

# LATAH LEGACY

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE LATAH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Inside: Moscow Elite---part 1  
Pioneers of Travel Routes  
Charles O. Brown



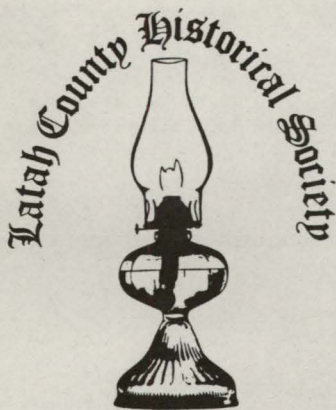
This Eastlake Style house located in Yamhill, Oregon, strongly influenced the design of the McConnell Mansion

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## MOSCOW ELITE ON THE EDGE OF THE FRONTIER (part 1)

by Joann C. Jones

The 30-year period from 1880 to 1910 was a time of transition for the Pacific Northwest. In 1880, it was still an isolated frontier which attracted relatively small numbers of settlers, found little use for its rich natural resources, and maintained its commercial contact with the rest of the world by sea. By 1910 the population of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho totaled more than 2,000,000, the economy was closely interlocked with that of the rest of the nation, and the general level of growth compared favorably with that of other sections.

The completion of northern transcontinental railways, ushering in a new day of easy and rapid transportation, was largely responsible for the population growth.<sup>1</sup>

The decade of the 1880s was a major turning point for the Pacific Northwest. Railroad connections were being made not only between major population centers such as St. Paul and Portland, Omaha and San Francisco, but also to inland areas including the Palouse country. In 1885 the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company brought a line into the Palouse country through Colfax, Pullman, and Moscow which facilitated rapid growth. Immigrants came from established communities in the East and Midwest as well as from Europe bringing refined social habits with them to this new frontier.

One family that immigrated to Moscow on the new railroad line was that of the Hon. W. J. McConnell, State Senator from Oregon. McConnell, his wife, Louisa, and their four children, William, Benjamin, Mary, and Olive, made the trip in late 1886. As the family settled themselves in the seats of the O.R.&N. railway car

they must have had many thoughts of their new home in the community of Moscow, Idaho, and the home they were leaving in Yamhill, Oregon. Like many immigrants to the Palouse country, they were moving east from an established area of the Pacific Northwest to a town in its infancy. The first white settlers, James Deakin, A. A. Lieuallen, John Russell, and Henry McGregor, had only sixteen years earlier divided a parcel of land four ways and started the town the McConnells were heading toward. Moscow had grown in those years and with the coming of the railroad the population would double from 1,000 in 1889 to 2,010 in 1891.<sup>2</sup> A main street with numerous commercial establishments was fulfilling the needs of its townspeople as well as those in the outlying area.

William McConnell was quite familiar with the commerce of Moscow since he had been an important part of its development. He first came to Moscow in 1878 when it was a small but growing trade center for the farm families in the area. He and J. H. Maguire opened a general merchandise store on the southeast corner of Main and First Streets and by 1883 McConnell had become a successful merchant and respected citizen of the area.<sup>3</sup> McConnell also had interests in the mercantile business and grain company in Pullman where he was in partnership with W. M. Chambers.<sup>4</sup> A newspaper article in the July 10, 1885, Moscow Mirror described McConnell as "having large interests in Moscow," and "a kind of financial godfather to the Moscow people." He came forward after "repeated calls" during the July 4th celebrations that year, and, according to the news reporter, told the people "he had left his home in Oregon to come to Moscow on the Fourth; he felt he had a right to be here; his great business





The McConnell house, c.1890, Mrs. McConnell standing in front with two daughters

interests here gave him a kind of complimentary ticket into the country." In that speech he assured the people that the railroad was going to come. And indeed it did come.

Between the years 1878 and 1886, McConnell had divided his time between his business interests in Moscow and his family in Yamhill. He must have felt some satisfaction as he rode the train that December day, 1886, knowing that now his business, home, and family would no longer be separated.

Mrs. McConnell, no doubt, was anxious to settle into her newly completed home. It had been built in the Eastlake Style which was currently quite popular on the east and west coasts. Charles Locke Eastlake, a British architect and furniture designer, had published a popular book entitled,

Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery, and Other Details in 1877. A house quite similar to the plan and design of the present McConnell Mansion had been built in Yamhill and surely was an inspiration to the McConnells. The home had similar bay windows, curved brackets supporting the eaves, sharp gables, and the tall narrow look of the Eastlake style. Numerous new homes were being built in Moscow in 1885 and 1886 in the eclectic Victorian styles but none so up-to-date as this. [In 1974 the W. J. McConnell house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The architecture was described in the following way:

Set on a large corner lot in Moscow, the McConnell house is a large, two-story clapboard dwelling of striking design. Despite alterations both inside and



out, the house retains its general style and character which is best described as Eastlake. The tall, narrow look favored in the 1880s is achieved in a series of two-story bays topped with sharp gables. The windows and doors are also quite tall, adding to the vertical effect. Band-sawn decoration is profuse, particularly in the gables, front porch and around the windows. Elaborage [sic] brackets, with curled edges and cut-out design, support the wide eaves, small roofs over the entryways and the narrow ledges which encircle the bays at midpoint.<sup>5]</sup>

The finest redwood and cedar lumber had been shipped from San Francisco to Portland, transferred to a riverboat and taken up the Columbia to The Dalles, Oregon, where it was loaded onto freight wagons.<sup>4</sup> Construction had begun in early summer on property purchased by McConnell in 1883. It was a parcel of the land originally settled by John Russell.

Moscow also awaited the arrival of this already socially prominent family. Page 3 of the Moscow Mirror, "Local Brevities," of 1886 kept everyone well informed about the progress of the house construction and the goings on of the family.

May 21: Hon. W. J. McConnell is in Moscow and intends to make his permanent home here.

July 2: Teams are busy hauling rock for the foundation of W. J. McConnell's new residence.

July 23: W. J. McConnell's house foundation is almost finished and indicates that a fine house will surmount it.

August 27: W. J. McConnell has a family residence in this city nearly finished of imposing structure. It occupies a prominent site overlooking the city. It is a two story building with a basement department. Its appearance indicates comfort and elegance and we are of the opinion that when it is finished it will be a structure of which Moscow may be proud.

October 22: As soon as this elegant residence which overlooks Moscow from the eminence upon which it is situated is completed, this useful and eminent citizen of Oregon will make this city his permanent home. We welcome him and his family among us. He is not a stranger to our people. . . .

The house was apparently finished by December 10 when the column announced, "W. J. McConnell will soon occupy his new residence."

The activities of other Moscow residents were also recorded by the Mirror. In August, 1885, the column's editor described C. B. Holt's house, in its nearly finished state, as an ornament to the town and informed the community that John Schafer had given the contract to erect a business house on the lot next to the Webbers.<sup>7</sup> In September, residents learned that one of the Lieuallen families had erected the "prettiest" porch in the country and Henry Dernham was building a "handsome" dwelling in the Park Addition.<sup>8</sup> Many of these families would soon be neighbors of the McConnells. That same month, Moscow citizens were encouraged to buy town lots soon if they wanted a home, for opportunities would not be as good in the future.<sup>9</sup> Moscow was thriving and a full page store advertisement which ran from September 18 through October 9, 1885, explained why. "Moscow is fired with new life and activity by the early completion of the railroad," which, consequently, allowed their mercantile business to offer the community many more trade items.

When the O.R.&N. train pulled into the handsome new station on the edge of Main Street on that Christmas Eve, 1886, the McConnells were met by Allen Ramstedt with a hay-filled bobsled. He transported them to their mansion where neighbors had dinner prepared for them. Two Christmas trees, one in the front parlor and one in the dining room, were decorated with tiny tallow candles. Senator McConnell was kept quite busy running from one tree to the other, making sure the branches did not catch on fire.<sup>10</sup> Neighbors at the housewarming no doubt included other



prominent Moscow families living in what has since come to be known as the Fort Russell Neighborhood. Their neighbors to the north were the George W. Howard family. Their large house with a gabled bay supporting a turret was built before 1885. Mr. Howard owned a boot and shoe

shop on Main Street.<sup>11</sup> Dr. James W. Reeder, a physician who came to Moscow around 1880, lived in a boxy two-story house to the east.<sup>12</sup> The William Baker family had recently moved into their new home on the corner lot of East B and Adams Streets. It was also a fine mansion with elaborate millwork, brackets, and patterned shingles accenting its steep gables. Mr. Baker was associated with his father and brother in the Baker-Clark Bank, Moscow's first bank.<sup>13</sup> Dr. Dorsey Baker, his father, had amassed a fortune in Walla Walla banking and was quite well known for building the first railroad, nicknamed the "Rawhide Railroad," which linked Walla Walla with the steamships on the Columbia.<sup>14</sup> William Kaufman and Henry Dernham, partners in the U.S. Wholesale and Retail Department Store, built large Victorian homes next to each other on East B Street in 1885.<sup>15</sup> To the northwest of the new mansion lived the Robert S. Browne family. The Brownes built a large home on East B Street with three enormous gables. The Moscow Mirror commented, "Robert S. Browne carries off the palm for just finishing one of the handsomest homes in Moscow."<sup>16</sup>

The McConnell home must have been as up-to-date on the interior as was its polychrome tan and reddish brown exterior. Furniture had been shipped in from Spokane Falls (Spokane) and Portland including a hardwood table with a marble top and a writing desk with a walnut burl top.<sup>17</sup> Two Eastlake style chairs and a settee made up an "art grouping" appropriate for use in the formal parlor. A large gold mirror with a wide gold frame hung over the fireplace mantel. The fireplace, designed to burn coal, was constructed by placing a thin veneer of Vermont marble over a steel frame, and then trimming it with gold leaf and black onyx. This Victorian technique of making something



William J. McConnell

look more elegant and expensive than it really was, was used in other parts of the house as well. Much of the woodwork and wood flooring was made from local, readily available woods such as pine and fir which were hand grained by a local craftsman to look like finer woods. Red "Brussels" carpet strips were laid on the wood floor leading McConnell to quip, "Everybody who comes to my house is going to get the red carpet treatment."<sup>18</sup> Cedar wood shutters covered the tall bay windows in both parlors as well as the rest of the windows in the house.

The home was illuminated with gas lighting and each of the two parlors had brass chandeliers. The house was the first in Moscow to have indoor plumbing. A windmill was installed over a deep well that was on the property when McConnell purchased it and water was pumped to a second floor storage tank. Within the next few



years, Alan Ramstedt planted poplar seedlings in front of the house and a white picket fence was added. An orchard was planted in the back. Carrie McConnell Bush recalled that her father worked hard to get a lawn started, sending to California to get sod and transplanting it. "One morning we found my brother's two pet badgers had rooted up the sod. Father was furious. He had the two animals shot."<sup>19</sup>

The wives of prominent business and professional men also presented the "red carpet" treatment at least one afternoon each week in towns and cities throughout the "civilized" West as well as the East. Calling card visits were protocol for these women and Mrs. McConnell and her neighbors were no exception to the rule. Although Louisa McConnell was described as being a timid, shy woman, who did not enjoy high society life, she did like to visit with her friends in Moscow.<sup>20</sup> Calling card visits meant the house had to be spotless and Mrs. McConnell made sure everything was thoroughly gone over from washing the gold mirror everyday, eventually leaving spots where the washing took the gold leaf off, to polishing the silver once a week.<sup>21</sup>

Elsie Nelson, in her recollections of early Moscow, tells of an experience her mother often told her about. She had the opportunity to go to the elegant McConnell mansion with a friend on one of these calling days. "Mother recalled particularly how interestingly and splendidly it was furnished, its beautiful lace curtains, imported rugs, oil paintings, its hanging lamps, and the huge gold-framed mirror over the parlor fireplace."<sup>22</sup> This was quite a treat for the young woman raised on a homestead. Mrs. Nelson entered the home through the front door with its beautifully etched glass window under a stained glass transom. The focal point in the central entrance hall was a large majolica vase decorated with naturalistic three-dimensional roses, or it may have been turned to display a full bunch of grapes. To the left was a door leading into the glassed-in conservatory

where Mrs. McConnell grew house plants and kept the family's pet parrot.

The visitors usually left their calling cards with the day of the week they would be available for callers in a bowl just for that purpose. On the designated day Mrs. McConnell's carriage pulled up in front of one of the other fine homes in Moscow. A number of blocks to the southeast was the home of Mrs. Mason A. Cornwall, constructed in 1889. She entered the main entrance on the north side. The lantern--a small square structure with windows--which capped the roof was originally planned to be placed over this entrance but the carpenters made an error in construction while Mr. Cornwall was absent. Cornwall used this lantern to watch the races on the track northeast of town and his children used it to watch Native Americans come across the hills to dig camas or travel through to the Colville Reservation.<sup>23</sup> (The Cornwall house is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.)

Another Victorian home north of the Cornwall home belonged to Frank L. White, an important local businessman as well as farmer. He opened Moscow's first drug store in the early '80s and later worked as office manager for the McConnell-Maguire store. He was elected mayor in 1895 and 1901.<sup>24</sup> Summer afternoon visits with Mrs. White may have been spent on the balastraded porch extending on three sides of this house.

Social entertaining was not limited to afternoon tea service:

On the 16th ? Mrs. Henry Dernham and Mrs. William Kaufman entertained their lady friends at a Kettle-Drum at their respective residences in this city. The homes of Mrs. D. and Mrs. K. are neighboring. The reception was held in one dwelling and the feast was served in the other. Those present inform us that it was the event of the season, that the guests were elegantly entertained and that the hostess [sic] were equal in every particular to the hospitality of the occasion.<sup>25</sup>



Not everything about the residential neighborhoods these women resided in was up to their social standards or their idea of how people should act in a civilized town such as Moscow was becoming. A letter in the local newspaper on July 17, 1885, was entitled, "Moscow Matrons Made Mad":

To Jacob James Holt, Esq. We the undersigned ladies of the west part of Moscow, respectfully ask you to remove the manure pile, adjoining your barn on 3rd Street, from the sidewalk, so that we can go to and from the butcher shop without wading through hog, horse and cow manure, ankle deep at the very next rain. We know of no law that allows a person to take this town sidewalk and make a barnyard of it, and compel not only the men but the little children and women to pass through it. If your wife and children would come into your sitting room with their shoes, stockings and skirts soiled with barn yard manure when their husbands and fathers were paying taxes every year for roads and sidewalks, you would naturally ask, "why does one man take away our county road and sidewalk and use it for his barnyard? Is he greater than the county?" Signed: ELEVEN LADIES

The following week, the Mirror asked that the ladies be patient and not be too hard on the butchers, Jones and Holt, but to give them a chance to remove the manure pile. Evidently the problem was removed, for the next edition of the paper carried a thank you from the ladies.<sup>24</sup> The railroads were opening corridors to the Palouse country, bringing fashionable goods from the elegant cities of the East and West, but even in its largest town evidence of frontier practices could still be found.

As Moscow grew, the McConnell-Maguire store flourished and by 1891 the partners decided to construct a new building on the southeast corner of First and Main Streets. McConnell was doing quite well monetarily and politically. He was elected to the United States Senate in 1890 when Idaho became a state and in

1892 he sold a mica mine in the Bear Creek district to a syndicate for a reported price of \$60,000.<sup>27</sup> His business thrived until the depression of 1893 when he, like many other merchants, lost his store as well as his grain warehouses in Moscow and Pullman. A title search from the Latah County Title Company shows that Louisa McConnell declared their home as a homestead that year and was thus able to continue living there until 1897. The law allowed a person to retain a certain amount of personal property in a situation of bankruptcy to sustain themselves and their family. In the same year McConnell began his first elected term as Governor of the state of Idaho. Their daughter, Mary (Mayme), went to Boise with her father while her mother maintained the family home in Moscow.

Because mother was in rather delicate health, and very shy about meeting new people, father decided to take me along to Boise as his hostess and part-time secretary.<sup>28</sup>

The McConnell daughters grew to maturity while living in the mansion. Mayme and Ollie were much like their father, outgoing and outspoken, while Carrie, the youngest, seemed to be more like her mother.

And Carrie was quite--well, she was social. She had her own little society of friends that we all knew here, but to go out or try to be up in the social life, didn't appeal to her at all.<sup>29</sup>

The two sons, Will and Ben, graduated from eastern medical schools but, like so many westerners, retained the pioneer spirit of freedom and independence. Both returned to the West, Ben to Montana where he was a forest ranger and Will to the Coeur d'Alene mining country.<sup>30</sup>

The McConnells remained members of the social elite of Moscow even after the loss of the business and the eventual loss of their home. Homer David, in his book Moscow at the Turn of the Century, included them in a list of families



who were more or less aristocrats: the Spotswoods from Virginia, the Judge Forneys, the Truitts, the McConnells, Hattabaughs, Judge Pipers, Alexander Ryries, faculty members (heads of various departments), the Butterfields, and Philip Tillinghast, an attorney from New York City. He had a son who came to visit him from Yale and lived with him during the summer. They had a valet who took care of their wardrobes and put out their fresh linens every morning. This was very interesting to us young fellows around. The son, Morgan, became attracted to Mary Spotswood, a beautiful young lady, and they were eventually married. The wedding was a wonderful social event in Moscow.<sup>31</sup>

By 1900 Moscowites were dressing formally for parties and socials, men in tails and white ties, women in evening gowns. Adherence to fashion was important. David described New Year's Day when the young men dressed in morning cutaway coats and striped trousers, stiff bosom shirts with wing-tip collars, and ascot ties and carried walking sticks to make their calls on the young ladies. They were served tea and eggnog.<sup>32</sup> The McConnell girls were surely visited by some of these young men. They were, along with Maude Barton Hunter (whose father owned the Moscow

Hotel) and the Mix girls, the "society girls in town. . . . The pride and joy of the Moscow Academy, charming, gracious, witty, popular and clever."<sup>33</sup>

Social and cultural events were plentiful during these years in Moscow. The local newspaper gave notice of many traveling entertainers, local concerts and literary programs, community celebrations and activities. A review of the McPhee-Keiser Co. exclaimed that their play was "elegantly staged."<sup>34</sup> Residents of the community were told of Professor F. A. Clark, from the Boston Dancing Academy of New York City, who would be teaching modern social dances, including Deux Temps, Oxford, and French, to the ladies in the afternoons and gentlemen in the evenings. Monthly soirees were scheduled. And Valentine's Eve was celebrated by many

young people in 1897, at the "cozy" home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles York Shields.<sup>35</sup>

The notes for this section of the article appear on page 8.

(Ed. note: Part 2, which will continue this article on customs and manners in Moscow to 1910, will be concluded in the next issue.)

JOANN C. JONES is an assistant professor of home economics at the University of Idaho and is enrolled in the graduate program in public history at Washington State University. Research for this article was funded by a grant from the Association for the Humanities in Idaho, under the National Endowment for the Humanities, and is co-sponsored by the Latah County Historical Society and the School of Home Economics, University of Idaho.

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The dress reform movement makes but slow headway against the prejudices of woman-kind. There is not the slightest doubt in the world that the divided skirt is both more convenient and comfortable than the ordinary woman's dress, but not one woman in 1,000,000 would have the nerve to wear it, though she were trebly convinced of its superiority. The corset, though, is the great bone of contention among the dress reformers. There is division among themselves as to whether it should be discarded or not. The average woman is wedded to her stays and no amount of reasoning, either from a high art or a hygienic point of view, can induce her to part with them. And there is no lack of argument brought to bear upon the subject by the prophets of the new movement. It is even claimed that the compression of the body by the corset is fatal to spiritual progress. This may cause much distressing anxiety to the fashionable woman, but it does not abolish the corset.

Moscow Mirror  
6 December 1889, p. 4



<sup>1</sup>Dorothy O. Johansen, Empire of the Columbia: A History of the Pacific Northwest (2d ed.; New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 301.

<sup>2</sup>Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Moscow, ID, March 1889 and January 1891.

<sup>3</sup>Keith Petersen, "History of the McConnell Building," Quarterly Bulletin of the Latah County Historical Society, 1983), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>The Pullman Herald, 7 December 1972, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup>Nancy F. Renk, "Nomination Form for the W. J. McConnell House" (Boise, ID: National Register of Historic Places Inventory, 1972).

<sup>6</sup>Don Heikkila, "McConnell Home, Onetime Showplace, Being Prepared for County Museum," Henrik and Bernice Juve, Memory Book of the Latah County Pioneers, Vol. 2 p. 38.

<sup>7</sup>"Local Brevities," Moscow Mirror, 14 August 1885, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup>"Local Brevities," Moscow Mirror, 18 September 1885, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup>"Local Brevities," Moscow Mirror, 11 September 1885, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup>Maribel Schupfer, "Home of Early Day Idaho Leader Still Used Here," Henrik and Bernice Juve, Memory Book of the Latah County Pioneers, Vol. 2, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup>Lillian Otness, A Great Good Country: A Guide to Historic Moscow and Latah County, Idaho (Moscow, ID: Latah County Historical Society, 1983), p. 75.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>14</sup>Homer David, Moscow at the Turn of the Century (Moscow, ID: Latah County Historical Society, 1979), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup>Otness, p. 85.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>17</sup>Schupfer.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>First and fourth interview with Iona Adair by Sam Schrager, 1976, p. 25, and 1977, p. 23. Bernadine Adair Cornelison (sister) was also present and contributed to the five interviews done by Schrager.

<sup>21</sup>Ione Adair, No. 4, p. 28.

<sup>22</sup>Elsie Nelson, Today Is Ours: Saga of a Pioneer Family (Moscow, ID: The Idahoonian, 1972), p. 41.

<sup>23</sup>Otness, pp. 94-5.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>25</sup>"Local Brevities," Moscow Mirror, 24 December 1886, p. 3. According to Roget's University Thesaurus, 1963, a Kettle-drum is a social gathering.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 24 July and 31 July 1885.

<sup>27</sup>Eugene Virgil Smalley, Pullman, Palouse City, and Colfax in 1892 (reprinted from Northwest Magazine for September and October 1892, Friends of the Library, Washington State University, The Record, 1970, Vol. 3).

<sup>28</sup>Dabney Taylor, "Happy Birthday, Mrs. Borah," Henrik and Bernice Juve, Memory Book of the Latah County Pioneers, Vol. 1, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup>Ione Adair, No. 4, p. 25.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>David, pp. 46-7.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>33</sup>Lola Clyde, No. 1, p. 26.

<sup>34</sup>"Brevities," Double Standard, 10 February 1897, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup>"Brevities," Double Standard, 17 February 1897, p. 5.



## PIONEER OF TRAVEL ROUTES

### The Story of C. C. Van Arsdol

by Ted Van Arsdol

Editor's Note: Ted Van Arsdol of Vancouver, Washington, is now a freelance writer and historian after a long career as a reporter for the Vancouver Columbian. During his years with that paper he wrote numerous articles about the history of southwest Washington. He is also a frequent contributor to Clark County History, and is a former editor of that journal. He notes of his grandfather C. C. Van Arsdol that "he was a tall rather lean man--a bit bent and stooped when I knew him in the last years of his life. He was a workaholic; he had to be to accomplish as much as he did. During the years he was in Canada especially, away from the family, he must have been absorbed almost entirely in his job as division engineer of the Grand Trunk Pacific. Here is a description of him from Frederick Talbott's The Making of a Great Canadian Railway: 'His tall, gaunt figure striding through the dense bush is familiar up and down the banks of the Skeena River and throughout Northern British Columbia today, for as divisional engineer he is responsible for the construction of that length of railway. It may be raining as it only can rain on the Pacific Ocean . . . but he reeks not of the elements. A lounge jacket is quite sufficient protection, and even should it become sodden like a sponge, a stand-up before the camp fire will dry the garment very quickly. A man of few words, and those uttered in a very low tone, the men on the work will tell you that every one counts, for a stern wrestle with Nature day after day for supremacy among the mountains is not conducive to conversation or idle talk.'"

\* \* \* \* \*

Before railroads and good roads were provided, economic progress was slow, almost non-existent for Palouse country pioneers.

The rich farming lands were remote from the Snake River, which had been used by steamboats to land cargoes at Wallula and at points as far east as Lewiston during high-water periods.

F. J. Parker, writing in the Walla Walla Daily Statesman of December 17, 1891, had explained the early problem:

The "man with the hoe" came along, and all the stories of the packers that the Palouse country was too cold to raise anything, and the efforts of the cattle kings to direct them elsewhere availed naught. And they are here today the dominant power of the land.

It was a hard struggle for years for them to make a decent living. True, they could raise all they wanted, but there was no market except they drove a hundred miles in their wagons, and by the time they had sold their load of wheat, flax, seed or bacon, and paid their ferry toll and expenses the mighty little they obtained was eaten up. They are all right now with two already and soon another to make the third transcontinental railroad bidding for their custom. Life is now worth living for the Palouse farmer.

Among individuals linked to early transportation history in and near the Palouse country was C. C. Van Arsdol, who died at Clarkston, Washington, in 1941.

For many years he was active in locating railroad routes and supervising their



construction in the West. When development of new railroad lines faded out in World War I, the engineer turned to highway work.

Van Arsdol's first connection with Latah County history was supervision of construction of Northern Pacific track into Moscow in 1890. The line was extended on to Juliaetta, and finally into Lewiston in 1898.

In 1915 a highway was proposed for the hill above Lewiston, which had been traveled earlier by stages and wagons running between the Palouse communities and Lewiston.

Van Arsdol, who had returned from a job as division engineer of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in Canada, agreed to take the position as engineer of the new road. He had charge of laying out and building the Spiral Highway, which opened officially on November 7, 1917. The road, notable for a series of curves taking advantage of hill contours, remained for many years the principal route connecting Moscow and other Palouse cities and towns with the Lewiston-Clarkston area and southern Idaho.

The first railroad construction had taken place in the higher country; the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company provided a rail line to Moscow in 1885. In those days, when railroads could make and break communities, the OR&N extension seemed to assure a bright future for Moscow.

The Portland Morning Oregonian noted Moscow activity on June 29, 1888:

New stores are building, streets are being graded and wide sidewalks laid. The merchants are trying to compete with Portland in selling general merchandise to the farmers and are warring among themselves in every branch of trade . . . the six general merchandise stores are the finest this side of Portland.

A big Fourth of July celebration is anticipated at Moscow. . . . A large Parrot gun has been purchased and is here

for the Fourth. The celebrated Lewiston Cornet Band has been engaged in connection with the Moscow Silver Tube Band.

More signs of progress of the kind making Moscow a likely prospect for an additional railroad line were mentioned by the Oregonian on August 11, 1889:

The busy hum of industry may be continually heard in Moscow.

Messrs. Shields & Hattabaugh have formed an electric light company and the plant now stands ordered, and it is contemplated that the lights will be turned on . . . by the middle of September. . . .

From late advices it is understood that work will soon commence on the territorial university in this place, the regents recently have had a meeting.

More than two years earlier, in 1887, C. C. Van Arsdol had arrived in the Pacific Northwest as a 36-year-old division engineer for the Union Pacific Railroad. He had charge of UP surveys in the Salmon River region and along lower Snake River. In that first year, 1887, Van Arsdol and his wife Della and son Verne took their first stage ride from the Palouse down the steep hill north of the Clearwater River and across on the Silcott Ferry into Lewiston.

In July 1887, the UP asked Van Arsdol to take a job with the Washington and Idaho Company at Farmington. For that company, said to be allied with the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company, the engineer led a survey party across the Bitterroot Range to Missoula, at a time when there was considerable publicity about what appeared to be a struggle between the major railroads for control of the Mullan Pass and the Coeur d'Alene mining section.

Van Arsdol was in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1888 and also did some work at Portland docks for the Southern Pacific. In late 1888 and early 1889 he was involved in UP surveys through northern California and eastern Oregon.





Road and railroad construction engineer, C. C. Van Arsdol, far left, lower row, with his Northern Pacific surveying crew, about 1890. He visited the Palouse Country for the first time in 1887.

The engineer joined the Northern Pacific in May 1889 and his first NP job was surveying for the proposed Rocky Fork and Cooke City Railway Company in and near Stillwater Creek in Montana.

In November he was sent to the Palouse for surveys of a line between Oakesdale and Colfax. Later in the winter, Van Arsdol surveyed for a possible line in the Penawawa area.

Conditions for surveyors were particularly rugged during this winter, one of the famous cattle-killing winters of the inland Pacific Northwest. In a February 13 letter, Van Arsdol wrote: "Our progress has been slow, partially on account of the deep snow and continuous stormy weather for a month past, and partly on account of the party being crippled by illness."

Van Arsdol completed a reconnaissance for

the NP between Olympia and Grays Harbor in the spring, then was sent back to the Palouse country about the start of May 1890 as division engineer on the Spokane and Palouse Extension from the Whitman County line into Idaho.

The Spokane and Palouse Railroad extended 112 miles, from Spokane Falls through Spangle, Oakesdale, Garfield, Palouse City, Pullman, Colton and Uniontown to Genesee. But Genesee had not been the real goal of this line. Lewiston had been the proposed eventual destination of the Spokane and Palouse, and a branch would also be extended up the valley of the Clearwater.<sup>1</sup>

On May 2, 1890, the Colfax Commoner reported that the name of the community of Latah had been changed to Kendrick, honoring the NP's chief engineer, and that



railroad officials and the leading property owners of the town had been in Palouse City completing arrangements on Kendrick property that would be given to the NP. T. Kirby, original owner of the townsite, said the town had given the NP a bonded deed to half the site, provided that the railroad built there by January 1, 1891. Kirby said all preliminary steps, including surveys and maps, had been completed and that the new line probably would start from Whelan, run through Moscow to Kendrick, then go to the Clearwater River and downstream to Lewiston.

The Commoner recorded on May 16 that Chief Engineer J. W. Kendrick had awarded a contract to Donald, Smith & Howe of North Yakima for constructing the branch line to Lewiston, a distance of about 72 miles. The job was to be finished by December 1.

A little later The Commoner stated that articles of incorporation for the Northern Pacific and Idaho Railroad Company had been filed in Tacoma. The company's objective was to build from a junction of the Spokane and Palouse Railway to Moscow and Juliaetta, down the Clearwater to Lewiston, up Snake River to Tammany Creek and up that stream, a total distance of 91 miles.<sup>2</sup>

The Mirror newspaper of Moscow reported on May 16:

"The effect of the railroad is beginning to be felt at Kendrick. Several drunks took the town by storm last Sunday. They drove the bartender from the saloon and made things lively for the citizens for a short time."

Grading was under way in late May between Cornwall and Moscow. By late May, horses and tools were reported arriving daily in Pullman for the new line to Lewiston.<sup>3</sup>

Van Arsdol was in Lewiston during part of the spring working on right of way and plans for the NP depot. But the Union Pacific had considered the Lewiston area part of its possible future plans, and the NP news had stirred up the rival line.

On June 12, the Lewiston Teller brought news that a UP construction engine had been sidetracked at Riparia for building a rail line to Lewiston. The steamboat Spokane also was being prepared to haul machinery and supplies to Lewiston. The UP movements foreshadowed a more intense rivalry in the Lewiston area just before the turn of the century.

Meantime, Palouse country residents learned that Whelan had lost out as the starting place for the new NP line. Construction forces had been removed from Whelan, four miles north of Pullman, after three miles of grading had been completed from that point, and went to work east of Pullman.

"The city [Pullman] offered inducements to the Northern Pacific to build from that point, and it is said threatened to give all of her large shipping trade to the Union Pacific in case the Northern Pacific failed to do so," the Colfax Commoner noted on June 27.

Pullman's Herald of July 12 observed that more than 100 teams were working between Pullman and Moscow, and "the dirt is being piled up rapidly."<sup>4</sup> On August 23, the Herald added: "The first rail was laid on the new railroad last Monday, when the switch was put in. A regular construction gang and train is now employed, and it will be but a few days before Moscow will see Northern Pacific trains. One mile of track had been laid last night."

One aspect of the "prosperity" brought in by the railroad is indicated in the following item:

"The new town of Kendrick had five saloons up to last Friday, with a prospect for more. With two raging streams and three times as many saloons, Kendrick should be classed among the 'wet' towns."<sup>5</sup>

About this time, more competition seemed imminent from the UP, near Garfield in Whitman County. The Enterprise provided information that Engineer Hulburt's surveying party had pitched tents at Gar-





The Van Arsdol engineered railroad along the river bank in Kendrick. Note the high water which eventually led to the flood of 1900.

field. The party planned to survey a route from Garfield to Camas Prairie via Lewiston and the Potlatch country. The men were reported to have worked on the Lewiston end of the proposed route during the greater part of the season to ascertain whether they could get across from Lewiston to Camas Prairie.<sup>7</sup>

Arrival of the NP track at Moscow did not arouse much attention in the newspapers; this was an anticlimax, coming five years after completion of the OR&N line. One brief item in mid-September related that track-layers were in sight of the town, and the NP would haul out grain in the fall. The construction men passed through and moved eastward rapidly in October. Vollmer (Troy) residents were expecting in November to hear the shrill of a locomotive whistle soon. But a large bridge between Cornwall and Vollmer, requiring more than one-half million feet of lumber, was expected to cause some delay.

The NP had begun running trains into Mos-

cow in late November. In early December some rock cuts were not finished, and laborers were quitting, so there was speculation that the road would not be extended further than Vollmer that winter.<sup>8</sup>

Van Arsdol continued to supervise work on the line in late 1890 and early 1891. In early May he represented the NP in conference with leaders of the Nez Perce Indians and U.S. officials, at a two-day meeting. Press reports summarized that an agreement had been reached to pay "a damage of \$20 per acre for every acre used in the right of way across the reservation," on tribal lands. No price had been set on land allocated to individuals.<sup>9</sup>

Later in the year, Lewiston residents were getting concerned about lack of construction progress. The amount of cash and real estate raised by citizens to induce the NP to build into Lewiston was said to be not large enough in the view of NP officials, and some of them thought Juliaetta was a good enough place for the terminus of the branch at that time.<sup>10</sup>



For Moscow and Pullman, however, there was not nearly as much concern. They had railroads, and the future appeared bright. F. J. Parker, who visited the area, wrote in the Walla Walla Daily Statesman on December 17, 1891:

. . . Moscow has fully 5,000 population and Pullman, a much newer town, about 3,000. Both places are admirably situated for trade and business in the midst of the most fertile agricultural country in the world, with a good climate, timber in the adjacent hills in unlimited quantity, and mines within easy reach which only require the golden key of capital to unlock; . . . both connected with branch lines of two great continental systems that center here, it is only natural to be impressed with the manifold advantages offered.

Late in 1891, Van Arsdol traveled to Yellowstone National Park for the reconnaissance of a rail line. He also was finishing up estimates and other paper work on the Lewiston extension of the NP.

The Van Arsdol family had resided for a while in Moscow where a son Drexel was born. Also, the family lived in Pullman for a time and a son Frederick Ward was born in that community.

But the NP was in financial difficulties and little work was available for Van Arsdol and other railroad men in 1892. Van Arsdol took on some jobs for the town of Pullman, then in 1893 moved his family to Lewiston to be closer to his next project, a plan to bring irrigation water to Jawbone Flat, just west of Lewiston.

Most of his efforts from 1893 into 1897 were aimed at completing the Jawbone Flat project. Financing finally was arranged, through the aid of E. H. Libby, Charles Francis Adams, and others, and in 1896 water reached the flat, later known as Vineland and eventually as Clarkston. Van Arsdol was secretary and engineer of the Lewiston Water and Power Company, which completed the irrigation system and sold lots in the new townsite.

In December 1897 the NP announced that it

would complete the rail line into Lewiston. Agreement was reached with Lewiston officials, and Van Arsdol went to Juliaetta to give instructions to the surveyors in the field.

Shortly after the start of 1898, the NP let a contract to Geiger & Zabriske of Tacoma for construction of the 21 miles of track from Juliaetta to Lewiston. Laying of track started in March and the line was to be pushed through to the Clearwater River, where a short delay was expected because of bridge construction there. The bridge was to be framed at Juliaetta, and hauled to the river by rail.<sup>11</sup>

Resumption of work created busy times near the end of track. One early April story reported.

. . . recent snow is melting and the Potlatch and Bear creeks are on the rise, which will be appreciated by the tie men as well as the sawmill men. There are 18,000 ties along the Big Bear creek, which will be floated to Kendrick as soon as there is water enough, besides along the Potlatch river there are about 200,000 feet of logs to be floated down. The work train is making daily trips to the tie piles along Little Bear creek, between Kendrick and Vollmer, and hauling them to the end of the line. The work of laying track is under headway. . . .

It seems to be a settled fact that the road will be built up the Clearwater as far as Big Canyon this year. . . .<sup>12</sup>

Construction was started about the start of June on a bridge over Lapwai Creek at Spaulding.<sup>13</sup>

A little later, even before the track had been completed to Lewiston, that town was feeling the side effects of the project:

For the first time in years Lewiston is being visited by a gang of hoboes. The building of the railroad in this vicinity is bringing them. Several arrests have been made and a chain gang organized, which is engaged in improving the streets.<sup>14</sup>



After completion of construction to Lewiston, the first train arrived on September 8, 1898, with a Spokane Chamber of Commerce party aboard. Work also had started eastward on the Clearwater River, from the vicinity of Arrow.

The activity intensified interest in the possibility of a new line through the Bitterroot Range, linking Lewiston with Montana. OR&N survey parties had taken the field early in the year, competing with Van Arsdol's parties for the most feasible routes, and work started on extending the OR&N up the Snake River to Lewiston. There was even discussion about a revived plan to build a railroad line through Hells Canyon, an early-day dream of some UP officials.<sup>15</sup>

Construction and political maneuvering continued until leaders of the rail company finally reached a truce, announced in January 1900.

"The termination of the Clearwater difficulty," the Yakima, Washington, Republic reported under a St. Paul, Minnesota, dateline, "marks the end of one of the most bitter railroad wars ever waged in this country. Every phase of railroad politics, diplomacy and force was brought into play by the lines interested."<sup>16</sup>

Van Arsdol continued with the NP in 1900, when he headed surveys of the Lind Cut-off through the Big Bend country of eastern Washington. From September 1900 to the spring of 1901 he worked on NP surveys in the Hoquiam area, then supervised construction of a line from Hoquiam to Moclips, ending in the summer of 1903.

The engineer's biggest job came in August 1903, when he was hired by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway as division engineer of the western section of that transcontinental route in Canada. He had charge of the reconnaissance, preliminary location, and construction of 1,300 miles of railroad.

His family remained in Clarkston, and he visited them periodically before finally returning permanently in October 1914.

Van Arsdol opened an office as a consulting engineer in Lewiston, and commuted between there and his home at Fifteenth and Chestnut streets in Clarkston.

Cars were getting prevalent in the Palouse country and elsewhere, providing a big impetus for the improvement of roads and the development of a north-south highway. The Lewiston hill road remained one of the biggest problems in and out of the Palouse country, but there also were other routes in and near Lewiston requiring attention, and Van Arsdol eventually was called in for work on a number of the roads.

A dirt road already was available down the Lewiston hill. C. C. Van Arsdol's son, Fred, recalled that it started at the old Collins ranch at the hill's top, and followed a ridge down, west of the alignment selected for the Spiral Highway.

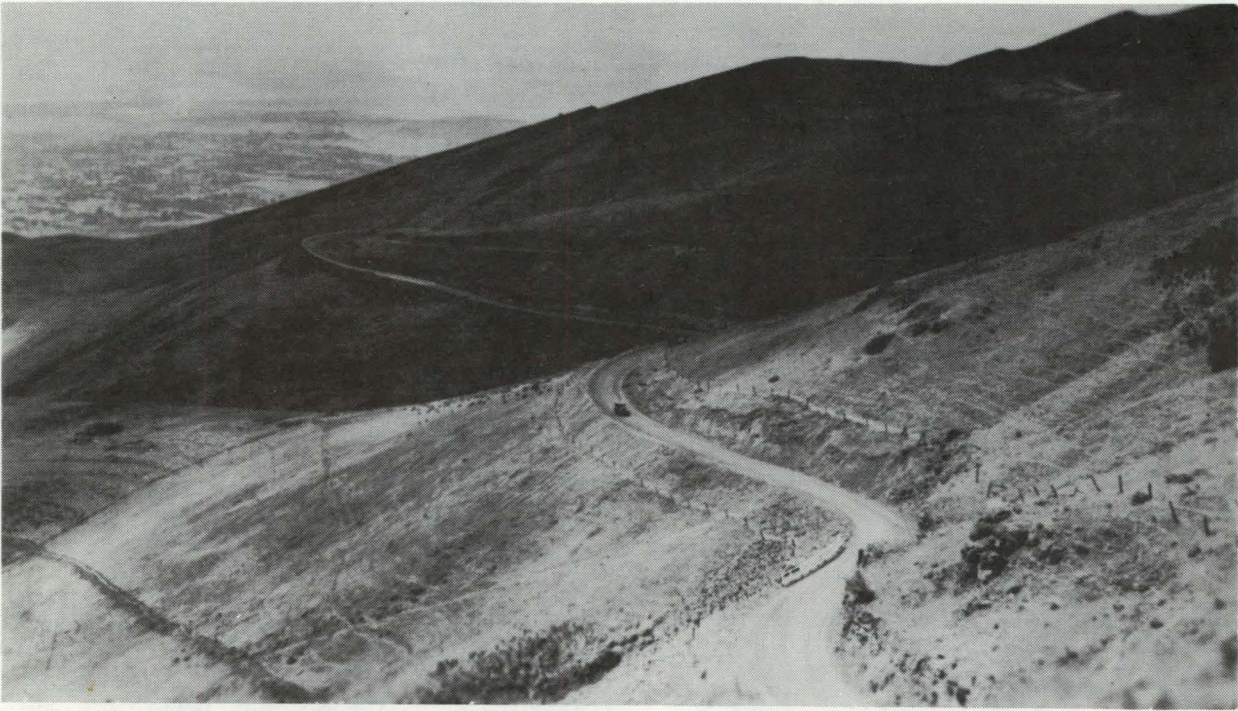
"I can vouch for the fact that it was very steep," Fred Van Arsdol said. "As an indication of the steepness, I will mention an incident when I was a boy in Clarkston. I had raised some watermelons. A fellow living near us also raised melons and was hauling some to farms. He had half a load to take to the Uniontown and Colton area to sell and wanted to know if he could take mine along too. I agreed, and he took my melons in the back end of his wagon; his melons were in the front part.

"Several weeks later I saw him again. He had not paid me for my melons, and he explained that he was going up the hill and the end gate came out.

"He said my watermelons had rolled out, but he managed to get the end gate back in before his melons rolled out. I never did get any payment for my melons.

"The last time I traveled on the old road was in a Dodge car about the time the route was being surveyed for the Spiral Highway. Traveling up was hard. It was a dirt road with no rock and was narrow--you could go for a long stretch without finding a place to pass on the road.





Descending the "Lewiston Grade," a 2,000 foot "spiral highway" on Idaho's main north-south Highway #95

"But it was used a lot; it was the only way up and down the hill. Usually two horses were used to pull a wagon, and a lot of braking was required in coming down the steep grade."

A wide, safe road with an easier grade was needed, as part of the proposed Idaho-Pacific Highway. This route, 800 miles long, was to extend from the Utah-Idaho border near Fish Haven in Bear Lake County through Pocatello, Boise, and Lewiston, and then on north.

The Idaho State Highway Commission, established in 1913, "has the problem of building roads in one of the most sparsely settled and mountainous sections of the country," Engineering News commented in May 1915.

Up to that time the commission had been surveying and studying trunk-line highways, which totaled 1,300 miles.

"To those familiar with the Idaho country, the problem of locating these highways with 8 percent maximum grade is appreciated," Engineering News added. "The proposed location of the Idaho-Pacific

Highway . . . has no grade exceeding 5 percent, although it is questioned if this is justifiable."

As an example of the problem, the publication printed a picture of Lewiston and the nearby hill, showing a suggested alignment of the new road that was to be built on the steep slopes. The road was to rise 1,900 feet in 10 miles.<sup>17</sup>

At a public meeting called by R. S. Erb, Lewiston Commercial Club president, on July 15, 1915, considerable favorable opinion was expressed for the hill project, helped along by the fact that the state of Washington had located the eastern division of Washington state highway through Pomeroy, Clarkston, and Uniontown. The hill route would tie in with that road. "It is probable that no public meeting in the history ever found a more unanimous sentiment in favor of united action back of a responsibility of this community nature," the Lewiston Morning Tribune observed.<sup>18</sup>

By a large majority, Lewiston voters approved a bond issue of \$150,000, the estimated cost of 10 miles of road in-



cluding engineering, right of way, and surfacing, with the state providing one-third of the construction cost outside the city limits.<sup>19</sup>

C. C. Van Arsdol, who had been hired by the Lewiston Highway District commissioners (E. A. White, Porter Shafer, and F. N. Finch), was in charge of the surveys and construction of the Spiral Highway.

In September 1916 a big steam shovel was on the job and nearing the summit. Van Arsdol said grading of the road would be completed in late November, and guard rails would be installed along two miles of the highway. No part of the grade was more than 5 percent, and it was estimated the cars could travel from the bottom to top "conveniently in 20 to 25 minutes" when the road was completed.

Van Arsdol also mentioned that one consideration in the layout of the highway was to present the opportunity for tourists to get good views of the scenery stretching away from the junction of the Snake and Clearwater rivers to the south-east, south, and southwest.<sup>20</sup>

The new Spiral Highway was opened officially on November 7, 1917.

Highway Commissioner White said the road "kindled a deep interest in highway development of northern Idaho and eastern Washington." A considerable number of new highway districts were organized, and "a shot in the arm" was given to the North and South (Idaho-Pacific) Highway. The road completion also spurred interest in connections with the Idaho route from Washington highways.

Following completion of the Spiral Highway, various nearby road districts sought Van Arsdol's help on their projects. He was employed on as many as three of these at a time, locating roads on Whitebird, Winchester, Alpowa and other steep sites.

But the major long-range project of interest to Van Arsdol in his later years, in the 1920s and '30s, was the Blue Mountain

Highway, proposed to link northeastern Oregon with the Lewiston-Clarkston valley.

Van Arsdol was first president of the Blue Mountain Tri-State Highway Association and he worked for 17 years with the others, such as Bill Huyette and Elmer Halsey, to get funds for the project. The men were able to get some money for the proposed route, and spent mostly their own money attending Good Roads sessions and other meetings to promote the project. Van Arsdol was 68 when he became interested in the road. This was built gradually, as funds became available. Some of the route is through the rugged canyon of the Grande Ronde River.<sup>21</sup>

The engineer died in Clarkston on February 25, 1941, at the age of 89, and was buried in the cemetery on Normal Hill, Lewiston. The Lewiston Morning Tribune editorialized on February 27 that "it is not given to many men to leave such enduring traces of themselves" as Van Arsdol, the result of his railroad and highway work and the Clarkston project. Former associates of Van Arsdol installed a marker in 1949 at the top of the Lewiston hill, commemorating the engineer's work.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The Great Northwest, a Guide-Book and Itinerary (St. Paul: W. C. Riley, Publisher, 1889), pp. 316-318.

<sup>2</sup>The Commoner, June 6, 1890 (Colfax, WA).

<sup>3</sup>Star, May 23, 30; The Commoner, June 6, 1890.

<sup>4</sup>As reported in The Commoner, July 18, 1890.

<sup>5</sup>Reported in The Commoner, Aug. 29, 1890.

<sup>6</sup>Pullman Herald, August 2, 1890.

<sup>7</sup>Reprinted in The Commoner, Sept. 19, 1890.



<sup>8</sup>Portland Telegram, Sept. 15, 1890; Pullman Herald, Sept. 20, Oct. 25, Nov. 15, 29, Dec. 13, 1890.

<sup>9</sup>Pullman Herald, May 16, 1891.

<sup>10</sup>Walla Walla Daily Statesman, Aug. 18, 1891.

<sup>11</sup>The News-Recorder, Pasco, Washington, Jan. 28, March 11, 1898.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., April 8, 1898.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., June 10, 1898.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., Aug. 12, 1898.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., Feb. 18, March 25, Nov. 18, 1898.

<sup>16</sup>Yakima Republic, Jan. 26, 1900.

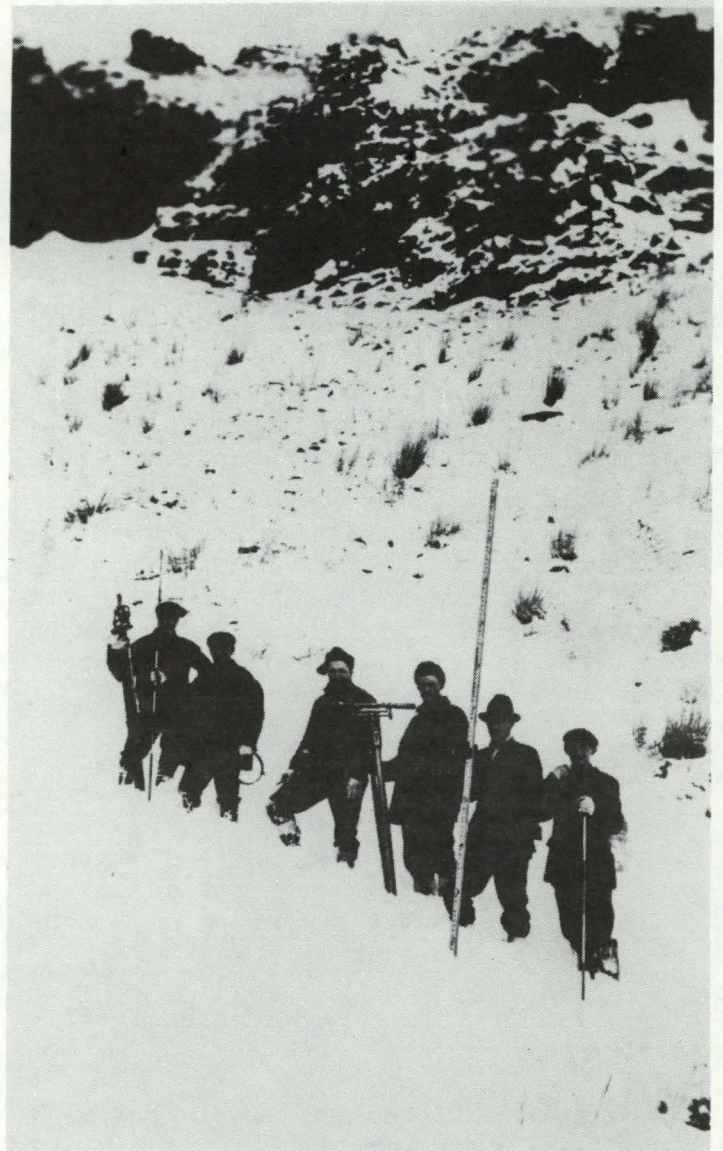
<sup>17</sup>Engineering News, Vol. 73, No. 19, May 13, 1915, p. 936. Other sources stated that the rise in elevation for the road is about 2,000 feet.

<sup>18</sup>Lewiston Morning Tribune, July 16, 1915.

<sup>19</sup>Morning Oregonian, Portland, May 23, 1920.

<sup>20</sup>Lewiston Morning Tribune, Sept. 27, 1916.

<sup>21</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, material for this article is from "Railway Pathfinder," a manuscript by Ted Van Arsdol, based on family papers and other information. Ted Van Arsdol is a grandson of C. C. Van Arsdol and son of Fred Van Arsdol, mentioned in this article.



Van Arsdol's highway survey crew on the Lewiston grade, Feb. 1, 1916. The Spiral Highway was completed and opened on November 7, 1917.



## LATAH VIGNETTES: CHARLES O. BROWN

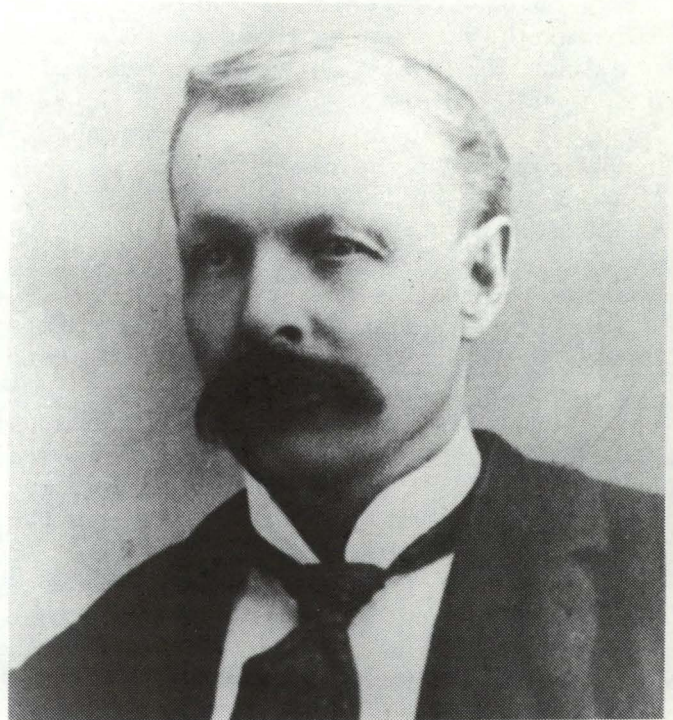
by Keith Petersen and Mary E. Reed

It was in November, 1898, that Charles Brown and his son, Nat, nearly died in a blizzard near the Clearwater. They rested in a crude shelter, regaining strength after a day of wilderness hiking, having been trapped in an early snow. Despite their predicament, Brown took time to record his thoughts in his diary:

Now there is no conversation. All strength is necessary to keep slowly moving. Utter silence is over all. The stream appears merely a deep crack in the mass of snow, and fallen timber only white ridges that cross our way. Now any slight obstruction like a bent bush or projecting limb from the many fallen trees trips us and we fall and each time rise slower and with greater difficulty. Our clothing has become thoroughly wet. It is now 3 o'clock. We have had no food since breakfast, we have none with us. The dense snow-burdened forest is fast growing dark.

It was a particularly bleak time in the life of one of Idaho's most significant, yet little known, figures. But the Browns survived and influenced the economic history of a wide region.

Sometimes we are too provincial. At times this narrow vision leads to a rose-colored view of history, a glorification of pioneer roots. Fascinated by the familiar names and places around us, we tend to look upon our local history as a unique experience. At other times this provincialism leads in the opposite direction. Some skeptics argue that nothing of significance ever occurred here, and that to truly understand national or world events we should not waste time studying local history.



Charles O'dell Brown  
1842-1902 (c. 1880)

Both views are shortsighted and tend to isolate history from the larger picture. On the one hand we sometimes write about local areas and characters as though there was no outside world, as though events here happened in a vacuum. On the other hand, we often ignore regional history completely, believing it unimportant. Sometimes it takes someone from outside our area to awaken us to the significance of our roots and our place in national history. Just such recognition took place recently when the American Association for State and Local History, was headquarters in Nashville, awarded the Latah County Historical Society a grant to prepare and edit the diaries of Charles O. Brown for publication. Over



370 organizations from throughout the United States applied for this, one of the most prestigious national grants in the history field. Only 18 received funding. The grant review committee judged Brown's diaries as important not only locally, but nationally, a reminder that both are intricately intertwined.

Few people have heard of Charles Brown. More local residents remember his son, Nat, the Clearwater area lumberman with a somewhat shadowy reputation who married Henrietta Ryrie, mother of Moscow novelist Carol Ryrie Brink, after her first husband died of tuberculosis. When Henrietta committed suicide a few years later some said Nat's womanizing was to blame. Or they might remember C. O.'s son-in-law Theodore Fohl, first fire warden of the Clearwater Timber Protective Association, the nation's first cooperative timber protective organization, and timber cruiser extraordinaire who owned the Bovill homestead on which stood the White Pine King, purported to be the largest white pine tree in the West. It is unfortunate that Charles has escaped attention, for he was one of Moscow's most respected citizens and helped change the history of northern Idaho.

In the early 1890s, C. O. Brown was a disgruntled Michigan timberland trader. Aware that the Great Lakes region was being overlogged and that his future lay elsewhere, he boarded a train for Idaho in 1893. On July 22 he reached Moscow and spent a few days surveying the area's timberlands. He was much impressed with the region's tall, clear white pines and "the largest cedar I have ever seen." Brown returned to Michigan, but his exploratory trip convinced him that Idaho was where he should seek a fortune.

He told lumber barons in the Great Lakes states about the forests he had seen, but they were preoccupied with surviving the 1893 depression and were uninterested in westward expansion. But Brown knew the value of what he had seen, and returned to Latah County in 1894 with son Nat and son-in-law Theodore, the three of them claiming homesteads near Bovill.

Brown needed outside capital to reap Idaho's potential, and he realized that only Midwestern lumbermen had the money required. So for six years he labored alone with his Idaho secret, surveying timberlands--at times risking his life--and preaching the gospel of the area's forestry resources. In Latah County stood "the largest single group of white pine . . . in the United States, upon no tree of which the lumberman's ax has yet fallen." He made speeches. He published brochures. He traveled frequently to the Great Lakes, trying to entice big-moneyed timber barons to Idaho, but few listened. Finally in 1899 the economy revived, rekindled by patriotism and optimism following American military victories over Spain. As lumber in the Great Lakes states became scarce, timbermen realized the time had come to move on. C. O. Brown was ready to pilot them to Idaho.

In the spring of 1900 John Glover visited Brown in his Moscow office. Brown had no idea Glover represented the Midwest's largest timber syndicate, having traveled west at the instigation of John Humbird, wealthy Wisconsin lumberman and Frederick Weyerhaeuser's associate. Brown had persistently written Weyerhaeuser and Humbird, who had secretly dispatched Glover to scout the area he extolled. Brown toured Glover through the forests around his Bovill homestead. Glover, overwhelmed, immediately offered Brown a job with his "company," though it was still unclear to Brown who he represented. Brown accepted a job as "local agent," hoping for the best though remaining skeptical. "Will this deal stick?" he questioned in his diary. "I certainly hope so--I am getting old and cannot always hold my breath waiting--well if we do go on with this enterprise I believe I can make a pile of money for the company--and incidentally [sic] a living for myself." A few weeks later Brown learned he was on Humbird and Weyerhaeuser's payroll. His perseverance had finally paid off.

Despite Latah County's obvious wealth, Weyerhaeuser and Humbird instructed Brown to concentrate timber purchasing efforts further south, in the Clearwater River



area. Here he found a crowded field, for his proselytizing had finally alerted many lumbermen to the region's riches. In August, Charles and Nat sighted some of the Clearwater's finest timber stands. Returning to Moscow, Brown wired Glover of the discovery. "Go at once" and claim the timber, Glover telegraphed back, and a few days later Charles and Nat Brown, Theo Fohl, and four other men struck for the woods, only to discover that others were already surveying their prized property. Brown prodded his men and, taking advantage of his rival's survey markers, devoted his energy to cruising--estimating the amount of standing timber. On September 14 Brown met Glover in Lewiston and filed on 30,000 acres of Idaho's choicest timberlands, arriving just one day ahead of their rival. "We only secured the land by the 'skin of our teeth,'" Brown gleefully recorded in his diary, adding it was "one of the sharpest pieces of work I have ever accomplished."

His bitterly disappointed competitor rushed back to the Clearwater hoping to successfully file on adjacent timberlands. Unrested, Brown and his crew also returned, cruising an additional 20,000 acres. On September 24 Brown got word that one of his rival's men had already left for Lewiston. He dispatched Nat to overtake him, and, on a famous "night ride" which included stealing his competitor's horse and commandeering a train, Nat Brown once again filed first on the rich forest land. The Weyerhaeuser syndicate, the largest of all lumbering concerns, had made its first Idaho timberland purchases, and thanks to C. O. Brown were to forever alter the history of northern Idaho.

In October Weyerhaeuser his son Charles, Humbird, and Glover visited Brown in Moscow. It was Brown's first meeting with lumber baron Weyerhaeuser, and he took the party on a nine-day junket through Latah County and Clearwater forests. Brown escorted the group by horseback along narrow forest trails. Despite incessant rain, primitive lodgings, and characterless food, the party tried "to put the best foot forward." After leaving the



Theodore Fohl, 1863-1950. Son-in-law of C. O. Brown. Willing promoter of the Clearwater Timber Co., a later subsidiary of the Potlatch Lumber Co. On the left, an adopted son, Franz.

woods, Weyerhaeuser congratulated Nat on his night ride and thanked Charles for an enlightening tour.

Horseback riding through a cold, soggy forest, sleeping in homestead shacks, and eating cold meals was not exactly the type of travel to which Humbird and the Weyerhaeusers were accustomed. But these were shrewd timbermen who realized Brown had not exaggerated Idaho's riches. In December 1900 they formed the Clearwater Timber Company, with Brown as local agent, which eventually owned over 200,000 acres of prime white pine and a huge sawmill in Lewiston. Further north they would shortly organize the Potlatch Lumber Company in Potlatch and the Edward Ruteledge Timber Company in Coeur d'Alene, the three eventually merging to form Potlatch Corporation, one of the largest timber products firms in the world. Certainly, this outside business dramatically affected the region's history, and just as



certainly this region played a significant role in national forestry history and in the fortunes of the Weyerhaeuser conglomerate. C. O. Brown had brought big timber business to Idaho.

Brown was nothing if not tireless. Having finally lured the kingpin of American lumbermen to Idaho, he continued efforts at getting rich by constructing a logging railroad into some of the area's timberlands. Thus began the strange history of the Moscow & Eastern Railway Company, one of the little known episodes of our local history.

The road was organized in 1899 by Brown and several prominent Moscow businessmen, including George Creighton and Frank Gilbert. It was to begin at Moscow and head northeasterly until terminating near Bovill, unsurprisingly quite close to where the Browns and Fohl held their timber homesteads. Brown, in his typically persistent fashion, promoted the road to Midwestern financiers. He found no one interested in building the line, and when he died in 1902 it seemed the railroad scheme expired too. But actually the Moscow & Eastern just sat dormant, coming out of hibernation when the Potlatch Lumber Company announced it planned to construct a logging railroad.

The chances were probably slim at best that the Moscow & Eastern would have ever become the Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway, but many Moscow businessmen believed they had a realistic chance to snare both the railroad and the large sawmill the company planned to construct. It is doubtful that Potlatch's general manager, William Deary, ever seriously considered Moscow as a rail terminus. Towns such as Palouse and Garfield, being much closer to the company's timber, were better situated. But he was in the midst of a political battle and well understood the advantages of town rivalries.

Deary was attempting to lobby the Idaho legislature to extend the time limit on a law requiring lumbermen to remove timber from state-leased lands within forests,

and he did not believe it economically possible to log them all within the 20-year limit. But he was frequently chastised by the press for these un-Progressive efforts, and, realizing Moscow was always a key community in north Idaho politics, Deary held out the logging railroad carrot to persuade town businessmen not to oppose his lobbying. "I am sure I can get the support of the business men of Moscow," he wrote, "and if they oppose it I am going to tell them that if they do anything to prevent our getting the extension we will immediately build a railroad to our two mills in [Palouse and Colfax] Washington and that Moscow will lose the chance of having the railroad."

Moscow businessmen did not oppose the time extension and consequently believed they would land the railroad. Deary did nothing to discourage this enthusiasm, using it to wield leverage from Palouse City residents, which is where he really wanted his line to commence. "We have good inducements from the people of Moscow and along the [Moscow and Eastern] route," he wrote the Palouse Businessmen's Association. "They have offered right of way along with considerable land with timber on it as bonus. Now [I] will say [that] if [the people of Palouse] are favorable and feel like taking hold and getting right of way for us, we shall be pleased."

The Palouse Businessmen's Association raised over \$10,000 for the right of way, and did all it could to accommodate Deary. The lumber company's railroad began at Palouse and ended at Bovill, not far from where C. O. Brown hoped the Moscow & Eastern would terminate. The company's huge mill was built at the new town of Potlatch. Moscow lost out on both a sawmill and a railroad, but it was not through lack of effort on Brown's part.

When Charles Brown died in August 1902, all Moscow businesses closed for the funeral. He had helped build the small community and brought large-scale lumbering to Idaho. He died before the Weyerhaeusers began sawmilling here, but he



envisioned the big mills, railroads, and immense multi-million dollar logging operations that eventually came. His life is a case study of the impact a local individual can have on national history.

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For More Information: The story of C. O. Brown and the Moscow & Eastern will be told in more detail in Keith Petersen's history of Potlatch and the Potlatch Lumber Company, which the Society will publish in 1987. The Brown diaries will be edited by Petersen and should be published by 1987 or 1988. The diaries are located, along with other Brown personal papers, in the University of Idaho Library's Special Collections. The Historical Society also has a small collection of Brown papers. Ralph Space's Pioneer Timbermen: A History of Clearwater Timber and Timbermen is the only book to date that utilizes the Brown diaries.

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If that "young lady's spring hat" that adorns the frontispiece of the last Harper's Bazaar is really and truly to be the style the coming season there will be no choice for us men folks either in church, in a theater, or anywhere else where people want to see as well as to hear. This "young lady's spring hat" is a startling affair--something like a two story corrugated coal scuttal turned downside up and surmounted with a whole lilac bush, leaves, stem and all.

Moscow Mirror  
30 April 1886, p. 2

#### TEN GOOD THINGS TO KNOW.

1. That salt will curdle new milk; hence in preparing milk porridge, gravies, etc., salt should not be added until the dish is prepared.

2. That clear boiling water will remove tea stains and many fruit stains. Pour the water through the stain and thus prevent it spreading over the fabric.

3. That ripe tomatoes will remove ink and other stains from white clothes; also from the hands.

4. That a tablespoonful of turpentine boiled with white clothes will aid in the whitening process.

5. That boiled starch is much improved by the addition of a little sperm, salt or gum arabic dissolved.

6. That beeswax and salt will make rusty flatirons as clean and smooth as glass. Tie a lump of wax in a rag and keep it for that purpose. When the irons are hot rub them first with the wax rag, then scour with a paper or cloth sprinkled with salt.

7. That blue ointment and kerosene mixed in equal proportions and applied to the bedsteads is an unfailing bedbug remedy, as a coat of whitewash is for the walls of a log house.

8. That kerosene will soften boots and shoes that have been hardened by water and render them as pliable as new.

9. That kerosene will make tin tea-kettles as bright as new. Saturate a woolen rag and rub with it. It will also remove stains from varnished furniture.

10. That cool rainwater and soda will remove machine grease from washable fabrics.

Moscow Mirror  
26 July 1889, p. 2



## BOOK REVIEW

With One Sky Above Us: Life on an American Indian Reservation at the Turn of the Century. Mick Gidley. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979. 159 p. \$9.95. Paper.

M. (Mick) Gidley is senior lecturer in American Literature and Chairman of American and Commonwealth Arts at the University of Exeter in England. Fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the British Academy, and the American Philosophical Society between 1976 and 1978 allowed him to conduct extensive research in numerous Pacific Northwest libraries and archives. The result of his investigation was the publication of With One Sky Above Us, a photographic monograph primarily concerned with the life of Dr. Edward Hempstead Latham, his medical work on the Colville Indian Reservation in northeast Washington, and his photographic depiction of the reservation landscape, the Indian agency, and all the tribal Indians who were forced to call the reservation home.

Dr. Latham, born in Columbua, Ohio, in 1845, spent most of his childhood in Kentucky with his uncle after his father died in 1848. In 1870 he married Mary Archer of New Richmond, Ohio, and together they had three sons while attending college. Latham graduated from the Cincinnati College of Pharmacy in 1882 and received a degree in medicine from Miami Medical College in 1884. His wife Mary graduated in medicine from the Cincinnati College of Medicine and Surgery in 1886. After practicing their professions in Cincinnati for a year they moved to Spokane for health reasons. But after being in Washington for three years, the Lathams drifted apart. Mary stayed in Spokane and became well known for her medical practice, business developments, and community activities. Edward moved to the Col-

ville Reservation and set up a medical office after being appointed agency physician at the Nespelem sub-agency.

While at the reservation Dr. Latham administered medicine and took care of his Indian charges from the San Poil, Spokane, Nez Perce, Colville, Nespelem, Columbia, Lake, and Okanogan tribes who had all been lumped together over a period of years beginning in 1872. Captain John McAdam Webster, the reservation agent, described Latham as only a "fair" medical practitioner. Latham had a drinking problem and although effective in taking care of numerous small pox, grippe, and pneumonia cases, he did not keep up with the latest medical discoveries and publications. Nor was Latham always there when the Indians needed him. No doubt Latham's job was difficult, especially since he had to put up with bureaucratic red tape just to procure meager medical supplies and travel great distances by horse and wagon to tend to health matters on the reservation. Also, according to his job description, Latham's primary function was to "strive to overcome the evil influence of the native 'medicine men,' to abolish their superstitious rites and barbarous customs." Indeed, his assignments were extremely difficult and probably for these reasons Latham viewed many of the reservation Indians with hostility and contempt. Increasingly, he occupied his time with outdoor pursuits--hunting, fishing, and photography.

Actually Latham is known more for his photographs than for his work as agency physician. From his initial appointment in 1890 until his death in 1928, he attempted to capture the reservation environment through thousands of photographs of the landscape (mostly involving water), the common Indian people, some of the leading reservation leaders like Chief Joseph and Chief Moses, and the annual Fourth of July celebrations. Gidley views Latham as an amateur photographer who had an ability to portray the human side of the Indians who posed for him. However, all of the Indians in Latham's world--men, women,



and children--were dressed in their finest apparel and possessed an air of dignity and what appeared as wealth. That is the book's major weakness. Gidley subtitled the book Life on an American Indian Reservation, but the reader cannot gain a sense of real life perspective from Latham photographs. One cannot tell if the various Indians were content or miserable within their reservation experience.

The ninety-three photographs included in this book do, however, provide insight into the Indians' material culture and values. Unfortunately, Gidley does not focus on this aspect of the images. Latham poses Indians in their finest hand-crafted clothing and decorative accessories. It becomes obvious, as one goes through the book, that these Indian tribes accepted and used certain features of white culture that they thought beneficial, but as late as the 1920s still maintained a large degree of their own traditions and customs. That in itself makes the book worthwhile.

Gidley's book is well written and easily read. He devotes more than half of the volume to Latham's photographs, but also provides the reader with a forty page critical summation of national and Pacific Northwest Indian reservation policy. In addition, the book contains a map, a short bibliography of significant research material, and an index. Gidley failed, however, to footnote his primary and secondary source material which is at times disturbing as some readers may want verification of his historical treatment and fact. Overall, With One Sky Above Us is interesting and valuable because it focuses on one of America's most neglected and persistent problems, reservation Indian policy.

--J. D. Britton

J. D. Britton, a Ph.D. candidate in history at Washington State University, is currently writing his dissertation on the 1863 Nez Perce Treaty. He worked for the Society in the early 1980s preparing oral history materials for radio broadcasts.



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

	Member	Friend	Contributor	Sustainer	Sponsor	Patron
Individual	\$ 7.50-15	\$16-30	\$ 31-75	\$ 76-150	\$151-499	\$500 up
Family	12.50-25	26-50	51-100	101-250	251-499	500 up
Business	25-50	51-100	101-250	251-350	351-499	500 up

Privileges are identical for all classes; the higher dues represent a much needed donation to help the Society's work. Dues are tax deductible.

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

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