

Pullman

Early History

1871-1892

The City of Pullman was incorporated under territorial law on April 11, 1888, as a fourth class city. It had a population of 250-300 people. The first city government consisted of five Trustees: O. Stewart, J. H. Maguire, J. M. Hill, M. S. Phillips, and T. H. Taylor. The Trustees elected Orville Stewart as their Chairman. William Newton was appointed City Clerk; R. Lanning, City Marshal; W. F. Windus, City Treasurer; R. Lanning, Street Commissioner; and H. G. DePledge, City Assessor and City Surveyor. William Newton, also the corporate counsel, was appointed to draw up ordinances at his earliest convenience, defining the duties and fixing the compensation of office approved by the Board of Trustees.

By April 17, 1888, "Bye" laws and rules of order were adopted. The first ordinance passed was "to regulate and license the sale and disposal of spirituous fermented malt and other toxicating liquors within the corporate limits of the town of Pullman." (Clerk Newton didn't use punctuation marks.) By the end of the year, 19 ordinances had been adopted (with the rules suspended, read twice at the same meeting and voting at once thereon). The little village was firmly set on a course of organization, physical improvement, and economic growth.

Thomas Neill arrived in Pullman in 1888. Born in Ireland in 1861, he had come to Indiana to study law, and then moved on to North Dakota. There he saw a Northern Pacific Railroad advertisement extolling the virtues of the town of Pullman in the midst of the rich Palouse farming land in Washington Territory. The advertisement suggested that the town needed a newspaper. Neill and his wife, Ada Allen Neill, moved to Pullman. He published the first issue of the Pullman Herald on November 2, 1888. The paper became a vigorous and enlightened spokesman for the area.

In order that economic growth flourish, a number of elements must be in place; including superior transportation

facilities, communications services, power, stable governmental support, and a product for sale. All of these items were developing and were available within the span of a decade.

For a town of 500 persons to have three railroads seems incredible, but the fact is that in 1885 the Columbia and Palouse Railway (later a branch of the Oregon-Washington Railroad and Navigation Co.) built a road into Pullman, and the first train came over the line to Pullman on September 8, 1885. The Spokane and Palouse Railroad from Spokane to Genesee, Idaho, was built in 1887.

Securing the Northern Pacific route to Lewiston from Pullman was an achievement that honed the wits and resources of the community. In the spring of 1890 the Northern Pacific proposed to extend its line to Lewiston through Moscow, branching the line at Whelan. When this was discovered, telegrams were sent to New York and also to the traffic manager and the chief engineer in St. Paul, pointing out that the road would get 100,000 more tons of freight if the line went through Pullman rather than branching at Whelan. The next day, the chief engineer asked that a committee meet with him in Spokane. The committee set off for Spokane where it presented maps of the proposed route and information on the productivity of the land along the way. No promises were made at that meeting, however, the local engineer in charge of construction asked the Pullman committee to show him the proposed route.

The committee was told if it could get the rights-of-way along the route, it would be considered. Rights-of-way were finally secured, but then the committee was told the railroad required an acre of land in Moscow for a station. This seemed impossible, but Dr. Webb recalled a written memo given him by a Mr. McGregor saying if the Northern Pacific ever built in Moscow, he would give them a depot site. When McGregor was reminded of his promise, he indicated he had

sold all his Moscow land except his home. But he remembered that he and a Mr. Taylor had agreed if the railroad came, one would give the other half the land not used by the railroad. The deed for Taylor's land had not been given. Accordingly, McGregor received the land and it was made available for the Northern Pacific station.

The Trustees had many items of business even for a small town. Twice they levied quarantines, once for smallpox and once for scarlet fever. They even considered building a pest house. In April, 1889, they purchased Lot #1, block 7 for a jail for \$350.

The committee system was used to develop and investigate proposals. Committees on highways, public improvements, finance, fire, health, and police kept five Trustees busy. In May, 1889, the Assessor delivered the assessment roll to the Board, and the Board then declared it would act as a Board of Equalization. Apparently the Assessor had done a good job for no complaints were registered on that day although the Bank of Pullman later received a change.

Ordinance 32 of August 6, 1889 created a Fire Department and a committee to oversee matters pertaining to fire and water. At this time M. C. True proposed to the City that it use his newly drilled artesian well at Main and Pine. This was rejected. First considerations of a water system were rejected as too costly.

Thomas Neill says in his memoirs that the first thing he campaigned for in the Herald was street lighting. The December 20th meeting of the Trustees notes that "it is the duty of the town Marshall to light the lamps erected by individuals and that the town furnish oil therefor".

Beginning a long tradition, the Trustees appropriated \$30 for the purpose of assisting in paying for pamphlets advertising Pullman.

The most persistent item of business over the years had to do with surveying, establishing grades, grading streets, filling holes, building sidewalks, crosswalks, culverts, and railings. The early sidewalks were wooden and there were many lumber bills therefor. Buildings had to be moved from areas planned for streets. The Trustees asked counsel their rights in these matters and how to proceed. In fact, frustration in these matters shows through the minutes. The March 22, 1888, meeting authorized a telephone call to the county surveyor in Colfax to come at once to establish all grades for streets on which sidewalks had been authorized.

Sanitation was another persistent problem. One evening, M. C. True was late for the Trustees' meeting. At that time the first order of business was to move "that the town Marshall take legal measures toward the removal of a nuisance maintained by M. C. True in allowing slops and refuse of his hotel to accumulate on the ground near the hotel and the maintenance of a hog pen in his hotel yard". The removal of an old privy at the back of Farris Brothers' store was also directed.

Washington's change from a territory to a state triggered a reorganization of city government. On April 11, 1890, a petition was received from legal and qualified voters to call a special election to submit the question of reincorporation to the voters of said town, as provided by section 4 of an Act Providing for Organization and Classification. The petition was signed by 50 people and was accepted by the Trustees. A special election was set for April 28, 1890, between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. On May 3, the returns of the election were opened in the presence of the Board of Trustees and canvassed. Sixty-eight votes were cast and all were in favor of reincorporation.

Thereupon, it was necessary to conduct a new election for public officials. This election, in which 101 votes were cast, took place on May 19, 1890. W. V. Windus received 98 votes

to become Mayor. The Trustees who had the next highest number of votes were D. C. Munroe (96), Wm. Chambers (97), E. H. Letterman (81), J. Wilkinson (69), and T. H. Kaylor (55).

Now a whole new set of city employees and ordinances needed to be dealt with repeating much of the previous work. The push was on for more extensive and expensive actions than in previous sessions.

On June 13, 1890, the committee on fire and water reported on the advisability of purchasing a chemical fire engine and other fire protection. It was decided that hooks and ladders should be constructed and placed on wheels with buckets and axes and other necessary articles to fight fires. Alas, it was too late!

On July 3rd, all the business buildings except the Herald and the hotel were in smoking ruins after two hours. The fire was discovered at the rear of Lyle Brothers' stable on Grand Street. Thanks to the wind, the barn was quickly enveloped in flame and fire spread to the rest of the town. A second fire was discovered but was put out. It was felt the fires were set. Some stock from some of the stores was saved and kept at the Herald and in private homes.

The Herald reported that the characteristic grit and enterprise of Pullman citizens showed itself in the rebuilding of the town, for within 24 hours of the fire, frames were up for temporary buildings. One businessman bought the stock of the store at Almota and was back in business in 48 hours. Permits were issued for temporary buildings of wood, but the Trustees had had enough of wooden store buildings. Henceforth, business buildings were required to be of brick and warehouses covered with corrugated iron. A number of plans for the new buildings of brick called for full glass fronts, lathe plastered walls, and metal roofs. The Realty Company even petitioned for a 17" cement sidewalk. The old brick from the destroyed buildings was pushed into the streets for a

road base. Ordinance No. 13 required that chimney flues be of brick. Money was needed and delinquent taxes were turned over for collection. Night watchmen were employed in this period, usually at \$1.50 each. The Trustees authorized the creation of a fire department on July 22, 1890.

The community's dreams became obvious when at the Trustees' meeting of August 1, 1890, a petition was received to annex what is now College Hill and the Lawrence and Holbrook addition. This petition was signed by 43 qualified voters of the town and favorably voted upon on September 8, 1890. In addition, an election was called to bond the town for \$8,000. Also, the Trustees purchased Lot 5, Block 36 for a City Hall for the sum of \$300. On August 22nd, a bid was accepted for the construction of the water works for \$8,000, subject to the bonds being issued and floated and the reservoir built. Bonds were subsequently issued in \$1,000 denominations. In September, the City bought, for \$200, Lot 1, Block 26 for a reservoir.

In October, the spending continued. The Trustees finally purchased 1000' of Bay State rubber lined jacket hose and a Rumsey Hose cart #3, 5 feet wide. The vote to bond the City was carried by 49 out of 53 votes. The hose cost \$.93 delivered; the cart cost \$15 delivered and one extra nozzle for \$10.50.

On November 11, 1890, an ordinance was passed allowing McKenzie and Baird to erect poles and string wire thereon in any street, alley, or public place in the town for electric light and power. The ordinance was read once, the rules suspended, the ordinance voted on and passed all in the same evening. This ordinance was rejected as being too indefinite. It was revised and passed on December 12, 1890.

There was a reason for the rapid improvement program in the town. That reason involved the dream that Pullman procure the agricultural college and experiment station that

would come to the state upon assuming statehood.

Every wide-awake community wanted the college. The college would insure the development of the community beyond the small agricultural village. Considerable funds were available for the development of the institution. The University of Washington in Seattle, created in the 1860s, would have welcomed the college but it was clear the rest of the state would object.

A Whitman County location was not an impossible idea. Despite the fire, the community moved ahead to insure modern facilities. Actually, there had been enough interest in the college that a military college had been founded in the town. Its building finally burned after the agricultural college was established, leaving only its memory in the name of the northwest section of Pullman.

Plans were apparently laid before statehood was achieved. At the Republican convention held at Walla Walla in September, 1889, Whitman County had one of the largest delegations. That delegation cast its votes for Elisha P. Ferry for Governor, as he had said if elected he would be favorably inclined to the location of the college in Whitman County.

The first state legislature held its first meeting on the first Monday in November, 1889. Pullman boosters sent a telegram saying that Pullman would donate 160 acres of land for a college in the garden spot of the state. This made a favorable impression but no one still thought it possible that Pullman would get the college, except Pullman citizens who thought the state would be best served by having the college in their town.

The Act to Create a Commission of Technical Instruction and Establish a State Agricultural College and School of Science passed and was approved by the Governor on March 28, 1890. The act provided that the Governor appoint a commission of three and established an educational

institution of higher learning to be under the management of the commission, the chairman of which was to be the president of the college.

The commission was to locate the college, if not located by the legislature by June 1, 1890. The legislature adjourned without locating the college. The commission arrived in Pullman in the spring of 1890. M. C. True had struck an artesian well on Pine and Main shortly before the commission arrived. Another well had been drilled across the street and was flowing at the time. The farmers in the vicinity of the town had been notified of the visit, and it is said that there were more teams in town that day than before or since. The farmers claimed that Pullman was the logical place for the college. The commissioners said they had been better entertained in Pullman than elsewhere. But in the end, the commissioners could not come to an agreement and the commission was dissolved.

To eliminate some of the competition for the college, HB 170 was passed in 1891. This bill prohibited the college from being located in any county already having a state institution. Further-more, the college was to have 160 acres of land somewhere east of the Cascades. That left Yakima and Whitman counties as the top contenders.

A new commission was finally appointed by the legislature (all from members west of the Cascades). Acting Governor Laughton, in return for a favor, was asked by Whitman County Senator A. T. Farris to appoint a commission friendly to Pullman. The new commissioners visited the various sites that were offered. In Pullman their train was met by a band in uniform that headed the commissioners toward Main Street. The artesian wells were flowing. The fire company showed its strength and flooded the streets with water. The commission had many compliments for Pullman, its natural resources, fine stores, and store buildings. Dr. Webb entertained the group at a banquet at his house. The next

day the commissioners left on the Union Pacific for Olympia where a decision was expected within a month. E. H. Letterman, Dr. Webb, A. T. Farris, and Thomas Neill headed for Olympia to be in touch with the commissioners.

The commissioners met on Tuesday through Friday, when they adjourned until Saturday afternoon. They went to Tacoma where a Yakima proponent lived. A. T. Farris followed them. There was only one train a day from Tacoma to Olympia, so when on Saturday morning Mr. Farris found one of the commissioners did not board the train, he went to his hotel and found him in bed with a headache. Farris thereupon chartered a locomotive and car and delivered the commissioner to Olympia by 1:30 p.m.

The Governor met with the commissioners. The meeting went on and on. The secretary of state was asked to keep his office open as long as the commissioners were in session. About 11:00 p.m., the Pullman people were asked to make a deed for the land Pullman was offering and to execute a bond guaranteeing good title. This was an unexpected request, but a deed was furnished and a bond given. The commissioners then accepted them and made a decision locating the college at Pullman at about midnight. Sunday, April 18, 1891, was a day of celebration in Pullman.

The decision was made. However, there were attempts to overturn Pullman's good fortune. The next board meeting was in Pullman on May 22, 1891. With threats of injunctions and word that the sheriff was on his way to Pullman to serve papers, a hasty drawing was made for the first university building. It was to cost \$1,500. The bid thereon was let at once while the sheriff was being taken to supper in the hotel. By the time the sheriff joined the regents, it was too late to serve the restraining order.

All board proceedings were then stopped, but not the building. Despite the protests from North Yakima, the legal

charges were not sustained. The board was free to open the college.

President Lilly presented the courses of study to the regents, who adopted them. Seven Chairs were established. On January 13, 1892, the college opened in the one story 36' X 60' building that become known as the "crib". So, a university was born in a state that had at this time only three cities maintaining high schools.

The first college catalog lists 21 freshman and 63 preparatory students. Forty students were from Pullman. There were woman as well as men who registered the first day. The beginning steps had been taken to fulfill the state constitutional commitment that education is the paramount duty of the state.

Pullman had put on its best face, and its leaders had been tireless in the prospect of seeming defeat in securing the college. Now, it had the responsibility for sharing, supporting, and enjoying the growth of a great educational institution.

by Julia H. Bush