

IMELINE HISTORY

- **1805 Lewis and Clark** records indicate 3,000 Sokuik Indians reside in the area north of where the Snake River joins the Columbia River. (Later spelled Skutenai, gone by 1830.) Scootney Spring (now under the Scootney Reservoir) is named after them.
- **1829 Last buffalo killed** in Big Bend area. Black tail deer, mountain sheep and goats extinct.
- **1830 The Oregon Trail** is firmly established going through Walla Walla (Whitman Mission) and down the Columbia River.
- **1838 Fort Wahlah Wahlah** (Wallula) is bypassed by the Oregon Trail.
- **1847 The Whitman Massacre** occurs causing Fort Wahlah Wahlah to be moved to the current site of Walla Walla.
- **1850 The major center of commerce** in the Inland Empire area is Walla Walla.
- **1853 A state survey** was performed to find transcontinental railroad routes over the Cascades and includes the Crab Creek Coulee route.
- **1857 The White Bluff Military Supply and Ferry was established.** (15 miles down river from Vantage)
- **1858 The White Bluff Road** (Capt. Frasier's Wagon Rd.) between Fort Simco and Fort Colville crosses Crab Creek approx. 6 miles west of Othello.
- **1859 The Caribou Trail** (Road) between Fort Wahlah Wahlah to Fort Okanogan passes by Scootney Springs southeast of Othello. (White Bluff Road and Caribou Trail crossed near Wheeler) (Caribou Trail gone by 1885)
- **1860 Oregon State formed leaving the Washington Territory** (Idaho & Montana) with what was left, 12,000 people in what is now Washington State. People traveled through, but no one lived in the Big Bend area.
- **1861 Major center of commerce is Portland** , with overflow of settlers to Vancouver.
- **1862 Abraham Lincoln signs the Transcontinental Land Grant Railroad bill** , which would eventually grant the land Othello is on to the Northern Pacific Railroad.
- **1863 The boundaries of the modern State of Washington** are established.
- **1864 Steam boat service from Portland to White Bluff** established with road to Pend Oreille Lake. Boiler and machinery for mining hauled over this route to Pend Oreille Lake.
- **1865 The war between the states is over** , migration via the Oregon Trail begins in earnest. Spokane & Seattle areas have settlers.
- **1869 The Union to Pacific Transcontinental Railroad** is completed in Utah.
- **1870 Washington's first bank** is established in Walla Walla.
- **1871 Whitman County is formed** which includes the future Adams County.
- **1872 The first settlers in the Othello area** begin cattle ranching along lower Crab Creek, (Hutchinson, McManamon and Blythe).
- **1873 Major center of commerce in Washington State** is now the Olympia/Puget Sound Port area.
- **1874 The Northern Pacific Railroad builds the line** from Kalama (Vancouver) to Olympia (Puget Sound Port).
- **1875 The Northern Pacific Railroad Land Grant was 80 miles wide** in the Washington Territory, extending past Othello from Cunningham.
- **1876 50,000 head of cattle grazed in the Big Bend area** and were driven to Wyoming for marketing at \$15.00 each.
- **1877 The last Indian war is fought**, Chief Joseph says "I will fight no more".
- **1879 75,000 live in what will become Washington State** , most in Olympia and Vancouver, 4,000 in Walla Walla and 3,500 in Spokane.
- **1880 Cowboy falls off Basalt Cliff** later found dead under horse, area called Deadman Bluff. The 1880-1881 winter was worst on record. Snowed from Nov. 15 to March 15, ground was frozen until May. Five feet of snow at White Bluff Army supply depot. 100,000 cattle freeze to death in basin.

- **1881 Northern Pacific completes the Pend Oreille Line** from Wallula to Lake Pend Oreille over Providence Hill south of Lind headed for the mines in north Idaho. Spokane had 5,000 people.
- **1882 Adams, Franklin and Whitman County are formed** with their present boundaries. \$167,000 valuation, \$1,169 assessed.
- **1883 The Northern Pacific completes the line from Lake Pend Oreille** to Lake Superior creating the second transcontinental railroad.
- **1884 Union Pacific joins the Oregon Railway Navigation Company** at Wallula (Oregon Trail Route) reducing travel time on the Oregon Trail from five months to five days (third transcontinental route).
- **1885 Northern Pacific opens Pasco to Yakima Line.** Six million sacks of wheat hauled from Walla Walla area to Portland & Tacoma, rail gridlock throughout Pacific Northwest system. Rail reaches town of Three Forks and changes name to Pullman (after the elegant Pullman railroad cars).
- **1886 Final route of Northern Pacific goes over Stampede Pass** to Tacoma. Seattle has 10,000 people, commits to build their own railroad via Snoqualmie Pass and begins to build from Seattle and Spokane.
- **1887 Northern Pacific granted 40 million acres** of land and becomes the nations largest non-governmental landowner. Northern Pacific begins to build the Ellensburg, Columbia and East Railroad to Well #7 (Lind) to reduce travel time (through the Crab Creek Coulee). Tacoma's commerce twice that of Seattle. Stampede Pass tunnel completed 2.2 miles long.
- **1888 Northern Pacific builds** from Spokane to Davenport, Wilber and Coulee City wheat land to compete with Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern. First Adams County jail/courthouse in Ritzville, cost of \$3,700. Hatton post office established (closed in 1975).
- **1889 Washington State obtains state hood** with 350,000 people. Seattle, Lakeshore and Eastern reach Snoqualmie Falls from west and almost to Davenport going east but stalled in battle for right-of-way north of Dry Falls.
- **1890 Tracks and bridges ordered** for Ellensburg and North Eastern through Othello area. The great Seattle fire cripples Northwest economy.
- **1891 Right-of-way war** north of Dry Falls ends with the Northern Pacific purchasing the Seattle, Lakeshore and Eastern Railroad and cancels the Ellensburg/Lind cutoff project. Half of the Walla Walla wheat crop rots before getting shipped to the coast. Washington State University is formed, in Pullman.
- **1893 The Great Northern** reaches Seattle from St. Paul, a 72 hour trip (\$35.00) (fourth transcontinental line). Railroads haul 95% of all freight in U.S. Worldwide economics collapse. NP and UP go into receivership.
- **1894 The final Northern Pacific Land Grant** including the area around Othello was granted for a total of 2 million Washington State acres. (Every other section in 80 mile wide strip through territories.) (1/2 of Adams County owned by NP.) End of cattle era. Bunch grass gone, 25,000 wild horses eating range grass in basin.
- **1895 Wild horse round up** near Scootney Springs. Wheat sells for 18 - 20 cents per bushel.
- **1896 Annual Fourth of July picnic** started at Crab Creek. Hatton is nearest post office and rail station.
- **1897 The Alaska Gold Rush**, Washington State has 500,000 people. After gold rush, the main use of the Puget Sound was export/import from Orient and lumber to California.
- **1898 Seattle Northshore and Eastern tracks west of Spokane removed.** Between 1890 and 1900, Ritzville averaged 12-1/2" of rain, 22 bushels of wheat and 75 bushels of potatoes per acre.
- **1899 White Bluff Ferry** replaced with two horse powered unit. Cunningham gets post office (closes in 1985).
- **1900 Last Indian uprising.** Wanapum Indians did not like white men grazing along the "Crab Creek Sink" between Corfu and Columbia River. Adams County exports 5 million bushels of wheat.

- **1901 Homesteaders began to arrive** in the arid Columbia Basin - May, Adams, Barton, Lee, Reynolds, Morgan, Lucy, Hays, Drumheller, Damen, Michel, Rayburn. Ritzville exports more wheat than any other town in world, 2 million bushels in 1990 boxcars.
- **1902 One room school**, home post office and general store called Billington for 18 to 20 homesteads, was established 6 1/2 miles southeast of the future Othello site. Renamed Hamlet in 1906; closed in 1907. 50 million bushels of wheat from Inland Empire sold for 50 cents per bushel. (Averaged 40 million for next 30 years).
- **1903 96% pure silica mine** 3 miles northeast of Billington closes for good having shipped only 2 rail cars from Hatton in 1898. Othello school opens in small house near where 14th and Main will be built. US Reclamation Service declares Columbia Basin Irrigation impractical.
- **1904 Othello home post office** opens April 15, 1904 near 14th Avenue (some say 4th Avenue and Main Street in December 1, 1904). Is a Star Route from Cunningham. SP&S Railroad started from Spokane to Portland (Jim Hill)
- **1905 Othello is put on the state map.** White Bluff Road improved from White Bluff Ferry to Corfu. (Can still see the switch back road on the north side of Saddle Mountain.)
- **1906 Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railway** (Milwaukee) buys right-of-way through the basin for the high price of \$25.00 an acre! Pay homesteaders to help grade roadbed, saved many starving farmers from leaving land. Grandma Adams passed away.
- **1907 Milwaukee construction crews** arrive in Othello from Lind. Drills well and improves ice cave near Smyrna for storing crew provisions. Town site for a division point is platted by Milwaukee Land Company. Name of near by post office used for railroad town site. Post office moves to 1st and Main Street. Too cold to travel for burial at Cunningham, buried at homestead and begins what became American Legion Cemetery along Highway 17. (Hard layer makes digging difficult, replaced in 1960.)
- **1908 Forty families in Othello.** Six blocks east to west, 5 blocks north to south. Northern Pacific builds a spur from Connell to the Coulee City Line and plats Bruce six miles east of Othello, builds water system. Cunningham paper moves to Othello (Outlook Times). Two story brick school enlarged in 1924, removed in 1953 to build current football field. Presbyterian Church started (current museum).
- **1909 Milwaukee completes the line from Wisconsin to Puget Sound.** This was the first true great lakes to the Pacific rail line. First train, June 11, stalled in Warden due to dust storm. White Bluff Road closed. Direct mail service for Othello via railroad postal service. (Railroad did not go to Spokane.)
- **1910 Town of Othello incorporates.** City plat and water system given to the City. One million people in the state. 400 in Othello.
- **1911 Nation's last homestead land grants** in "Pot Holes Country". (Danielson)
- **1912 Hotel is built in Othello** on Larch Street. (Old Hotel & Art Gallery)
- **1913 The Milwaukee runs passenger trains** over the Oregon/Washington Railroad Navigation Company tracks into Spokane. Chicago - Seattle - 60 hours.
- **1914 U.S. enters W.W.I. Washington State** has more main line rail than any other state west of Mississippi. Spokane has five major rail servers. Adams County has four railroads.
- **1915 The Panama Canal** was completed. Transcontinental rail freight drops in half. Trackage not installed on bed graded east of Schrag. Milwaukee begins to lose business.
- **1916 Rayburn Ranch House** (first big ranch house) started at Rayburn Road and Highway 26. (Moved to Booker & Foley Road in 1975 and rebuilt.)
- **1917 First wild jackrabbit drive organized.** People walking in 5 mile wide line between Crab Creek and Saddle Mountains.
- **1918 The end of the wet era** (10" - 15" of rain for last 30 years). Wheat crops drop to 1/10 of "normal production". W.W.I ends.
- **1919 First cross state electrical tie** between Puget Power and WWP occurs at Taunton. The Columbia River Basin Commission is formed to evaluate possible irrigation. Othello Milwaukee Round House burns to ground, 8 engines lost. Building replaced with brick one.
- **1920 Milwaukee completes electrification** between Tacoma and Othello. The Milwaukee is the most modern and efficient railroad in world.

- **1921** **The 650 people in Othello** now stabilizes to 450 for next 30 years (until water comes).
- **1922** **The diesel engine facilitates** larger dry land farms and larger trucks.
- **1925** **Columbia Basin Irrigation League** is formed.
- **1927** **The railroad cafeteria** opens in the north half of the 25' x 125' depot building. Located 200' south of Main Street on the west side of the mainline. Known as the Beanery, the crew cafeteria was open to the public and was known for it's hardy meals for a reasonable price. 8' wide boardwalks were built from the end of the sidewalk on Main Street to the passenger platform between the depot and mainline. Section houses and bunk houses were scattered all around the rail yards between the stock yards, ice and coal houses, freight and passenger depots, round house, wheel shop, fueling and sanding stations, etc.
- **1928** **Milwaukee goes into receivership.** Beginning of a drought. 3" - 6" rain for 5 years.
- **1929** **Great Northern opens** the longest tunnel in the world, 7.7 miles under Steven's Pass, becomes more competitive with Northern Pacific and Milwaukee. Railroads and Othello enjoy financial prosperity until financial collapse of 1929.
- **1931** **Electricity comes to Othello** homes and businesses via WWP line to Taunton.
- **1933** **Grand Coulee Dam** is authorized. Columbia River lock system begins to compete with railroads for Inland Empire wheat.
- **1935** **Grand Coulee Dam design** changed to be high dam. The high speed Milwaukee "Hiawatha" passenger service begins through Othello.
- **1940** **James Hill's son** , Samuel Hill, opens Mary Hill Museum.
- **1942** **Grand Coulee Dam** is completed.
- **1945** **There are 2 million** people in the State of Washington.
- **1948** **O'Sullivan Dam completed.** Largest rock fill dam in world (no water anywhere around the dam site). Bureau of Reclamation locates district office in Othello.
- **1949** **Big Bend Power** to service United State Bureau of Reclamation federal buildings and Radar Base and brings line 16 miles from southeast and extends line through town on 7th Avenue.
- **1951** **The Radar Base** is established on Saddle Mountain south of Othello. 637th Radar Squadron - 200 men. Big grass fire north of town. Ambulance train to Ellensburg makes and holds speed record for line. (Two men die of burns.)
- **1953** **First irrigation water** arrives in Othello area.
- **1955** **Highway 26 built**, replaces King Street. Overpass built over Milwaukee at Othello and Northern Pacific near Lucy Road. First hard surface road in area.
- **1956** **Highway 17 finished.** A new mechanical icehouse and icing platforms on railroad are built north of Othello.
- **1957** **Othello Community Hospital** opens with 16 beds. It takes 44 hours to go from Chicago to Seattle via railroad, twice as long by car.
- **1958** Othello Ice and Cold Storage, Othello's first industry, begins producing ice for railroad and local produce.
- **1959** **City delivery of mail** started in Othello. The Titan missile sites were constructed in Royal City, Warden and Batum. Part of the northern protection system. These three sites each with three missiles were decommissioned by 1964.
- **1960** **2,669 people in Othello** , end of rail postal service. Othello is a Star Route again.
- **196?** **The three story wood bunkhouse** is built on Broadway to house the crews between runs from Seattle and Avery, ID.
- **1961** **First frozen food company**, Othello Packers, begins processing peas, carrots and corn. (south end of Simplot) End of Chicago-Seattle passenger rail service through Othello.
- **1964** **Chef Ready french fry** plat starts operations (McCains).
- **1968** **End of express parcel** shipping by railroad.
- **1971** **Amtrak formed by U.S. Government.** Pasco nearest station to Portland/Spokane. Ephrata nearest station to Seattle/Spokane.
- **1973** **Radar Base** deactivated.
- **1977** **1/3 of U.S. freight** hauled by railroads, half of basin's grain. The rest goes by truck/barge. Milwaukee Railroad files bankruptcy.

- **1980 Icehouse and platforms burned and buried** , Simplot expands west. Milwaukee abandons trackage west of North Dakota. Right-of-way turned into John Wayne Trail (except between Royal City and Warden).
- **1981 Grain train** concept begins. Bruce ships it's first 26 car grain train.
- **1982 BN purchases the Warden/Othello** section of the Milwaukee line.
- **1984 Othello, Warden and Connell** line sold to Central Washington Railroad.
- **1996 The framed remains** of five 16' x 26' crew homes west of the depot were destroyed.
- **1997 All Central Washington Railroad** changes to Columbia Basin Railroad; 3/4 of basin grain hauled by truck/barge.
- **1998 5400 people** in city limits, 5,000 outside in panhandle.
- **1999 Railroad Bunkhouse** on Broadway destroyed; no railroad structures left.
- **2000 Nestle** sells to JR Simplot Company.
- **2001 State owned grain train** used to ship from basin.
- **2002 Wal-Mart** superstore opens in Othello.

NOTES

1. Varying stories and dates exist. Accurate corrections and additional information is requested.
2. Road names, towns, etc. are used for location purposes; most did not exist when the event occurred.

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