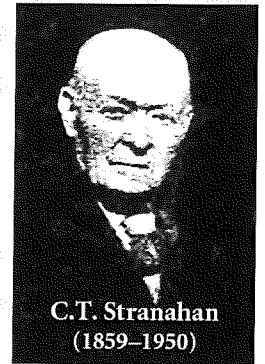
Miss Fletcher ignored the Indian name of *Wol-ah-ask-in-imai* and allotted the Indian woman as Julia Bannock with allotment number 182. Poor Julia lived only a few months after my interview. She died August 8, 1892.

The tragedy just related happened about 1845. It was only one of many conflicts in the early days over the Nez Perce hunting grounds, of which they were very jealous.

Old Nez Perce Indians used to tell of battles with the Bannocks, Shoshones, and the Sheep-Eater Indians who, occasionally, would trespass on their hunting grounds.

CLINTON T. STRANAHAN

In 1899 [Stranahan] was named Nez Perce Indian agent by President William McKinley, with headquarters at Spalding. In April 1902, he was given the added responsibility of superintendent of Nez Perce Indian schools when the two offices were merged... Mr. Stranahan became widely known as a good friend of the Nez Percés... Mr.



C.T. Stranahan
(1859-1950)

Stranahan often said that he believed the Indians had been treated unfairly. — The Lewiston Tribune (April 1, 1950)

INDIAN LAND FOR SALE

GET A HOME
OF
YOUR OWN
*
EASY PAYMENTS



PERFECT TITLE
*
POSSESSION
WITHIN
THIRTY DAYS

FINE LANDS IN THE WEST

IRRIGATED IRRIGABLE GRAZING AGRICULTURAL DRY FARMING

IN 1910 THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR SOLD UNDER SEALED BIDS ALLOTTED INDIAN LAND AS FOLLOWS:

Location	Acres	Average Price per Acre	Location	Acres	Average Price per Acre
Colorado	5,211.21	\$7.27	Oklahoma	34,664.00	\$19.14
Idaho	17,013.00	24.85	Oregon	1,020.00	15.43
Kansas	1,684.50	33.45	South Dakota	120,445.00	16.53
Montana	11,034.00	9.86	Washington	4,879.00	41.37
Nebraska	5,641.00	36.65	Wisconsin	1,069.00	17.00
North Dakota	22,610.70	9.93	Wyoming	865.00	20.64

BUILDING THE TRUCK ROUTE

When and why was Wallowa's Truck Route built?

The "when" is relatively easy: Discussions began in 1949, construction started in 1951, and the project reached its final stages in 1962. But the "why" is not as clear. One reason for cutting the corners of Wallowa's north-side streets was, according to some, to reduce the danger (and the distraction) from log trucks roaring past the two Main Street schools. At the time, child safety was becoming a growing concern across the state. In May of 1949, for example, *The Wallowa Record* reported that, according to Oregon Secretary of State Earl T. Newbry, "More than one-third of all pedestrian casualties in Oregon traffic last year were children of school age or below." Furthermore, Newbry said, "Milder weather and lengthening days will keep more and more children out-of-doors after school from now on, with a consequent increase in danger." Others, however, believed that the change was simply an advantage for the J. Herbert Bate Lumber Company, the dominant force in the Wallowa economy, by providing a more direct route to its mill. Possibly both reasons played a part in the decision to create what was then called the "truck bypass route" through town, and what is known today as the Truck Route.

From *The Wallowa Record* (1949-1962)

Construction Approved (April 6, 1951)

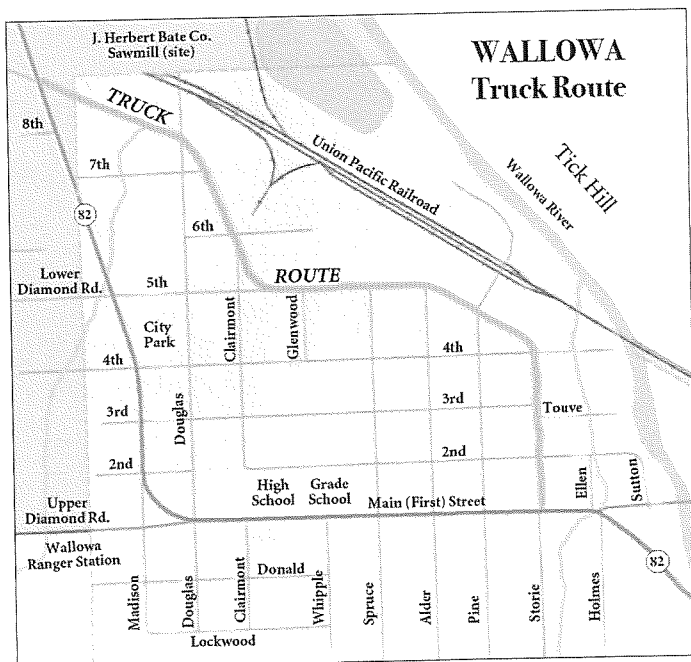
The Wallowa City Council approved a contract submitted by the State Highway Commission for construction of a truck bypass route through the city of Wallowa. The contract provides for the grading and surfacing with bituminous macadam of a route beginning at the Wallowa Cleaners corner [First and Storie streets] and proceeding on the old highway route [Fifth Street] to the Wallowa Cash Market [corner of Fifth and Clairmont streets]. Thence the truck-bypass route forks, one fork going straight west

[along Fifth Street] to Highway 82 at the Evans Building Supply, and the other following an angling route past the Bate mill to the highway. Under the contract, the State Highway Commission will pay \$15,000 of the construction costs, and the city of Wallowa will pay any amount in excess of \$15,000. Engineers' estimates place the total cost at \$16,900. The State Highway Commission has \$250,000 for use in building bypasses this year within Oregon cities. The maximum amount which may be allotted to any one city was allotted to the Wallowa project.

Construction Changes (May 3, 1951)

City council members decided to undertake a large portion of building the new truck bypass route through Wallowa. Construction costs are greater than earlier expected. Council members, conferring with state highway engineering personnel here this week learned that the state's \$15,000 share of the project will just about cover the macadamized pavement topping that is needed. Consequently, the council moved to undertake, as its own contractor, the building up of the grade and the installation of all drainage structures.

Under the newest proposal for the bypass, it will be necessary to eliminate the Y-fork which was earlier proposed to lead from the Cash Market, past the Evans Building Supply, and to the highway. Instead, the bypass route will follow the old highway and will have no fork. However, the council decided to undertake the oil surfacing of the section from the Cash Market to the highway.



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

The plan now being worked on calls for a continuous concrete culvert right under the fork in the highway and the street at the Wallowa Cash Market. This will eliminate the present hazardous, narrow wooden bridge. The city's share of the construction costs will be met from semi-annual allocations of state gas tax revenues, currently running about \$6,000 annually.

Bypass Completed (October 18, 1951)

Wallowa's new truck bypass route is proving popular for through-traffic and trucks, as well as local residents in doing their motoring about town. The new grade with its bituminous asphalt topping shows up now as an excellent piece of workmanship. Constable Bill Burritt has been busy this week making preparation for the erection of stop signs at various intersections along the new bypass route. Mr. Burritt has prepared the posts and painted them. Now comes the job of digging the post holes. Earlier Mr. Burritt had erected little signs at each end of the new route, designating it as a truck route. It is truly quite amazing the way the through-traffic, particularly the big trucks, spot the new route. They are safety-minded to begin with, and they're usually hired by good-sized concerns which know the importance of getting on a bypass where little children are not so likely to be popping out from school grounds and homes. The completed project is a compliment to our city council, their planning and negotiations which have brought Wallowa this improvement.

Complete Paving (March 4, 1954)

The State Highway Commission allocates street improvement funds to Oregon cities from an annual appropriation of \$250,000. Three years ago, Wallowa got a project financed largely from these funds, in which the

[Secretary of State Earl T. Newbry] reports 21 children killed and 560 injured on foot last year [1948], an increase of 10 percent over 1947. A majority of the mishaps occurred on streets, although rural highways, with 151 of the casualties, were not lacking in danger. – The Wallowa Record (May 5, 1949)

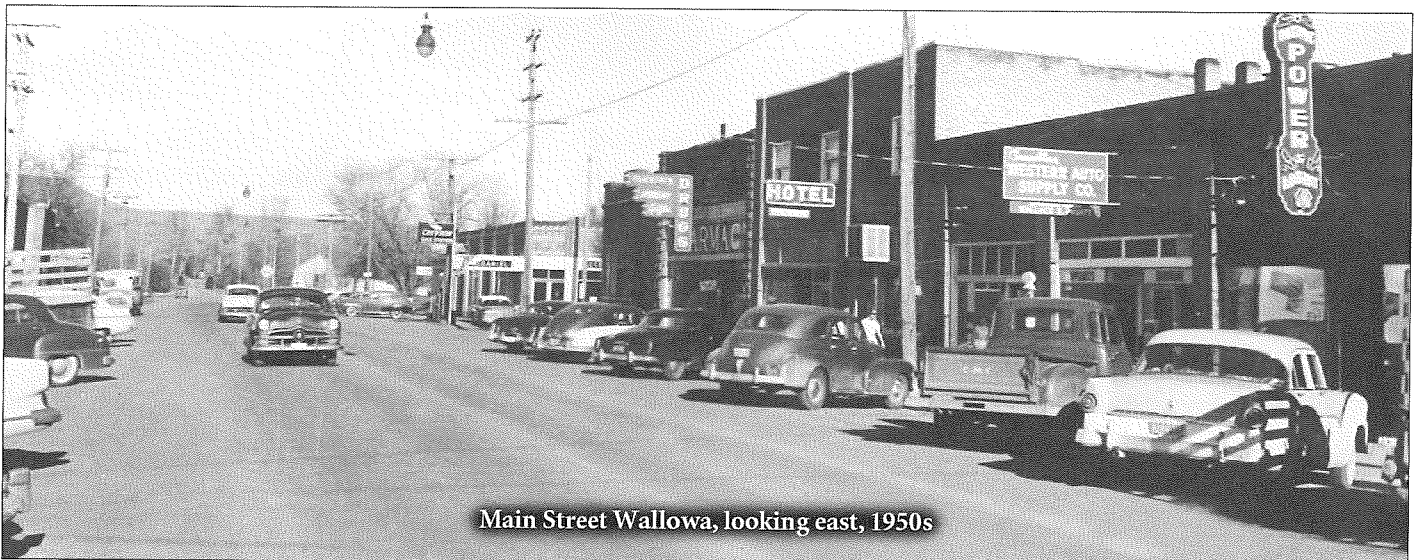
present truck bypass was constructed. Funds then available were not sufficient to complete the project. The bituminous asphalt surfacing ran out at about the curve by the Fleser planing mill [also known as the "Depot Corner," near the intersection of Storie and Fifth streets]. The present resolution asks for a project of improvement from the place where the work left off last time, south [along Storie Street] to Main Street, and then beyond the theatre, east to the Wallowa River bridge.

Street Improvement (March 5, 1959)

The city is hastening preparation of applications [to the state] for help in improving three sections of the street system, including the unimproved portion of the truck bypass route from the Wallowa Cleaners north [along Storie Street] to the depot corner [intersection of Storie and Fifth streets].

Paving Project (April 5, 1962)

The Wallowa City Council approved a contract with the State Highway Commission for joint paving of about two-thirds of the truck bypass through Wallowa. The part to be paved leads from the intersection of Main Street at the Wallowa Cleaners, north on Storie Street, and along Fifth Street to the Wallowa Cash Store. Total cost is estimated at \$22,000. Proceeds of the gasoline tax allocated for highway work within city limits will be used for \$20,000 of this cost. Costs in excess are to be footed by the city of Wallowa.



Main Street Wallowa, looking east, 1950s

Wallowa Then & Now

A CATHOLIC CHURCH (1913–1963)

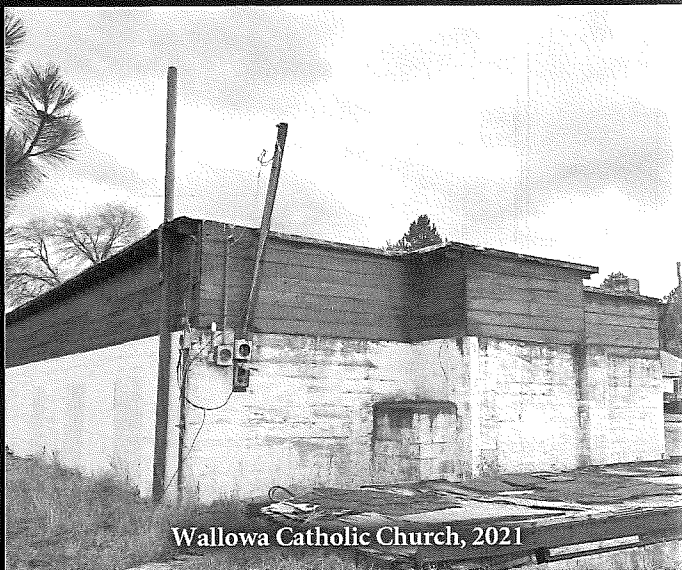
Wallowa, dedicated in 1913 as St. Anthony's and later re-named St. Margaret's, stood its
testament to age and a staircase too steep and high. Today, only its footprint remains.

Wallowa Catholic Church
[document] will be received
finished, and bids are
September 8, 1911)

Construction of the Catholic
understanding of some
committee in charge
material to be used in the
October 27, 1911

[in Wallowa] is the
nearing completion.

Wallowa Catholic Church in Wallowa
is the most beautiful
and was the occasion
conducted over the
Grande, island City,
take advantage of the
Wallowa, assisting in
where non-Catholics.



Wallowa Catholic Church, 2021

With the exception of one sermon, the service was entirely
in Latin. It was very impressive throughout and was one
of the most beautifully conducted services ever witnessed
here. – *The Wallowa Sun* (May 15, 1913)

1961 Construction of a new Catholic church in Wallowa
will begin within the next few days. A beautiful building,
its exterior of cedar board-and-batten blending well with
the hillside of Green Hill, near where it will be located,
the new edifice will replace St. Margaret's church, built at
Wallowa in 1913. Ten stained-glass windows, now in St.
Margaret's church, are to be incorporated in the new church.
The church will contain a choir loft and a cry room for
mothers of small, restless children. Erection of the Wallowa
Catholic Church has been made possible by a \$10,000 cash
donation by a family in Chicago. St. Margaret's church has

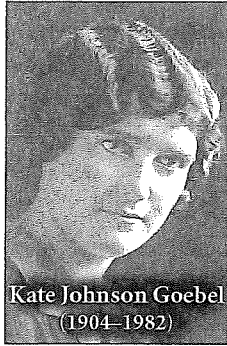


REMEMBERING CHRISTMAS

By Kate J. Goebel

From *I Remember: A Memoir of Homesteading Days in Oregon's Willamette Valley* (1977, 2001)

We never made much of birthdays; with big families you couldn't. Can't remember anyone having birthday cake when we were young, though I do remember Christmas. It was probably our biggest holiday.



Kate Johnson Goebel
(1904-1982)

The Christmas program and tree at school was a community project. Some men got a big tree on Christmas Eve, and women trimmed it, using real candles, each set in a little holder that was clamped to a branch. These, along with all the decorations, made a beautiful tree. We never thought of the fire hazard.

There were no extras or toys as kids have now. Parents brought at least one present for each of their children. When Christmas came we tried to have some little thing for their socks, mostly some candy and nuts or cookies. These were passed out by Santa Claus.

Christmas Goods at Brown's

Dolls, toys, albums, toilet cases, fancy dishes for Christmas at Brown's. Come and see my Christmas display. Everybody welcome at Brown's store. — The Willamette News (December 19, 1902)

At home we didn't have a tree but hung our socks and stockings along the wall and went to bed. The next morning after we had examined our socks and stockings—of course, spoiling all thoughts of breakfast—Dad brought out the big wooden bucket of candy.

It was divided in sections with different kinds of candy: hard mix, gum drops, sugar creams, and chocolate drops, besides all the nuts. We ate all we wanted and had all the candy we wanted for a week or more.

Holiday Specialties • Christmas Novelties

Something novel and useful for young or old, single or married. We have just what you want. Sherman & McLaren — The Willamette News (December 14, 1906)

Besides the candy and nuts, we got very little in the way of presents. Most families thought Christmas presents were for little kids. Adults had dinner and some went to church.

When my brother Luther [Johnson] was grown and working out, he sent presents to us little kids. To me he gave a doll—my one and only doll. It was a beautiful doll, with a china head and curly hair.

Its dress was beautiful, too, dainty blue cloth trimmed with lace, tucks, and ruffles. I loved that doll, and when I took her out of the box where I kept her, I wondered if she was real or would she disappear as in a dream.

Mom [Dollie Johnson] told me I shouldn't be selfish and to let the other kids play with her, too. When the doll's head was broken, I kept the body and played with her as before, but I cried a long time. Mom planned to get a new head for my doll, but there was no money for such things.



Luther Johnson
(1892-1967)



Dollie Johnson
(1870-1958)

Christmas Is Coming!

And the thought of what presents to get your wives and sweethearts is beginning to trouble you. With our splendid stock of general merchandise we can stop your troubles and satisfy the most particular buyers with suitable presents for grown people and the little folks as well... It is a silent but constant reminder of the giver and something that your friends will remember you by. Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year. Shell & Co. — The Willamette News (December 14, 1906)

Don't forget the Christmas dinner at the Golden Rule [Hotel] for 35 cents. — The Willamette News (December 21, 1906)
