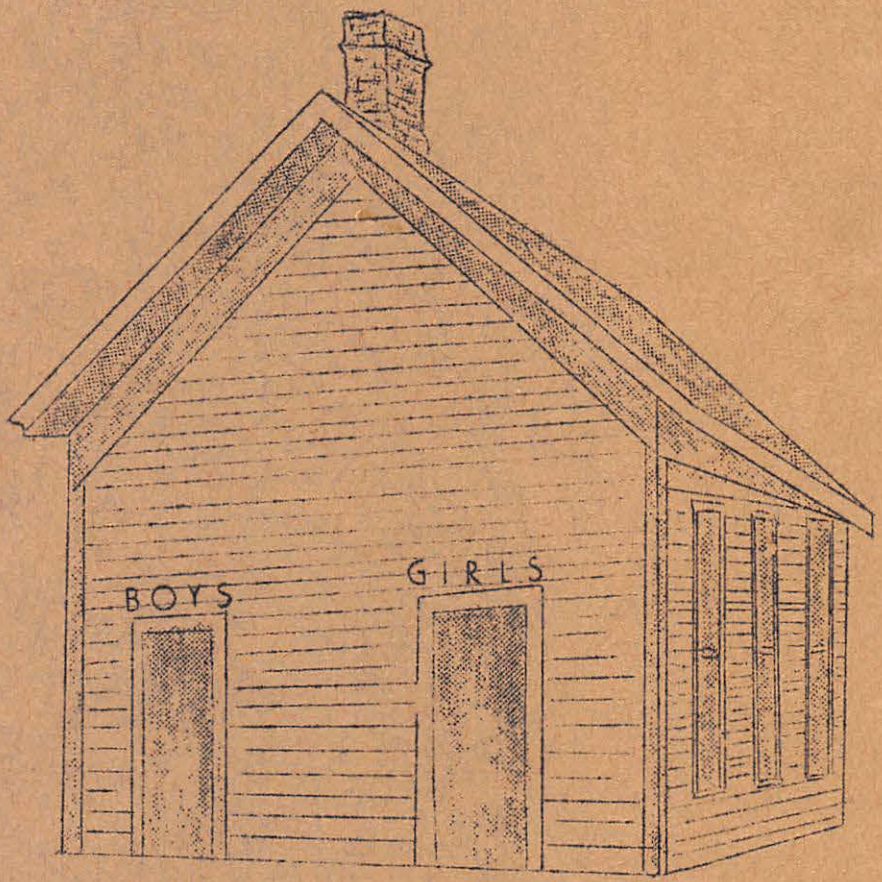
OUR HERITAGE

HISTORY OF

COLUMBIA SCHOOL

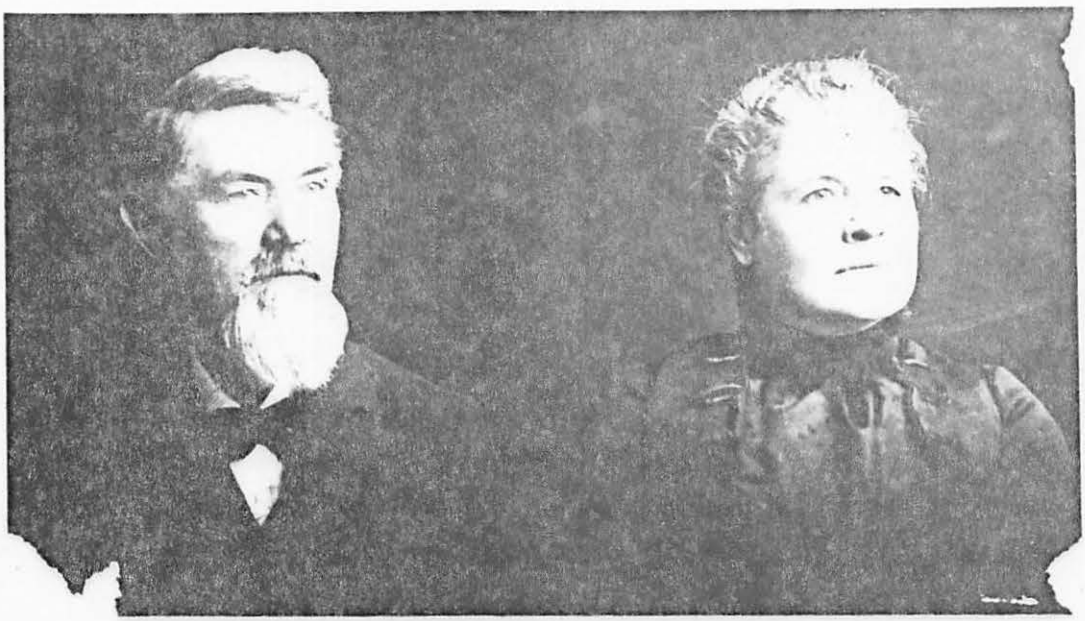


EIGHTH GRADE - 1967

JO AYLETTE BROWN
JEFF CANRIGHT
JO ANNE MUNDEN
TRESSA WARREN
PATRICIA VAUPEL
CHARLOTTE HUTCHENS, TEACHER

-COLUMBIA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER ONE-
Charlotte Hutchens, Teacher, June, 1967.
R.F.D.# I, Dayton, Washington.

Following the signing of a Peace-Treaty with the Northwest Indian Tribes in the year 1858, Eastern Washington Territory was thrown open for settlement.
When with the Oregon Mounted Volunteers, Samuel L. Gilbreath had seen the bunchgrass-covered hills of the Touchet Valley, looking as he said "like immense haystacks as far as the eye could see", and had decided then to homestead there when peace was declared.
Samuel L. Gilbreath and Margaret H. Fanning, who had crossed the plains in the same large wagon-train from St. Joseph, Missouri to the Willamette Valley in the year 1852, were married in Albany, Oregon, on Mar. 16, 1859.
Immediately after the wedding they left for the Touchet Valley.
Their equipment for the trip included a provision-wagon and team, several saddle horses, three herders and three hundred head of cattle.
The previous winter had been a hard one, with deep snow-drifts and much fallen timber with no cross-roads through the Cascade Mountains, so they were compelled almost literally to shovel and hew their way through.
In the mountains they encountered two single men, John Wells and Tom Davis, with their wagon and cattle, who joined them. They were all spring and most of the summer in reaching their first settlement, which was Fort Walla Walla. Captain Dent of the Fort (a brother-in-law of General U.S. Grant) wanted them to settle near the Fort, but the Post was a Cavalry Post, and the horses had grazed off the surrounding area, so they decided to move on to the Touchet Valley.



From Fort Walla Walla they followed the Old Lewis and Clark Trail, which crosses the Coppei creek at about the present railway station. Leaving the Trail they came down into the Touchet Valley through a narrow gulch, now known as the Sudderth Gulch just north of the site of the Dumas orchard. They then turned up the valley and camped that first night near a fine spring of clear, cold water. These were the first wagons ever to enter the Touchet Valley.

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That first night in the Touchet Valley, the Gilbreath caravan had a welcoming-committee composed of Indians on horseback, yelling and firing their guns. The new arrivals, so outmatched in numbers, naturally never expected to see the light of another day. But, as it turned out, no doubt these Indians had recently come into possession of too much firewater, and were just having a bit of fun at the expense of the newcomers, for after an hour or so of such"fun" they disappeared as noiselessly as they had appeared.

The next day the caravan pushed on up the Touchet Valley to the present site of Dayton, which they reached on August 26th, 1859. Dayton was then known as "The Crossing" because it was the central meeting-grounds of all local Indian tribes, Cayuses, Umatillas, Walla Wallas, Spokanes and Nez Perces, where they held their councils, wedding celebrations and sports competitions. Nature had prepared The Crossing for them, ready-made as it were, with plenty of water and bunch-grass for their horses, and unlimited wild game for themsleves. On their arrival at the Crossing, the Gilbreaths found as the sole inhabitants of the place a white man known as "Stubbs" and his squaw wife, who lived in a small but by the riverside. "Stubbs" real name was Theodore Snebley, and his "business" was cattle-rustling, and boot-legging firearms and firewater to the Indians.

The day following arrival the at The Crossing, the men of the caravan started to build a corral for their cattle, but encountered so many dens of rattlesnakes (it was just rattlesnake time and weather) that the Gilbreaths decided to retrace their steps back down-river to the spring where they had camped the night before. Here the Gilbreath familly settled and homesteaded its 160 acres covering level farm land, a hillside for pasture, the creek for water and adjoing timber for fuel. They constituted the first family to settle in old Walla Walla County, outside of the Whitman Mission, Fort Walla Walla, and the village of Walla Walla itself.

Three months later, the Lambert Hearn family arrived and homesteaded about a mile above them, approximately where the present Columbia School now stands. It should be remembered that the Walla Walla County of that day included Columbia, Garfield and Asotin counties as well.

Later that fall Jesse N. Day, and his two brothers-in-law, Jack and Newton Forrest arrived from the Willamette Valley, staked claims in and below Dayton, then returned to the Willamette Valley for the winter.

Several bachelors staked claims near the present site of Huntsville, Bennett of the Bateman place, Fudge, Lloyd, and the Whitaker brothers. George Pollard was one of these bachelors who built his cabin and stayed through the winter, being married the following year. There were but three or four occupied cabins in the Touchet Valley that first winter of 1859-60.

Rev. Berry, a Methodist circuit-rider held regular meetings, every other week in the Gilbreath cabin that winter, with the Gilbreath, Hearn and Stubbs families as a congregation, sometimes including single men who might be in the neighborhood.

On March 18th, 1860, a daughter, Sarah Jane, was born to the Gilbreaths. She was of the Whitman Mission, and the town of Walla Walla itself.

In the spring of 1860, Mr. Gilbreath was plowing with a yoke of oxen along-side the Lewis and Clark Trail, when a traveler to the Orofino mines in Idaho drew in his horse to watch the operation. Finally he asked Mr. Gilbreath what he expected to grow in this dry country. Mr. Gilbreath explained that he expected to grow some vegetables and small fruits for the family table, and some seed grain to plant more land the next year. But the traveler could stand it no longer. As he moved on he shouted back,"I'll tell you what you'll raise here-you'll raise a Hell of a dust, and that's all", and he was still laughing at his own joke as he passed out of sight.

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Jesse N. Day returned to his claim with his family about May of this year. But the Forrest Boys did not return with him, but sold their claims to others. J.H. Newland bought one of the claims they had intended to prove up on. This year homesteaders began to arrive in a steady stream.

Ransome Clarke and his wife Rebecca, had taken a "Donation Claim" (one square mile of land) in the present site of Walla Walla City, in 1855, being later driven out by the Indian War. Ransome died in the Willamette Valley, but his wife, Rebecca, returned to complete proving up on her claim, and was permitted by the Land Department to count the intervening years in proof of her residence. She later married A.J. Reynolds, who became a leading figure in the development of the city of Walla Walla. He and Capt. Dent of the Fort built the first Flouring Mill in Walla Walla.

The Donation Claim which Rebecca Clarke completed proof of residence on. was one of about four or five or such claims recognized by the U.S. Government in Washington Territory.

In the spring of 1861, Israel Davis seeded the first commercial crop of wheat in what is now Columbia County. Davis then went to the Willamette Valley to buy sheep, leaving Mr. Gilbreath in charge of the crop, which was cut with old-fashioned "cradles", and separated from the straw by piling on the ground and tramped on by horses, then winnowed from a ladder in a stiff breeze to a canvas on the ground. 1,000 bushels of wheat was the net result as proof enough that this was destined to become a great wheat country. It was stored carefully to be kept for neighboring land seeding the next year.

In December of the year 1861, Mr. Gilbreath took a string of pack-horses to the head of navigation on the Columbia River known as Old Fort Walla Walla, and later as Wallula, and packed them with staple groceries: flour, sugar, bacon, coffee, etc., intending to sell them in the newly opened Orofino mines in Idaho. He had returned as far as his home cabin on the Touchet on Christmas Day, when it began snowing and did not quit until there were four feet of packed snow on the level, when the weather turned bitterly cold. His trip to the mines was abandoned and all efforts were directed toward keeping men and animals from freezing or starving to death.

Cattle, trying to find shelter on the lee sides of hills became hopelessly stuck in the snow-drifts, and froze to death standing up. Those who made it to the shelter of trees on the hill-side, were attacked by roving bands of wolves and destroyed by the dozens. As for the men and women in the cabins, they dared not even step outside the door without covering their face and ears with whatever was available. A butchered beef-side hanging outside the cabin, was frozen stiff. An axe was necessary to cut out pieces of it, which were like oak chips.

Father's grocery supplies, originally intended for the Idaho miners, were sold to the neighbors at cost, and were the means of saving the lives of many in neighboring families, of which there were about fifteen in the neighborhood. As soon as the top of the snow developed a crust sufficiently hard to walk on, they could come to his cabin for supplies. No one was prepared for such a calamity. Not even the oldest Indians had a tradition of such a winter.

Even then, before the coming of spring, these supplies were exhausted, and the community was forced to resort to grinding the precious seed-wheat in old-fashioned coffee-mills, then cooking it into a kind of porridge on which they existed. Through succeedong Pioneer Days this winter was referred to as "The Hard Winter of 61-62".

Mr. Gilbreath lost his entire herd of cattle, with the exception of a cow and two calves, which he managed to pull through. Cold was not the only enemy, as bands of wolves attacked and killed most of the bands that were caught on the lee-side of hills and could not escape because of the deep drifts by which they

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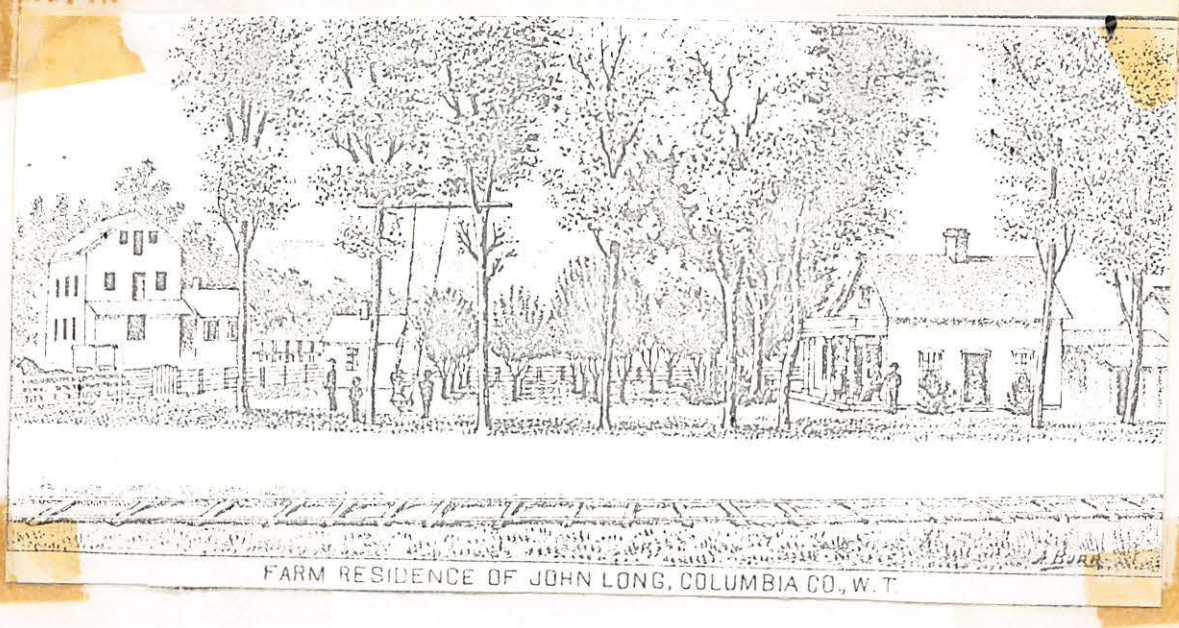
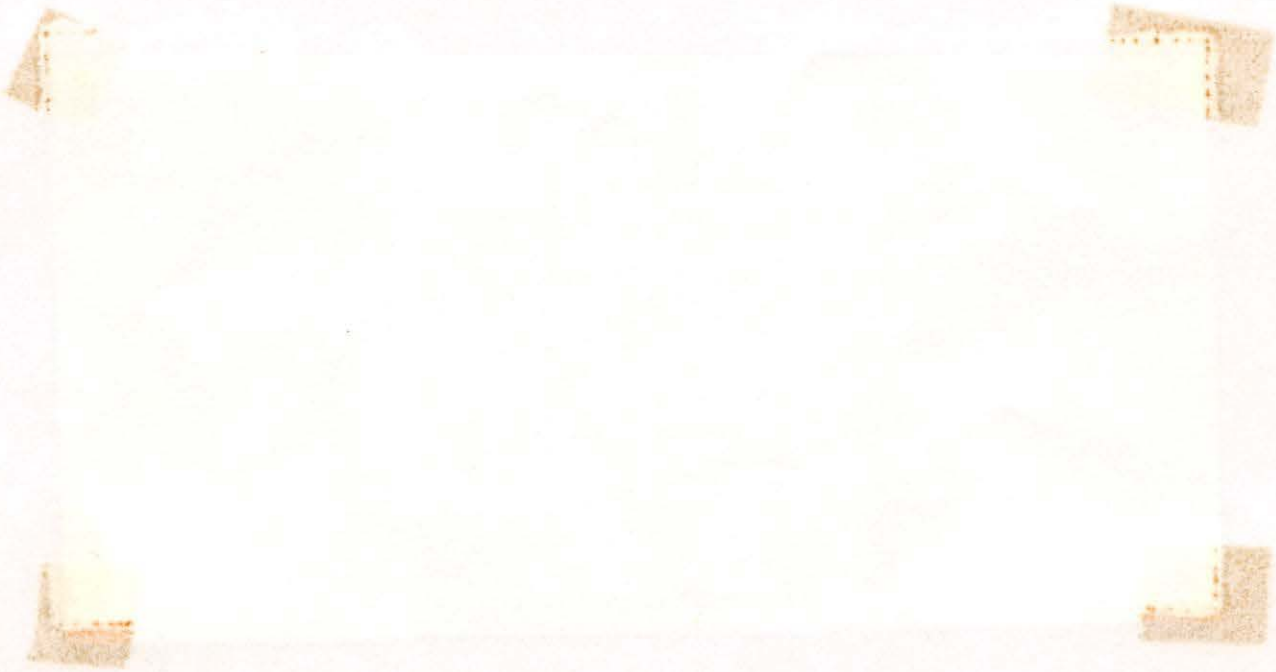
were surrounded.
With the coming of spring a "pony Express" began operating between Walla Walla and the Orofino mines in Idaho, with the Gilbreath cabin as the local stop for meals, rest and a change of horses. This "Express", was operated by Miller and Mossman; Joaquin Miller later became famous as the "Poet of the Sierras". Like other travelers of that day, Joaquin Miller wore buckskin clothing, and slept on the hard, earth floor of the cabin. On return trips, they often carried pouches of gold-dust from the mines, and every station had its golddust scales, for gold-dust was the sole currency of the time. Undaunted, in the spring of 1862, Gil-breath built a new cabin, nearer the highway, and the old cabin was occupied by a school, which opened with a half-dozen neighboring children as pupils, and an Englishman named Hardin as teacher. Though but a privately-supported school, this was doubtless the first attempt at regular education in the County.
Walla Walla county was reorganized in 1862, with the boundaries set as Snake River on the North, Columbia River on the West and the oregon line as the southern boundary.
In the first election held in this reorganized Walla Walla County, held on July 14th,1862, James Van Dyke, John Sheets and Samuel L. Gilbreath were elected to the First Board of County Commissioners. In this election, Walla Walla County polled almost four times as many votes as did King County on the Sound.
In the meantime homesteaders increased in number, as also did the County's "bad men". In addition to Stubbs, whose headquarters were in Dayton, and who managed to maintain an air or respectability, these men included such characters as "Club-foot" George Ives, Bill Bunting, John Cooper, Bill Skinner, and others, whose hideout gave Whiskey Creek its name. The thievery of these men became to bold that it was decided to hold a public meeting, "For all good citizens to attend". Of course all the "bad men" as well for fear of disclosing their hand attended. Father McGhee, a tall slow-speaking Methodist preacher was chosen to be chariman of this meeting, and he wasted no time in coming to the point for which the meeting was called. Speaking directly to the well-known rascals, he said in his slow drawling voice, "Boys, we want you to leave this county and be gone a l--o--n--g t--i--m--e. They left the following day. Later Ives and his gang were hanged by vigilantes in Montana.
That first crop of wheat grown on the Israel Davis homestead, together with a few grown near Fort Walla Walla proved at this early date that this Northwest Territory was destined to become a great grain-growing area-to be followed in due time by equally great industries as well. The first industrial step to appear logically in this pioneer land was the building of flouring-mills to grind wheat into flour for the families themselves, and other grains to be grown following wheat to feed the stock of the pioneer families.
The first flouring-mill on the Touchet River was built by Wait in the year 1865, near the town which now bears his name-Waitsburg.
The following year of 1866, the second mill on the Touchet River was built on the Newt Curl homestead about three miles down-river, by Gilbreath, Locke and Long. The timbers for this mill were hewn from tamarack logs in the Blue Mountains, then to the chosen site by ox teams. The buhrs and machinery for the mill were shipped around the Horn from Boston, thence up the Columbia River to Wallula, then to the site by oxen.
It soon became evident that the local population could not consume the output of these mills, and the only outside outlet for their products was distant, and the only mode of transportation was the horse-drawn wagon. Flour and feed were thus transported by wagon-trains as far east as the mining districts of Colorado, drivers returning with pauments for their loads in gold-dust.

The Gilbreath-Locke-Long mill became known as "MILTON MILLS", and a small settlement began to develope around it, consisting of a post-office, a store, a blacksmith shop, and the inevitable saloon.
Below is the only available photograph of Milton Mill, close to the residence of John Long, one of its builders. This mill operated most of the years in between, until about the year 1910, when it burned to the ground. Unfortunately there is no known photograph in existence, which would show the mill, the mill-race and other details more exactly. This photograph is a copy taken from Frank Gilbert's "Sketches of Old Walla Walla County", which specialized in homes of pioneers only.


FARM RESIDENCE OF JOHN LONG, COLUMBIA CO., W. T.

With the normal expansion of the settlement at Milton Mills, the need for a school became paramount. Mr. Gilbreath donated an acre from his homestead for school purposes. The saloon, not proving the success its owners had anticipated, the buildingit had occupied was sold to the school authorities, and moved onto the acre Mr. Gilbreath had provided. The mill had been built in the year 1866, and it was probably a year or two subsequent to that date before the school was ready for occupancy. At any rate, the children of Milton Mills, including two of the Gilbreaths oldest, began attending this first public school in what is now Columbia County, with the sign "SALOON" still above the door. The seats in this first school were logs hewed on one side with pegs driven in the bottom. The desks were planks laid on top of pegs driven into the wall. Unfortunately, to the best of our knowledge, no photograph now exists of this early school.
There having been another new school started nearer Walla Walla, called Walla Walla County School District #1, the school at Milton Mills was called Walla Walla County School District #2. Mark Witt was the first teacher at this school and Cushing Eels was Walla Walla County's Superintendent of Schools, followed later by Rev. A.W. Sweeney (1872). On November 11th, 1875, the Washington Territorial Legislature established the County of Columbia by division from Walla Walla County. Columbia County as organized then comprised not only the present area of Columbia, but included also what are now Garfield and Asotin Counties.



On separation of Columbia from Walla Walla County, the school district at Milton Mills was changed to Columbia County School District #1, its name was changed to Columbia School, and a new site selected near the crossroads as a more suitable and convenient situation for the school. The first School Superintendent of Columbia County was T.S. Leonard, and W.F. McLaren was the first teacher in the new building at the crossroads. Other teachers about that time were: W.T. Stott, whom the children had nick-named Washington Territory Stott; A.J. Shrum, who was the most musical of the early teachers; J.H. Windell and J.H. Wilt. The new School building was simply constructed in rectangular shape-a one-room class-room with a stove in the floor center, three windows on each side, and two doors in fron- one for boys and one for girls-and beware making a mistake. There were also two small outhouses in their respective corners of the lot, and quite a good-sized playfield. H.B. Ridgley had been a professional base-ball player, turned teacher, and he introduced the boys into the intricacies of the curving ball, base-running, and a steady mind and sure arm before home plate. As a result, "Hez" Brown became pitcher of the Whitman team, when he attained that institution later, after finishing at Dayton High. Likewise Leo Thompson (a south-paw), pitched for the nine at Pullman, while James Gilbreath played center on Whitman's football squad. In the earlier days of the school, the teacher would let the children out to watch the passing of immense herds of sheep on their way to or from their Blue Mountains grazing grounds, or perhaps it would be a large band of Indians dressed in war regalia, or a squad of cavalry from the Walla Walla Post as they jogged on their routine travels.

In the following school photograph, taken about the year 1900, Nancy Elizabeth Gilbreath-who never married but gave a long life exclusively to teaching primary grades in which she excelled-is shown as teacher of the Columbia School of her childhood, with her youngest brother, Fred, in the role of pupil, also Blanche Gilbreath Archer of Pullman, youngest daughter of her oldest brother, Lee Samuel Gilbreath. All Gilbreath children passed through Columbia School for their basic training

In 1878, Henry Villard bought the Baker narrow-gauge railroad, which connected Walla Walla with Wallula, widened it and connected it with his Portland Line. The next year, 1879 (the year this writer was born) his Oregon-Washington Railroad Company, built into the town of Dayton, the Pioneers, led by Mr. Gilbreath, having donated all rights-of-way for this purpose.

The entire grade and construction-work for this railroad was performed by Chinese contract labor, that is to say by Coolie slaves, using hand-shovels only. These men wore Coolie hats, and long pig-tails that were tucked under the hats, in line with the ancient Chinese myth that without them, they could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

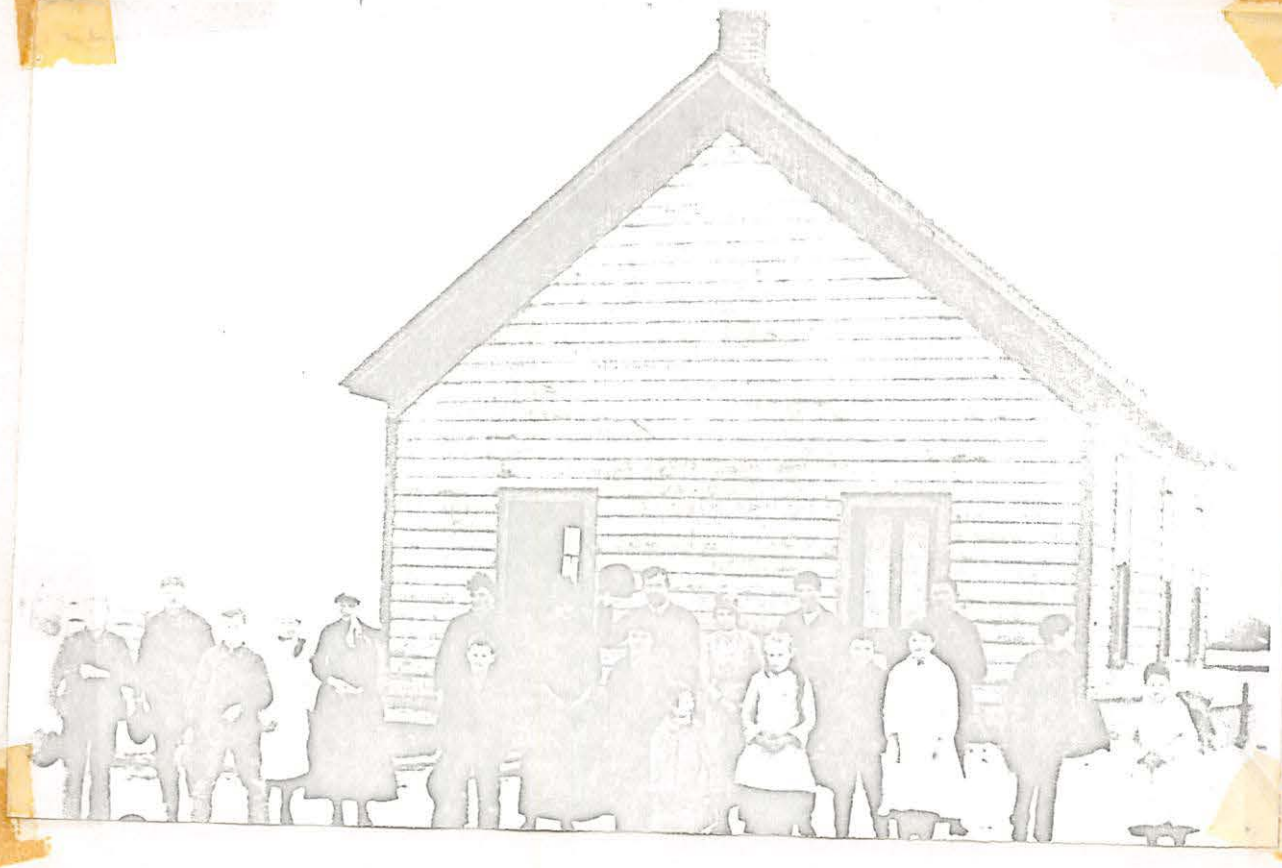
Coolies who died on the job were either buried in the railroad grade or in adjacent fields. It was not unusual later for a farmer in plowing his field of sod, to uncover the remains of a Coolie.

While the railroad was generally welcomed, time was required for both man and beast to become accustomed to its operations, especially as it parallelled the main roadway.

Dr. Pietrzycki, though Polish, was well-liked by the Dayton people in general, though sometimes he was rather easily excited, in speech. One day while down the line to see a patient-well, let the good doctor himself tell the story: "My horse-she don't like him, you she! You she! She run away, you she! You she! And one day she had done just that, you she! You she! When "she" saw the iron horse coming up the road towards her, with steam hissing, and whistle shrieking, she turned tail and fled for home, leaving the good doctor in his broken buggy to get home as best he could. In this connection it should rightly be said that in all local spelling-bees, the Doctor's name was sure to come up, and if you could spell it correctly, you automatically went to the head of the class.

Lacking access to past records of Walla Walla and Columbia County school teachers with their teaching dates, the best we can do is to list from memory several of the outstanding teachers as remembered by ourselves and classmates, such as J.L. Mohundro and J.O. Mattoon, who married mary Gilbreath, and later became School Superintendent of Whitman County, Washington. Johnny Woods was a favorite with eighth graders. He later became Principal of Sharpstein School in Walla Walla.

Following is a second photograph of Columbia School, taken at an earlier date with Mr. Hunt as the teacher



Recognizable in this photo are the following members of the Gilbreath family, Lee Joe, Charles, Sue, and Rose. Martha and George Ellis, whose family lived on what was later called the Richardson place, possibly now the Moore place. George Brown who lived on what later became the George Spalinger place. Oscar and Maude Long, who lived in what was at the time known as "Pie-plant Gulch". John, Ella and Frank Windust, whose father bought the Long place shown near the mill in the Milton Mill sketch. Others are not so clear. This photograph was taken about the year 1893, which was the year the Great Depression over-took all Western farmers, and made their lives a constant scramble.

In 1881 the county superintendent published the following report:

No. of school districts	61
No. of school houses	54
No. children of school age	3,286
No. children attending school	2,005
No. teachers employed	49

Then in 1882 the county superintendent gives the following report:

New districts organized	4
New buildings erected	9
No. districts not having school house	4
Average length of school term	4 mo.
Longest term	9 mo.
Shortest term	3 mo.

No. teachers having first grade education	7
Highest wages paid male teachers	$ 80
" " " female "	60
Lowest " " male "	33
" " " female "	25
No. male teachers in county	22
" female " " "	28
Value of school property	$19,488
No. children school age	2,000
" " under school age	525
No. pupils enrolled in public school	,223
" " " " private school	38
Average daily attendance	824

This was the year of the small pox epidemic so it was considered a good record. In 1902 the present site of Columbia school was purchased from Leroy C. Brown for $25. Originally the Lambert Hearn family homesteaded the site but sold it to Payne in 1861, thus the name Payne Hollow. Payne sold this land to Mr. Brown. The school consisted of the building itself, a barn and two outhouses which were chemical. The barn burned down at least twice and was rebuilt. They suspicioned that the older boys were smoking. The teachers boarded with families near the school.

In 1916-17, County Superintendent W.W. Hendron gives the following report:

Total No. districts	43
" " teachers	83
No. pupils enrolled	1,721
Value of school property	$146,500

In 1930 the value of Columbia School building was $5,000, value of equipment $600, insurance $3,000. Also in the year 1930, in District #1 there were:

No. days taught		172.5
Grade	1	5
	2	3
	3	7
	4	2
	5	4
	6	3
	7	6
	8	4
District evaluation		$463,668.00
Tax rate		4 mills

In 1936 the addition to the building was built by Lovell Burchett for $_____.
These school districts have been consolidated into Columbia Dist #1.

#15	Baldwin School	1926
#12	Bundy School	1931
#45	Mt. Pleasant School	1945

During the 1930's, organized baseball was played. On Friday afternoons they would play other country schools. Mr. Monte Leighty would come after school and coach the columbia team.

Around 1926 the road was changed from where it was then to the present location.

Columbia school was a center for community meetings which always included a large potluck dinner. Community plays were presented to standing room audiences. These plays traveled to the different country schoolhouses and other communities brought their plays to Columbia. These were very popular during the 1930's. An interesting point brought out by the superintendent was that many years ago the census was taken each year by having the teacher write down childrens names. This was sent home and signed by the parents. These census are accepted by the U.S. Social security and numerous requests have been received to prove ages of persons attending school at that time.
Klum was a sign or stopping point on the N.P. Railroad where people stopped the train or the little bug that traveled the tracks and rode into Dayton which was about 2 miles. Klum was located across from Roy Eslick's present home.
The hot lunch program was begun in 1952. Darrel Roderick remodeled the kitchen by installing the sink and building the counter. The stove was already in place as it had been used by the Farm Bureau. Mrs. Rayburn was the first cook and she and Mrs. Floyd McCauley purchased the cooking utensils, dishes, cutlery, trays,etc. Jean Hatfield succeeded Mrs. Rayburn in 1955, and cooked for i year. Mrs. Ernest Smith came in 1956 and is still with the school. How we all do like her Cooking!!! The government had helped every year with commodities such as: flour, rice, beans, milk, canned fruit, cheese, frozen chicken, turkey, and hamburger.
Prior to 1955, the janitor work was done by the teachers but in January, 1955, Darrel Newby became the janitor. Successive janitors have been: Jay Rayburn, Ernest Smith, Ora Winnett, Don Stoops (who taught school, drove the bus, and did the janitor work) and this year Jay Rayburn has been the janitor.

MONA WARD's Recollections-The teacher was a tall, very slender woman who had only 2 dresses-one brown and one black and that was all she ever wore. To punish one boy she made him sit on her lap. When he returned to his playmates he said that her knee was so bony that it almost cut him in half.
VINCE CLAGUE's Recollections-The Lewis family lived on Bowman hill with 2 boys. One boy scratched himself badly on his arm on his way to school, probably while g ng through a barb wire fence. Upon arriving at school he told everyone that he had been attacked by a cougar. Everyone immediatl·· became excited so Mr. McCauley, a neighbor, came with a gun, as did many other parents and school was dismissed for the day. Finally people realized the boy had made up the story.

Programs were held in connection with basket socials given by the school. Mr. Harry Kennedy, the teacher, assigned a boy to learn some famous lines from Shakespeare but the boy didn't want to so Mr. Kennedy told him he had to learn those lines. At the program the boy got up and gave these lines:

Here I am all ragged and dirty,
The girls try to kiss me and I
Run like a turkey.

Mr. Kenndey said nothing that night but the next day when he arrived at school he was paddled with Mr. Kennedy's paddle, which was a wide board with holes bored in it, so hard that spots where the holes were became blood blisters.

Cooden [illegible]
Thomas W. Whetstone
Robt Van Nice
Frank Stovall
Sam English
Ambrose Johnson