

Photo's or Negatives of G.B. Joslin —  
Early day Palouse photographer



# The Bunchgrass Historian

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Summer 1980

## Logging and Lumbering Along the Palouse River



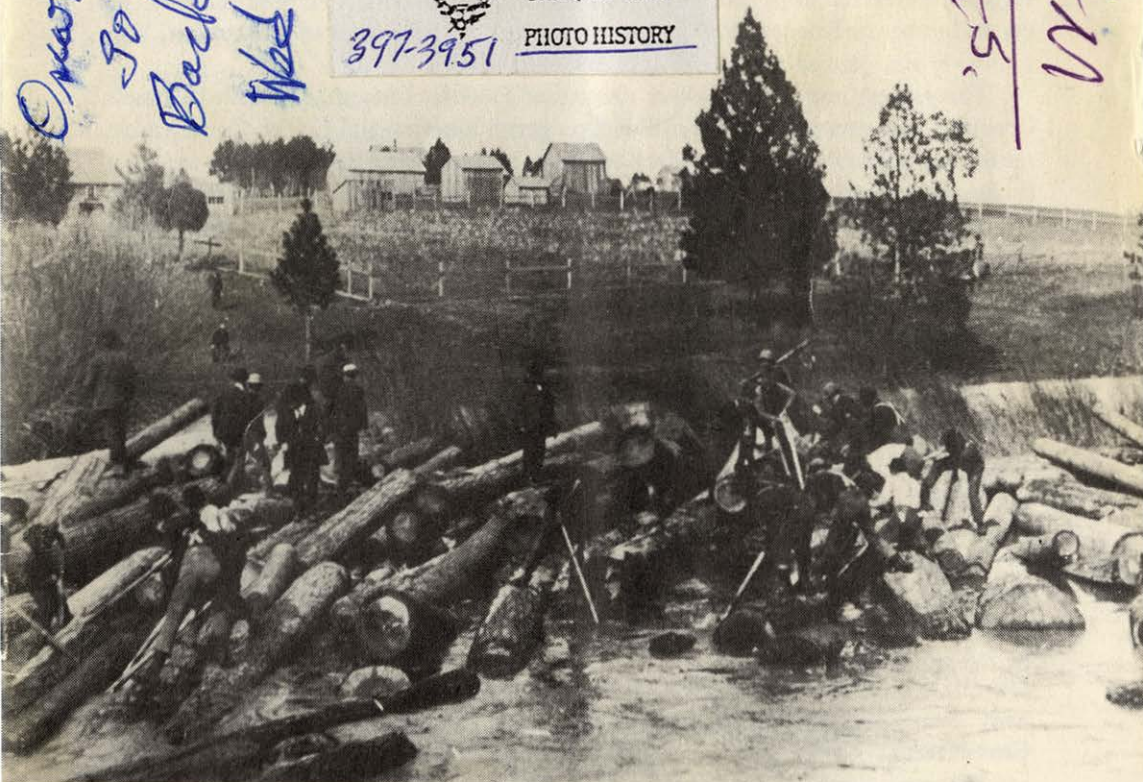
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PHOTO HISTORY

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Lumberjacks breaking up a log jam at Palouse, about 1905.

Published quarterly in March, June, September and December during the calendar year by the Whitman County Historical Society, at P.O. Box 67, Colfax, Washington 99111 to further an interest in a rich and wonderful heritage by sharing memories of those days of early settlement in the bunchgrass country. Subscription-member rates are \$5.00 year. **Current and back issue copies are available and may be obtained by writing to Fred Bohm, S.W. 405 State, Pullman, Wash. 99163.**

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## In This Issue

We have attempted here to present a brief, but, admittedly, incomplete look at the important role of the lumbering industry along the Palouse River. For a more detailed examination of the beginnings, growth and demise of lumbering in the Palouse, the reader is directed to the WSU Master's Thesis (unpublished) of R. W. Swanson, titled "A History of Logging and Lumber on the Palouse River, 1870-1905," 1958 and contemporaneous, local and regional newspapers.

As the settlers rushed in to take up new homes in the Palouse, the need for building materials far out ran the capacity of the lumber mills to supply these needs. Hence, many settlers had to be content for a year or two to live in soddies, dugouts and log cabins until the mills could turn out rough lumber to meet their requirements. To obtain lumber sufficient to build a one-room shack (see **Bunchgrass Historian**, Vol. 3, No. 4) was deemed a stroke of good fortune.

The earliest lumber mills were situated at Palouse, Lincoln, also called Chase's Crossing, now part of the Durwin Lange property; Elberton and Colfax. Considerable timber was available for a while along the banks of the Palouse River, but this was soon exhausted, necessitating the logging of timber from the upper reaches of this stream.

Lumber was also badly needed in the early Palouse country settlements for sidewalks, sewer pipe, bridges and even for an oil-well drilling rig at Rosalia.

We are fortunate in having acquired many fine photographs of the early lumber mills and present them here.

## Hail and Farewell

With this issue your Editor terminates his active editorship of the **Bunchgrass Historian**. Having been a member of the staff since its inception in March, 1973, under June Crithfield, Editor, it seems appropriate to turn the duties over to someone else. Dr. Fred Bohm, a Washington State University Library Specialist, has accepted this responsibility as of June 1, 1980. I am sure that he would appreciate the same cooperation and support that you have given to June Crithfield and to me. Dr. Bohm can be contacted by writing to him at S. W. 405 State Street, Pullman, WA 99163, or by telephone (334-2241).

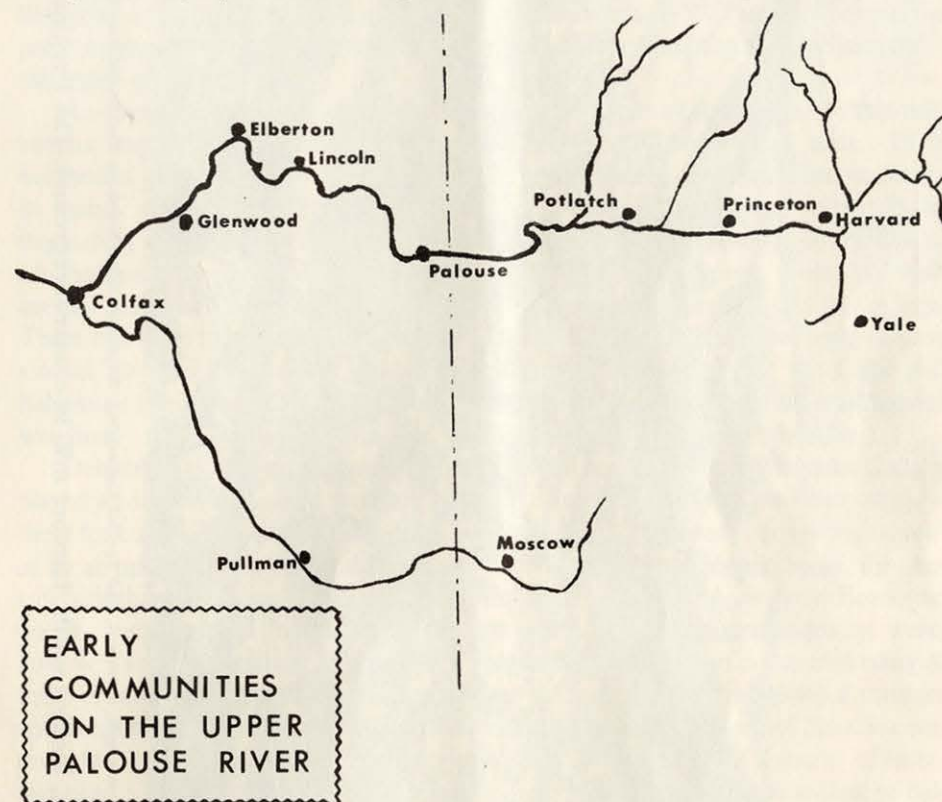
#### Correction:

We regret that in the spring issue of the **Historian** the names of Louise Leendertsen and June Crithfield were misspelled.

# Logging and Lumbering in Whitman County, 1871-1905

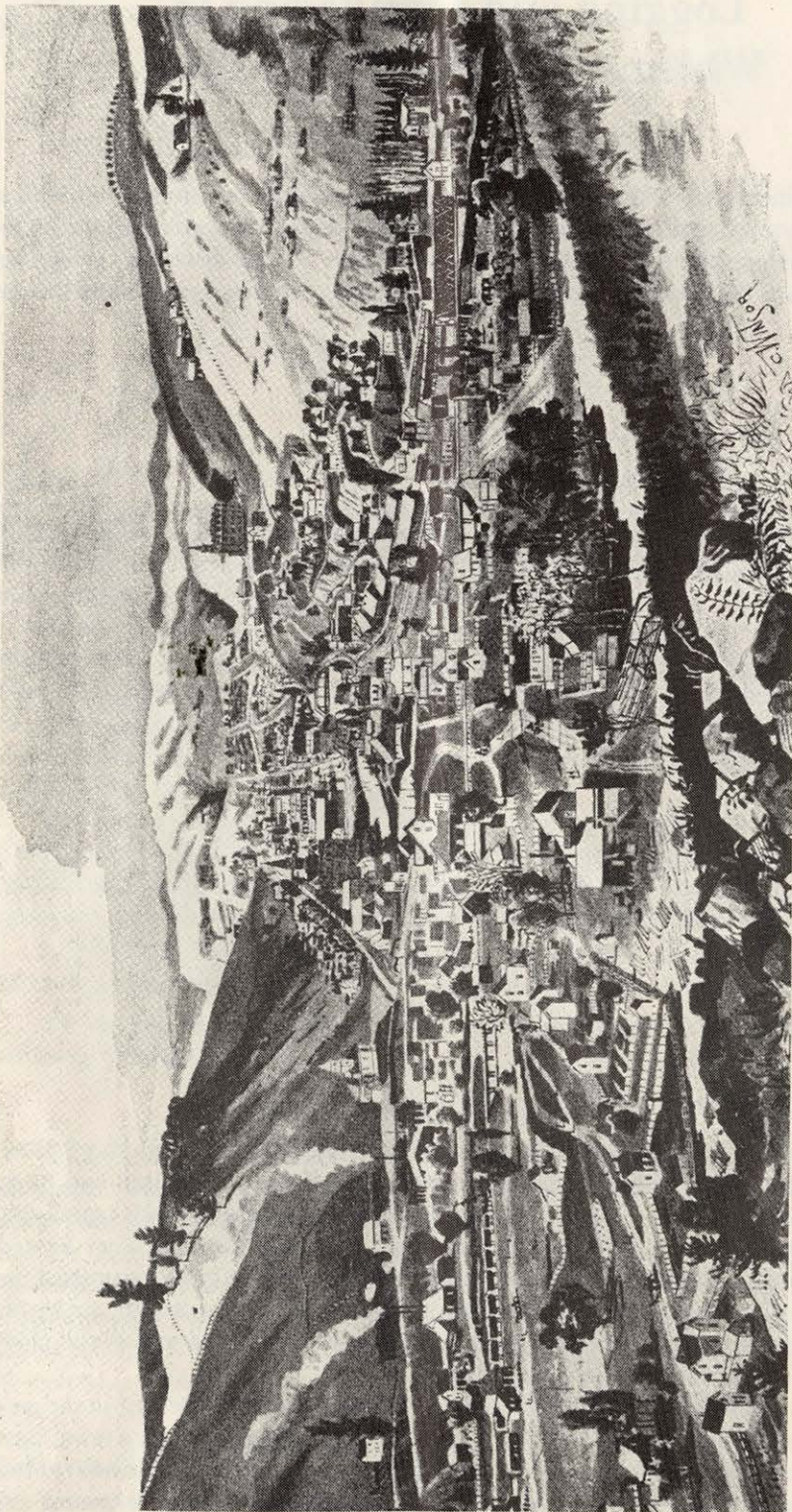
By Fred C. Bohm

In the final thrust of the westward movement that occurred after the Civil War, a plentiful source of timber for construction proved to be nearly equal in importance to regional development as cheap land and transportation. The earliest efforts at logging were, of course, adjuncts of farming and other activities. This was particularly true in



the Pacific Northwest. But when settlers gradually began to move into the Palouse region after the late 1860's, a market developed for a more organized and more specialized lumber trade. To meet the demand, eager entrepreneurs, with capital that usually failed to measure up to their enthusiasm, arrived in the area. They located sources of timber surrounding the headwaters of the Palouse River and constructed the small saw mills that soon dotted the river's banks. H. S. Hollingsworth, Anderson Cox, and James Perkins were such men. In 1871 they installed a mill at the place where the forks of the Palouse come together.

The mill established by Hollingsworth and his associates was the first in the area and the partners, hopeful that they would make a quick fortune, laid out a town, then named it after the Vice President of the United States, Schuyler Colfax. In 1877, Martin Sexton built another saw mill in Colfax. By 1880 his mill alone was turning out over 100,000 board feet of lumber annually.



—Courtesy Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections. Reprinted from *Northern Pacific Railway Company Northwest Magazine* September-October, 1892.

**View of Colfax, Washington, looking south. Lumber mill in center foreground. The Perkins House can be seen in the far right of the center.**

Other businessmen in the Palouse were quick to challenge the supremacy of these two mills. C. A. Farnsworth and a certain "Mr. Worley" built both a saw mill and a lumber yard in Colfax in 1878. The year 1882 witnessed the construction of the L. J. Schields mill, as well as the sale of the Farnsworth establishment to the Vanderberg-Twig partnership.

The town of Palouse also became the site of several important logging and lumbering concerns. Sexton and Codd built a mill there in the early 1880's; by 1883 W. L. Powers had completed his mill in that community. The Powers mill history is interesting because it illustrates so well the fate of many of the early Palouse logging concerns. Powers stayed in business for about five years, then sold out to Zerngibl and Schuman in the late 1880's. Shortly, J. K. McCornak and G. W. Petticord bought the property and reorganized it as the Palouse River Lumber Company in the aftermath of the Panic of 1893-1896.

An examination of the records of these early lumber ventures reveals that mill owners and organizers financed their operations on a very small scale. Their businesses, as illustrated by the case of the Powers mill, often went bankrupt, or changed hands frequently. Beyond this, the early Palouse lumbermen often found themselves at odds with one another. A classic case occurred in 1895. James Ewart, who had recently purchased the bankrupt Colfax Lumber Company, contracted with another firm, the Colfax Boom Company, to transport and store 900,000 feet of logs. These logs were to be "driven" down the Palouse River to Colfax. A payment dispute ensued, Ewart's logs became intermingled with those belonging to the Codd and Ballantine firms, then his timber went into receivership. After litigation a settlement was finally reached. (See pages 8-9 for legal documents relating to this affair.)

Despite all of these problems, the mills of what was to become Whitman County played an important role in the lives of many communities. They provided employment for hundreds of men. Community populations in Colfax and Palouse were swelled by an influx of transient lumbermen and their families. An economic boom, the likes of which these towns would not see again, resulted from lumbering activity. Economic booms, such as those that followed the nineteenth century logging industry, were, however, a mixed blessing. The people of Palouse and Colfax soon discovered many of these prosperity-related problems. But despite the fact that loggers' personal conduct and social habits shocked and offended the more permanent residents of Palouse communities, loggers also amazed residents and, on occasion, provided a source of entertainment. One Palouse resident, for example, tells of a logger who was willing to risk his life for a "bottle of whiskey." He wagered that he could ride a log over the spillway of the retainer dam in Palouse. Handshakes followed, money was laid down. The man jumped on a selected log, rode it over the spillway, and, apparently, collected his prize.

The details of the early log runs are described in detail in Garret D. Kincaid's **Palouse in the Making**.

"Logs were cut in the winter and the skid started early in the spring when the mountain snows swelled the Palouse. A million feet down to the Palouse mills and on to Colfax was a gigantic task of 40 to 60 men working three weeks to get the logs to the mill here (in Palouse) and about 45 or 60 days to get them to Colfax.

"During the drives around 400 men, many of them localites, were on the job. Most loggers were huge, husky men although strength was not the main requisite of a prime logger after the tree was felled. To get the logs down the river required men with brains and nimble legs. The logs were rolled into the river

and floated down until they formed a jam. The loggers then had the hazardous task of climbing across the mass of logs and breaking the jam until the logs were once again on their way down stream.

"The men would punch and pry into the pile of middle stream logs with their poles, or peeveys, and then try to escape with their lives as the jam burst and the released logs flew into the air and made a maelstrom of the river. The loggers usually tried to make a dive for shore as the logs crashed pell-mell down the river, but if they failed, they must know how to ride the logs into the next jam. The loggers usually received from \$3 to \$4.50 a day."

The year 1906 marked the beginning of the end for the Whitman County lumber mills. In that year the big Potlatch mill, financed by Weyerhaeuser family money, was opened. The new facility, heralded as the largest and most modern in the world, either bought up or drove out of business its tiny Whitman county competition. Ironically, Palouse mills sawed the lumber for the Potlatch buildings and Palouse kilns baked the bricks for Potlatch foundations. Despite this new competition, Palouse river mills did not cease operations immediately. Logs continued to be brought down the river until 1910 when the machinery from the last mill, in the city of Palouse, was sold and moved to Potlatch and to Montana. Lumbering in Whitman county was, in the end, a brief thirty-five year interlude in the area's history. Yet the small local mills filled a vital need in area development until they were forced to give way to the modern plant at Potlatch and to the massive amount of Weyerhaeuser capital that financed it. □

## Agreement Between John C. Davenport and J. A. Perkins

Know all men by these presents that whereas in consideration that John C. Davenport should expend large sums of money in building a mill on the South East quarter of South west quarter of Sec. eleven Township sixteen North of range no. forty three east. And in digging and constructing a race and flume conducting water across my land in said section of land and to induce the expenditure on the part of said Davenport of said money I agreed gave license and perpetual right to said Davenport to use so much of my land as was necessary and convenient [sic] to dig and keep in repair all ditches and dikes and construct all necessary and convenient [sic] flumes to convey water across my land as a motive power to such mill or mills as said Davenport or his successor in interest should construct and whereas the said Davenport has now complied with his part of said agreement in all respects and in faith of my said agreement and license has constructed a mill race and flumes as aforesaid. No [w] I. J. A. Perkins and Sarah J. Perkins his wife do hereby grant convey and confirm unto the said John C. Davenport and his heirs forever the right to use so much of my the said J. A. Perkins said land and in the place now used for a ditch race and flumes as may be necessary or convenient [sic] to conduct all water for a motive power for said mill and such other mill or mills as may hereafter be constructed and to improve and repair the said ditch race and flumes or enlarge the same. To have and to hold unto him the said John C. Davenport his heirs and assigns forever for his and their use. Witness our hands and seals hereto set and affixed this 23rd day of June One thousand Eight hundred and Seventy Seven.

Attest Robt. Ewart  
D. S. Broman

J. A. Perkins  
Sarah J. Perkins

Book of Deeds, Whitman County, W. T. Book A, p. 121.

## Agreement Between John C. Davenport and Sexton and Codd

This agreement made and entered into between John C. Davenport party of the first part and Martin J. Sexton and William Codd parties of the second part Witnesseth that whereas the part of the first part has heretofore had the exclusive right and domain in and to a certain dam Pond Mill race and flume situated in Whitman County Washington Territory near the town of Colfax and Palouse river on Sec. 11 T 16 N R43 E.W.M. and has permitted the party of the second part to use the same to float logs to their saw mill through the same subject to be terminated at any time by the will of the party of the first part. and the party of the second part being desirous to obtain a more permanent right or privilege it is therefore agreed by said parties as follows:

That the parties of the second part shall hereafter have the right and privilege of floating logs in said pond and race and in any change made in said pond or race of enlargement thereof provided that the part of the second part shall not float logs in the same to such an extent or at such times or in such manner as to prevent the party of the first part to have a sufficient flow of water to his mill or to any mill or mills hereafter erected as he shall require for the use of such mill or mills, or in such times or manner as to endanger or damage said dams race or flumes. In consideration of which the party of the second part is to be at one half the expense of keeping said dams race & flumes in repair the flume below the saw mill is not included in the above agreement. The said privilege of the party of the second part shall not be construed to the right to float any articles in said flume except saw logs to be sawed by the saw mill of the party of the second part.

Signed in presence of  
W. H. Davenport

John C. Davenport  
Martin J. Sexton  
William Codd

S. J. Boon

Filed and recorded July 6, 1877.

Book of Deeds, Whitman County, W. T. Book A, p. 121.

## Open Letter To The Citizens Of Colfax By William Codd

To the Citizens of Colfax:  
Gentlemen:

In answer to the article in the Daily Commoner of the 14th inst., entitled, "An open letter," I will say, that the sudden and unexpected flood of Sunday night and Monday last was the highest water ever seen in the North Palouse river at this time of the year. Everything in the North Palouse has been swept away by the flood, including two of the county bridges. The towns of Palouse and Elberton were submerged to a depth of from one to five feet and the oldest settlers in Palouse say that it was the highest water even known there at any season of the year. Now, Mr. Ewart in his article seems to have overlooked all of these facts and would have you believe that all the damage of property in the North end of the city was due to my carelessness in not having my logs properly boomed in the pond of the Colfax Milling Company, where we have always held logs in safety even in the spring freshets. When the dam gave way and let the water and logs down the channel where the imaginary clay street is marked out

on the map of Perkins & Prescott's addition to the City of Colfax, the logs had gone by only a short distance when they lodged securely against the bridge that spanned the channel at or near the Vanderberg place, and would have done very little damage had they been left there. No sooner had the logs lodged, than Messrs. Ewart, Smith and Magill began cutting the bridge and prying the logs loose, which sent them down the channel, tearing out sidewalks and fences and doing other damage. A second time they attempted to start the logs when the honorable city mayor, fearing that great damage might be done to the city pumping plant, ordered them to desist in their work of destruction. When they found out they could not carry out their designs they attacked the mayor, and had it not been for the presence of two of the city police the results might have been serious. Now, gentlemen, I ask what was their motive in cutting the bridge and starting the logs down, when they were securely lodged against the bridge and had done all the damage they could. If it was with a view of protecting their property they certainly used very poor judgment, but it is my opinion and the opinion of scores of spectators, that their object [not clear] the logs down against the railroad trestle from whence they would have to be immediately sent through into the North Palouse, and would have been a total loss to me.

Wm Codd

Colfax Commoner, December 22, 1893, p.1.

## Contract Between the Pelton Brothers and William Codd

Made in November, 1894

Witnesseth:—that the parties of the first part for the consideration hereinafter mentioned do hereby agree to cut, haul, and drive to the boom of Wm Codd in the North Palouse river at Colfax, Wash., Fifteen hundred thousand feet of good merchantable saw logs, said logs now the property of Wm Codd and standing on the following described claims all situated adjoining the North Palouse river, Latah County, Idaho, as follows:

All of the merchantable saw timber now standing on the Kincaid claim and the claim adjoining, being the timber left by Sherman and Ballard.

sd.—All of the merchantable timber on the Hargrave claim down to 12 in. diameter. After the timber on the above claims is cut and skidded then enough is to be cut from the Wolford claim at such places as the party of the second part shall designate to complete the contract of 1,500,000 feet. The logs to be cut in length to suit the party of the second part, to be well trimmed and all tamarack logs, long butted, and all logs marked XX chopped through the bark and into the log. The logs to be scaled by a competent scaler and the parties of the first part to board scaler free of charge while scaling logs for the above described logs delivered as stated. The party of the second part hereby agrees to pay \$3.50 per M. for all logs taken from the Kincaid and adjoining claim, and \$2.75 for all logs taken from the Hargrave and Wolford claims, payments as follows, Viz: One Dollar (\$1.00) per M. as fast as each 100,000 feet is banked, and \$1.50 per M. when the logs are delivered in the boom, the balance to be closed up by note one-half when logs are delivered into boom, note due Nov. 1st, 1895.

The parties of the first part to deliver the logs in the boom on such stage of water as party of the second part shall deem safe. The parties of the first part further agree not to engage in any other contract nor mix the above described logs with any other drive that may be in the North Palouse river in the year 1895. In case any logs are left in the river they are to be scaled C. 400 per M.

Witness to signatures

B. McNeeley

E. H. Pelton

U. S. Pelton

Forest Pelton

Wm Codd

Pelton et al. v. Codd, 5662 Whitman County Superior Court (1895), complaint, p. 1 and 2.

## THE BEST LUMBER ALWAYS FOUND

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### Zirngibl & Sherman's Mills

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We keep always in stock all kinds of

Rough and Dressed Lumber, Lath, Shingles and  
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running into our Lumber Yard enables  
us to fill all of our orders from all  
points with promptness and dispatch.*

A SQUARE DEAL TO ALL.

PALOUSE CITY

WASHINGTON

From the Palouse City News, January 2, 1890

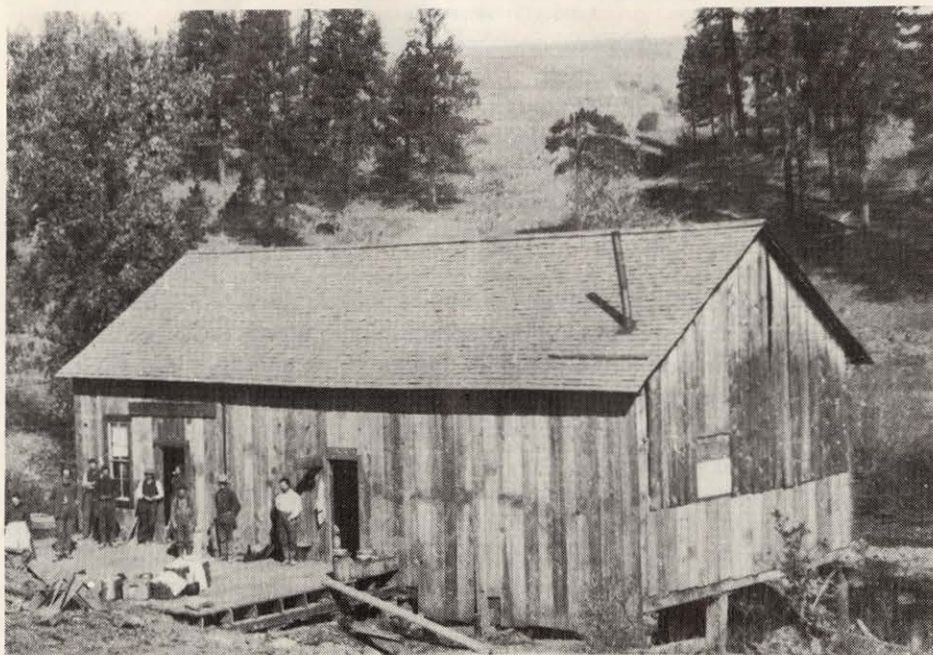
In 1875, a short distance upriver, Farnsworth and Worley built a sawmill powered by steam. Logs from the stands of virgin timber nearby could be floated to the sawmill and stored behind a low dam constructed for the purpose. Later, after Farnsworth disposed of his mill to Van Twig and Patten, he formed a partnership with Perry McConnell to haul freight from Walla Walla and Almota to Palouse and to the mines in Idaho.—J. B. West personal history, in press.

Three sawmills, the Palouse City Sawmill operated by Andrew Clyde, near the Northern Pacific Depot; that of Zirngibl and Sherman on the big flat west of the city, and one belonging to H. A. Skeels and E. J. Langdon upriver from the old Breeding Mill.—J. B. West, Ibid.

W. H. Bassett had a sash, door and blind factory and a planing mill. W. F. Williams and M. D. Ettinger manufactured sashes, door and moldings, etc. At the Skeel and Langdon plant.—Ibid.



Warehouses and sawmill at Elberton, 1888.



The old sawmill at Elberton in 1888.

Photographs on this page and on page 13 courtesy of Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections.

## Lumberjacks Flim-Flam Elberton Saloonkeeper and End Up in Jail

By J. B. West

Much has been written about the log drives by which logs were transported from the Idaho forest to the sawmills along the Palouse River as far downstream to Colfax, but stories about them keep coming to light. The logs had to be decked and ready to roll into the water in the Spring as soon as the runoff from the melting snows began, and the drive had to be rushed through while the water was still high. The logs cut from the virgin timber were large enough to bear a man's weight in the water, and it was the men's job to keep the logs together and keep them moving.

Power boats had not come into use then, and the river men rode the logs. Their only equipment was a pair of corked boots, pike poles and peavies. The pike poles, which had a spike in one end, were not only used to push the logs along, but helped a man keep his balance as he ran along a log, or jumped from one to another. The peavy was used to roll a log if it floated into shallow water or to separate them if they began to jam together. If a jam did form, and could not be separated by hand, a charge of powder had to be set near the key logs to blast them apart, so they could float freely again.

The river men were chosen from the logging crews. They had to be young, agile men who were chosen because they could endure the long hazardous hours of work with no days off. They were always soaking wet from the chilling snow water. They often fell into the water and their clothes never had a chance to dry. They were drinking men, which was one reason that there were no payday until the drive ended.

The last Palouse River Spring drive occurred after the W. I. & M. Railroad was built and it went to the Codd sawmill in Colfax. To pass through Palouse the logs had to go through the spillways of two Potlatch Lumber Company dams, one at a time, which was probably one reason why the P. L. Company contracted to deliver them to Colfax.

When the drive arrived at Elberton one evening the river crew gathered in the saloon there. There was very little money in their pockets, but they did manage to have a few drinks around, which only whetted their thirst. Then they went into a huddle and devised a scheme to obtain some hard liquor. According to plan, two of the biggest members began quarreling, which soon led to blows. The rest of the crew began to take sides and it looked to the two bartenders that there would soon be a free-for-all which would tear the saloon apart. They both left their stations behind the bar to separate the two. With that, a couple of the loggers went back of the bar and began gathering up the bottles, while the rest of them locked arms and surrounded the four in the middle. As soon as the thieves got out the door, the fight ended and the whole crew followed them.

When the saloonkeeper discovered what had happened he sent for the Sheriff at Colfax. Communications and transportation not being what it is today, by the time the Sheriff and his deputies arrived in Elberton most of the liquor had been consumed and the crew was gloriously drunk. They were rounded up and taken to jail.

When the Potlatch Lumber Company officials were told what had happened they had to take action, as time was running out. After the stolen liquor was paid for by the officials, the men were all released on bail so they could go back to work. You can bet there were some deductions from their paycheck come payday.—J. B. West—**Memories of the Palouse, Palouse Republic**, Sept. 5, 1974. □



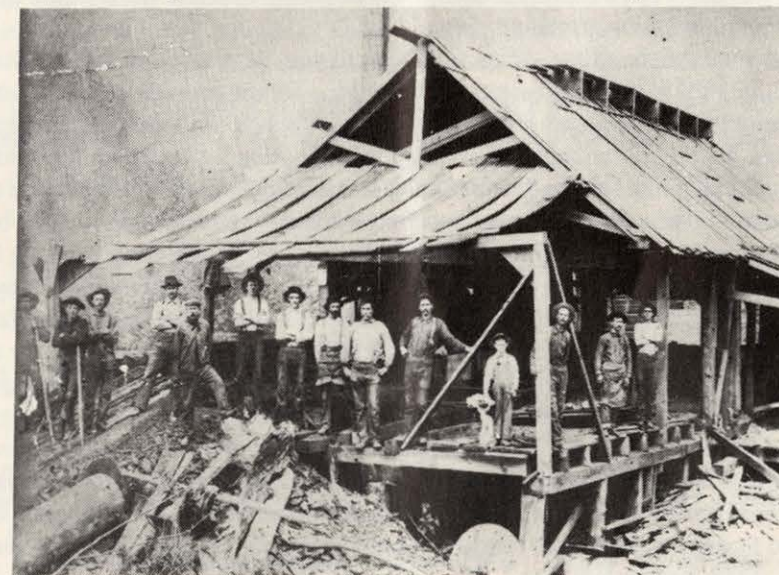
—Photo Courtesy of Boyd Beeson  
Logs were not always delivered to the mill by water. Here a group of loggers and two small horsemen pose with their team and lumber wagon.

## Lumbering In Whitman County

By Edith E. Erickson

"The first business venture, other than farming, in Colfax and probably all of Whitman County was a sawmill. James A. Perkins, H. S. Hollingsworth, and Anderson Cox constructed one and had it running by September 12, 1871. Rumor has it that the first lumber was used to build Hollingsworth a two-room shack.

"The mill was a primitive affair. It was written in some early histories that it was



Averill Mill, Elberton, [n.d.]

known as a tri-weekly mill, because the saw was so slow that it would go up one day and come down the next. Nevertheless, it proved to be a great blessing to the pioneers.

"It seems that the early sawmills served other functions besides the manufacture of lumber. In Colfax the site for the school was chosen by a committee which was appointed at a mass meeting of citizens, which was held in the sawmill. The first Democratic convention of the county was also held in the sawmill in 1872. The mill provided fresh clean sawdust to spread on the floor of the schoolhouse for the first wedding, that of J. A. Perkins and Jennie Ewart, held in Colfax in 1873. From about 1888 or 1890 until 1906, the sawdust from the mill was used to power the first electric light plant."

"Other sawmills soon began to spring up. Cox died in March 1872 and Perkins sold out to Hollingsworth who soon sold to John C. Davenport. According to a September 16, 1904 **Colfax Gazette**, Davenport sold to Codd and Sexton in 1877. Some other mills were Ellsworth and Blair, also in North Colfax which later was sold and named The Colfax Lumber Company. Codd and Sexton added a mill at Palouse City. It is said by various newspapers that Palouse had three steam sawmills in 1887. Elberton was also a lumber center. It was recorded that at least five mills were located near or in Elberton at various times. One of them was the Chase's mill, another a horse-

**Footnote:** Passages in quotation marks excerpted from R. W. Swanson's Washington State University Master's Thesis titled "A History of Logging and Lumbering on the Palouse River, 1870-1905," 1958. [Ed.]

powered type mill last operated on Union Flat and then moved to Elberton by Mr. Wilbur and Captain James Ewart, a third was C. E. Averill who in 1895 had a crew of 25 men and was reported by the **Spokesman Review** as one of the largest in the state. Most mills changed hands often or moved nearer the timber.

An important phase of logging was the log drives. These started shortly after the first mill was established. At first the logs were floated only a short distance from the river banks near town. "In the fall of 1871 a dam was built at the north end of Colfax and in the spring a boom for holding logs was built just above it. As more mills were built the log drives came from much greater and greater distances."

The log drives often created excitement. The logs of different mills would become mixed. Fights and lawsuits would result.

"The speed of the drives varied from year to year depending on the condition of the river. In 1892 it probably took the shortest time for the drive. It was completed in just eleven days. Some years it took as long as six weeks. If the water was too high the logs would drift onto the banks where they would become stranded and it would be necessary to skid them back to the main current, causing delay and extra expense to the mill owners. A method of preventing logs from becoming stranded was to place booms along the river at points where there was a danger of the logs getting over the bank. The **Spokesman-Review** on December 3, 1899 reported that a force of men were at work placing a strong boom in the pond above the dam near the water mill at Palouse and others were building booms along the river at places where there was danger of the logs getting over the banks and being stranded when floating down the next spring.

"Jams sometimes occurred on the drive. These developed when the lead logs in a drive would become stranded on a sand bar at one of the narrow bends of the river or hung up at a dam. The result was a tangled mass of logs which would only be broken by the use of powder. This was one of the most dangerous jobs in the logging business. Men had to crawl out onto the tangled mass and plant dynamite at strategic points in order to shake the key logs free.

"Sometimes traffic problems arose. This happened when the Palouse-bound drives got in ahead of those destined for Elberton and Colfax. In the spring of 1893, the Palouse Mill Company sold 500,000 feet of logs to L. T. Averill for his mill at Elberton in order to clear the river so that the Codd drive could get through.

"At times the demand for lumber was so great that it became necessary to make a second drive in the fall. This was a rather precarious undertaking since that time of year the river was relatively low. All was dependent upon heavy fall rains to raise the level of the river to a sufficient height.

Such a drive was described in the November 17, 1897 **Spokesman-Review** when it said, "The Palouse River Lumber Company started a drive of 350,000 feet of logs from Deep Creek, about 20 miles above Palouse on Sunday. The logs were expected to arrive in Palouse tonight, (Friday). The river is high and the drivers are making better headway than was ever before known at this season of the year."

"Facilities for eating and sleeping were usually carried right along with the drive. Sometimes a small crew went ahead to a point where the drive was expected to reach by nightfall and establish a camp there. These were moved day to day. A driver for the Potlatch Lumber Company's Boise camp had this to say about the Palouse drives, 'We didn't have a wanigan. We would eat here or we would eat there, wherever we happened to be. The food and supplies were carried on our backs. We slept anywhere we were when night came.' "

Weather not only effected the loggers but also other people near the logging area. "In the spring of 1892 Colfax had one of its many floods. The **Palouse News**

reported, 'At Colfax the results of the flood were more disastrous. Wednesday night the boom at Ellsworth's sawmill broke and 300,000 feet of logs started on a journey to the Snake River. A gang of men were sent off on two handcars to Winona Junction, where they attempted to head off the truant logs by a boom.' Apparently Ellsworth's crew was unable to retrieve the logs for he soon sold out to the Colfax Lumber Company.

"When Colfax suffered another flood the **Commoner** had this to say, 'The North Palouse River ran wild long before daybreak Monday morning, sweeping bridges from its path and coming like a deluge onto the North End District of Colfax. The main channel of the river had a boom of about a million feet of logs belonging to William

## PALOUSE CITY LUMBER AND MANUFACTURING CO. SKEELS, CLYDE & CO., Prop's.

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HOUSE FRONTS OF ANY DESIGN; SASH AND DOORS OF ANY SIZE OR SHAPE; MOULDING, RUSTIC, FLOORING, AND IN FACT ANY PIECE OF WOOD USED IN THE MOST COSTLY MODERN STRUCTURES.

**A NEW FEATURE.** We dress all kinds of common lumber as it leaves the saw.  
IT MATTERS NOT WHAT YOU WANT, IT WILL PAY YOU TO GET OUR PRICES.

## At the old Sexton & Codd site, Palouse City, Wash.

From the *Palouse City News*, January 2, 1890.

Codd. Half of them were whirled down stream and the other half tossed from the overflow of the mill race into Perkins' Flat, which had become a sea of water. There was a full 10 acres of logs floating along with piles of cordwood and heaps of rubbish. During that same flood George Smith started to break up a log jam near the city pumping station. The logs had lodged there, and it was deemed best by City Engineer Roberts to keep them secure, as to break up the pack and set them grinding over new ground might carry away the conduits of the sewage system. Mr. Smith was so persistent in his attempt to break the jam that Officers Carter and Lennon, along with Mayor Chadwick, had to pay a visit to the pump house to compell Smith to desist.

"The logs did considerable damage to property in the North End of Colfax, and some animosity developed between several local citizens and Codd. Codd answered the charges in an open letter that was published in the December 22, 1893 **Commoner**. The gist of his reply was that the logs had been secured as well as in any previous year and that it was the intensity of the flood that had caused them to get loose.

"People also caused each other problems. At times, conflicts arose between the mill owners and the local citizens. One such case involved William Codd and several citizens of Colfax—C. M. Chapman, W. F. Hickman, Samuel Remster, Mr. Bolan and Mrs. Mary Shaw—upon whose land the Palouse River had overflowed. A dam had been constructed across the Palouse River to force the water into the mill race. For

several years drift and logs and melting snow in the mountains had caused the stream to back up and overflow its banks. This flooding was so bad that the complainants were forced to abandon their homes. In the spring of 1899 Codd began to elevate the existing dam in order to cause the water to rise higher—3 or 4 feet—to increase the amount of boom space. The petitioners argued that this would cause the water to flood them again particularly as the dike was in poor shape in several places. The court ordered Codd to raise the level of the river no higher than one foot below the top level of the lowest point on the dike, unless he filled in the low places created by the last flood. He might then raise it as high as the general level of the dike.”

In 1896 the Colfax Lumber Company was involved in business problems. The firm had hired David Hennessey, a veteran driver, as foreman of its drive of about 15 men. They were to be paid between four and five dollars a day. However, they only got a small portion of the total. They filed suit for the remainder, requesting the sheriff to attach the logs.

“The whole problem arose out of the fact that the logs had been boomed by the Colfax Boom Company at the request of the Colfax Lumber Company and were being held by the Boom Company for payment of the boomage fees. The members of the Colfax Lumber Company maintained that they could not pay their debts until they received the logs and could begin filling their back orders. The Lumber Company was finally able to borrow the money from a local bank in order to pay the boomage fees and the wages of the crew.”

Another thing that often caused problems was the type of machinery that they had. the **Palouse News** gave this example, “While Sexton’s and Codd’s mill at Palouse City was running at great speed the fly-wheel went to pieces and caused the mill to be shut down. Workmen were at once employed. A wooden fly-wheel was made, and the mill was back running in a few days.”

The Codd name remained prominent in the lumber industry. The Colfax Boom Company was organized in 1893 to catch, boom, sort, raft, and hold logs, lumber and other timber products in the North Palouse River and do general logging and real estate business. The capital stock was \$5,000 divided into 50 shares among six men, four of whom were Codd.

On September 28, 1883 Sexton and Codd entered into a co-partnership with John Moran. The firm’s name, in this enterprise, was Sexton, Codd and company and it was organized for the purpose of selling lumber in Kootenai County, Idaho. Apparently the venture was not successful, since the company was dissolved on August 4, 1884. Moran filed suit in the Whitman County Court to compel his erstwhile partners to satisfy the debts of the firm. He maintained that they had refused to do this, and that they had confiscated all of the assets of the firm. Eventually, Sexton sold out his interest in the firm and the property became exclusively that of William Codd.

Business must have been rather slack during the year of 1894, since Mr. Codd and his family went on an extended trip to their old home in Wisconsin. This was about April 9, right during the height of the log-drive season. He had had contractors working in the woods during the previous winter getting out logs and 358,000 feet had been delivered to the river bank and driven to Colfax. There is no indication that the mill had been in operation that year. The great panic of 1893 had a devastating effect upon the Palouse area. Mr. Codd in all probability had decided not to manufacture any lumber that year, expecting little construction because of the depression.

“Codd’s mill had a short run during the 1895 year. It opened April 15 with a half a crews and closed down on June 21 after having sawed 1,200,000 feet. It did not resume

operation until about March 11, 1896, when George Ball, ex-Palouse City lawyer, was hired as a sawyer. The legal business also must have been pretty slow. During the winter of 1900-1901, Codd was again engaged in rebuilding his sawmill. More than \$8,000 was spent on new machinery. That made it the most complete sawmill plant in the Inland Empire with a capacity of 50,000 feet per day. It resumed operation on April 10, but it ran with less than a full crew due to the fact that the new machinery would need to be broken in slowly.”

The production of lumber as such was only one of the functions carried on in Codd’s mill. In an advertisement in the **Commoner** in 1892, he stated that he manufactured all kinds of rough and dressed building material, did scroll sawing and turning and that he had a large stock of cedar sashes and doors. One of his selling points was that his prices were lower than at any other point in the upper country.

Since the production of fruit, particularly apples, has become an important industry in the Palouse, the manufacture of fruit boxes developed into a necessary subsidiary. That the Codd’s mill was one of those which was engaged in this manufacture was proven by the report in the **Spokesman Review** of April 19, 1901 that stated, ‘During the fall Codd’s mill did a big business in making fruit boxes, and with the prospect for the biggest fruit crop in the history of the Palouse country this part of business will be one of importance this season.’

“Codd made his largest cut in history of the firm during the spring of 1904. A total of 5,000,000 feet of logs were hauled to the banks of the Palouse and driven down the river to Colfax.”

In September of 1904 the Potlatch Lumber Company of Palouse purchased the standing timber, logging outfit, and the sawmill from William Codd. The cash consideration was near \$350,000. The timber purchased by the Potlatch Company was located on 44 quarters of 11 sections of land situated on the headwaters of the Palouse and Potlatch Rivers. The price paid for the timber was at the rate of \$1 per 1000 feet. The logging outfit included in the sale was located in the timber on the upper Palouse and the sawmill situated at Colfax. The Potlatch Company continued to run the mill in Colfax for a few years.

William Codd had operated the mill for more than 27 years and accumulated an independent fortune. It was estimated to be in the neighborhood of \$300,000 with much of it invested in local real estate.□

M. J. Sexton opened his boom this week. It contained 400,000 feet of saw timber, which will be run to Colfax to be cut up.

**Palouse Gazette** (Colfax) Vol. 10, No. 26, March 18, 1887.

Wm. Cood [Codd] had sixty men on his drive when he started with it at the mouth of Gold Creek Sunday. He says it will take him two months to reach Colfax. [Ibid]

Wm. Codd and his forty-five hardy rivermen reached here on Tuesday with two million feet of logs. Mr. Codd expects to reach Colfax with his drive in about twenty days.

**Palouse Gazette** No. 28, April 1, 1887.

“The late George Draper, whose father took up land at a very early date a mile west of the Chase Mill, used to tell this story.—‘When I was 16, my father sent me to Chase’s Sawmill with a wagon and four horses for lumber and I thought I was a man.’”—**The Palouse Story**, 1962.

On the cover page this and the following five pages, photographs show very dramatically a spring log run at Palouse about 1905. All are from the Paul Bockmier collection.

*Page 94' 1850-1977*  
*Larry Stark —*



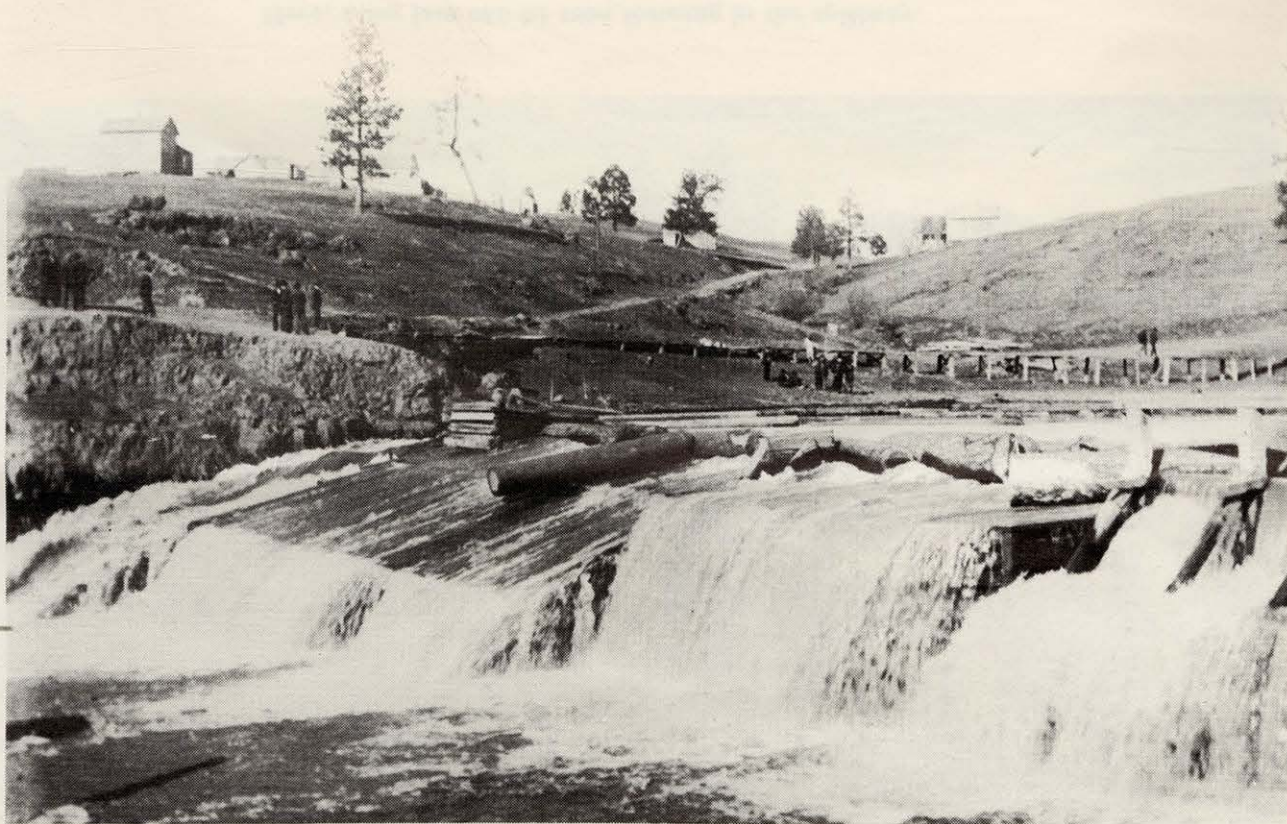
Water flooding over the large mill dam at the east end of Palouse.



Curious bystanders observe the beginning of the log run over the Palouse mill dam. Note the lumberjack with his "peavy."



Logs in this photograph are being collected below the dam.



Logs going over the spillway. Elevated wooden sidewalk seen in center background.



Here, a log jam can be seen forming in the spillway.



After the jam formed, it had to be broken up by blasting.



Potlatch Mill at Palouse, circa 1906. It was not long before this mill closed ending any major saw milling in Whitman County.

—Photo Courtesy Mrs. Victor Uptmor

See Sale - Colfax -  
Caul Buchanan's  
Director