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THE HECTIC ORIGIN OF KLICKITAT

By Fred Lockley

In 1852 Erastus S. Joslyn of Massachusetts settled on the north bank of the Columbia river, almost opposite the mouth of Hood river. His donation land claim was located about a mile and a half east of where the town of White Salmon was later built. He built a log cabin, set out a small orchard, fenced a place for a garden and began raising stock.

At the outbreak of the Indian war in 1855 the nearby Indians told Mr. Joslyn that the Indians from a distance would be apt to kill him and that he had better leave. He took refuge on the Oregon side of the river and he saw the Indians burn his cabin, cut down or pull up his small orchard trees and drive off his stock. At the close of the war he returned to his ranch, living there till 1874. The Suksdorf brothers bought this place, later selling it to Judge Byrnett.

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One of the earliest places taken up in Klickitat county was on Rockland Flats, across from The Dalles. This place was taken up by Captain Jordan, an army officer at The Dalles. The first real settlement of the county, however, occurred in 1858 and '59. Egbert French, who married a squaw, took up a place at the mouth of the Klickitat river, where Lyle is now located. Later he ran a store near Goldendale. J. H. Alexander lived near Rockland with his wife, who was a squaw. In the early spring of 1859 Amos Stark built a log house in Klickitat county, not far from the Columbia river. After building his cabin, he went to California, where he met Stanton H. Jones, who decided to settle in Klickitat county.

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While Mr. Stark was in California, a number of settlers took up places in Klickitat county, among them being Willis Jenkins, with his family, who had crossed the plains to the Willamette Valley in 1844. He settled in Polk county, not far from where the town of Dallas was later built. In 1849 he went to the California gold diggings and during the winter he rocked out over \$7000 in gold dust, which he invested in merchandise which he shipped to Polk county and sold at a good profit.

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Selling his claim in Polk county, he moved to Wilbur, in Southern Oregon, where he ran a store for a while and also put up travel. At the outbreak of the Rogue River war in 1855, he moved his family to Forest Grove and in the summer of 1859 they moved to Klickitat county, settling near the block house.

This block house was built by the government in the summer of 1856, during the Indian war. At the same time the army officers built a military road across the Simcoe range to Fort Simcoe, on what is now the Yakima Indian reservation. They built a block house on Spring creek, about seven miles northwest of where the town of Goldendale was later located. For several years prior to the Civil war a troop of cavalry was located at the block house.

When the troops left the block house, Willis Jenkins filed on the claim on which the block house was located. He had brought with him from the Willamette valley about 150 head of cattle and a number of horses.

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Shortly after the Jenkins family took up their place, Lewis S. Parrott, with his son-in-law, John J. Golden, took up places. John J. Golden came ahead of the others, driving a band of cattle and arriving in Klickitat county on July 9, 1859. The rest of the party, with the Tarter family, arrived in August. John J. Golden settled where the town of Columbus was later built. Columbus is now known as Maryhill.

Money being scarce in the county, Mr. Golden secured a contract to deliver 1000 cords of wood to the river boats. This furnished work for most of the settlers in that part of the county.

At about this time F. Mortimer Thorp and his family arrived from Polk county. Mr. Thorp took up the place on which Goldendale was later built. His cabin stood at about the place where the Methodist church was later built. Alfred Henson came at the same time, taking a place next to Thorp's. Charles Splawn settled near the Alexander place, and just above Splawn Calvin Pell took up a place. John Nelson and Robert Carter took up places on the swale, while Alfred Allen and A. H. Curtis took up places on Rockland flats.

John W. Burgen and his brother Thomas brought in a band of cattle and some horses in the fall of 1859, John Burgen settling on Swale

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creek, four miles south of where Goldendale now is. A settler already occupied the place but sold his squatter's right for \$20. In 1860 Newton Burgen was born on this place. He was the first white child to be born in Klickitat county.

Thomas Burgen, with his family, moved to Chamberlain flats in 1864. Among others who settled in Klickitat county in the summer or fall of 1859 were Jacob Halstead, Nelson Whitney, James Clark, William Murphy, Captain McFarland and his son Neil, Marion Stafford, Francis Venable, Jacob Gulliford, Tim Chamberlain, the Waters family and a few transients who moved on.

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There were not over 15 families in the county, and for that reason the settlers were opposed to having the county organized, believing that it would mean high taxes to support county officials.

However, the territorial legislature decided to organize the county anyway, and on December 20, 1859, passed an act organizing a new county to be called Clicatat. This spelling was later changed to Klickitat. The county seat was located on the land claim of Alfred Allen.

The legislature appointed Alfred Allen, Robert Tarter and Jacob Halstead county commissioners; Willis Jenkins, probate judge; James Clark, sheriff; Nelson Whitney, county auditor; Edwin Grant, assessor; William Murphy, treasurer, and John Nelson, justice of the peace.

Resenting the action of the legislature in over-riding their wishes, the settlers got together and most of the officers appointed refused to qualify. Consequently, no assessment rolls could be made and no taxes levied.

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The discovery of gold in Idaho and Eastern Oregon meant prosperity to the settlers of Klickitat county, as it meant more boats on the river, which meant a greater demand for cordwood. Mr. Hadley started a wood yard at Columbus and Tim Chamberlain started one on Chamberlain flats, 13 miles farther up the Columbia. The Oregon Steam Navigation company contracted for large amounts of cordwood at \$10 a cord. Most of the wood was cut in the hills near Goldendale and hauled a distance of about 10 or 12 miles. The hauling was done with ox teams. It took

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two days to make the round trip with an ox team, to haul a cord of wood.

The residents of Klickitat county not only profited from the sale of cordwood, but they were able to sell their beef at profitable prices to the mining camps in Eastern Oregon and Idaho. Their herds of horses, for which there had been but little demand, were now turned into money by the packers who came there to buy animals for pack trains.

In 1860 the residents of the county contributed money and labor to build a road to Columbus. The same year the first wheat was sown in the county and some gardens were put out.

In 1860 a county election was held. The county was divided into three precincts, the polls being located at Rockland, at the Jenkins place on the site of Goldendale, and at the block house.

The officers elected, at the request of the settlers, refused to qualify, so that the county could not be organized.

The territorial legislator, not to be thwarted, appointed officers as follows to fill the vacancies: John Nelson, probate judge; Willis Jenkins, treasurer; C. W. Philips, auditor; William T. Waters, sheriff; James H. Herman, A. Waters and A. G. Davis, county commissioners, and C. J. McFarland, S. Peasley and W. T. Murphy, justices of the peace. On January 31, 1861, the territorial legislature enlarged the limits of Klickitat county, so as to take in more settlers.

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The early day settlers of Klickitat county, having had two or three fat years, were destined to have a very lean one, for the fall and winter of 1861 were unusually cold, much snow fell and in mid-December a heavy warm rain came, causing much damage from floods. From December 22 to January 1 it snowed continuously. From the first to the fourth of January there was a sleet storm which froze as it fell, crusting the snow. This crust became so thick that men could travel all over the country on the icy crust. The crust stayed on the snow for six weeks, during which time most of the cattle and horses in the county died from starvation and the extreme cold.

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Among the large cattle owners in the county who lost most of their stock were John Golden, Willis Jenkins, William Murphy, John and Thomas Burgen, Lewis Parrott, Ben E. Snipes, and Joseph Knott of Portland. On account of most of the stock being winter killed, beef sold at from \$1 to \$1.50 a pound in the mines.

Prior to this cold winter, Klickitat county had been fairly alive with jackrabbits and prairie chickens, but neither the jackrabbits nor prairie chickens could break through the icy crust to get at the dried grass or other food, so most of them died.

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The loss of their stock caused the settlers to turn their attention to growing grain. As there were no threshing machines in the county, this grain was cut and stacked for winter feed. In 1860 Jacob Halsted, David Kitson, Benjamin Alverson and his brother Isaac built a sawmill on Mill Creek and sawed rough lumber, which was sold to the settlers.

As yet, no town existed in Klickitat county, but at about the time the mining industry became active in Eastern Oregon, A. J. Davis started a store at Columbus, and another man started a butcher shop.

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After Davis had sold out his stock of goods, he sold his building to a man who used it for a saloon. He had no license and when the settlers protested at his selling whiskey to the Indians, he defied them, as there was no county organization. Thomas Jenkins, whose

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family lived at Columbus, asked the saloonkeeper not to sell liquor to the Indians. The saloonkeeper was abusive and defiant.

Securing the help of Nelson Whitney, Lewis Parrott, Stanton H. Jones and William Hicinbotham, Thomas Jenkins went to the saloon, seized the loaded shotgun which the owner had, discharged it and then, with his associates, emptied out the casks, broke the demijohns and destroyed all the liquor. The saloonkeeper came to the conclusion that the settlers meant business, took the hint and departed.

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In the late fall of 1862 a ferry was started between Rockland and The Dalles and another one connecting the Rock Creek Road with the road on the Oregon side. The ferry rate for a wagon was \$3, pack horse \$1, loose animals 50 cents. The Rockland ferry was started by James Herman and made its first trip on July 9, 1859. The second ferry on the upper river was operated at Umatilla. In 1868 William Hicinbotham started a ferry at Columbus.

In 1861 Joseph Chapman planted an orchard along the Columbia, near Rock Creek. Not long after the close of the Indian war, Neil and A. G. Palmer settled on a place just below the Joslyn place at White Salmon.

Rev. E. P. Roberts, with his family, took the claim adjoining Joslyn on the east in about 1861. Mr. Roberts, who came from Maine, had been a missionary in the South Seas. In 1864 Mr. Roberts sold his place to J. R. Warner. John Perry with his Indian wife, settled on the river near where Lyle was later located. In 1865 E. S. Tanner came to White Salmon.

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The first schoolhouse in Klickitat Valley was built in 1866. This schoolhouse was later moved to the Columbus Road, four miles south of Goldendale. Prior to the building of the school house, the settlers had a private school, taught by Nelson Whitney. Jennie Chamberlain, who later married Nelson Whitney, was the first teacher in the public school.

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As new settlers came in, there was a good deal of discussion about county organization. It was thought if the county was organized, schools, roads and bridges could be secured.

Before the organization some of the officials appointed by the territorial legislature collected taxes from those who were willing to pay. The officials met, put all taxes collected in a jackpot and divided them among themselves.

In 1865 the sheriff collected from all of the settlers who were willing to pay a tax, and left the county with all he had collected, leaving the other officers in the lurch, so the following year, no attempt was made to collect taxes.

In 1867 the territorial legislature once more decided to organize the county, or rather to reorganize it, and appointed the following officials: County commissioners, Amos Stark, August Schuster and H. M. McNary; auditor, Thomas Johnson; treasurer, William Connell; assessor, S. H. Jones; probate judge, James Taylor. August Schuster resigned as county commissioner and was at once appointed sheriff. John Burgen was appointed superintendent of schools. This was the first actual organization to be effected in Klickitat county. A building at Rockland was rented for a courthouse, the county commissioners agreeing to pay \$8 a month rent.

The county school superintendent was the only official who drew a regular salary. He was paid \$25 a year. The other officials were paid when they did any work, usually being paid so much a day. On January 18, 1868, the territorial legislature once more changed the boundary lines of the county. The following year they cut off a strip and added it to Yakima county.

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John W. Burgen was the real pioneer in the farming line, for in 1870 he raised a crop of wheat. Prior to this the cattlemen had always said that it was impossible to raise grain in Klickitat county. The following year several other farmers planted wheat, some of it averaging 40 bushels to the acre. In 1871 a grist mill was built at The Dalles and the Klickitat farmers took their wheat across the river to be ground into flour at The Dalles.

The first town platted in Klickitat county was laid out by J. L. Henderson, where the military road crossed the Little Klickitat river.

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He offered lots free to anyone who would accept them, but finding no takers, he abandoned the townsite.

On September 5, 1871, John J. Golden bought from L. J. Kimberland, his claim and in 1872 he platted a townsite, naming it Goldendale. That same year Thomas Johnson built a combined store and residence in Goldendale, which, at the time, was the only store in Goldendale, stores previously started having gone out of business. On November 8, 1872, an election was held to decide upon a site for the county seat. Goldendale received 77 votes and Rockland 78. It was claimed that there were about 500 people in the county at that time.

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In 1878 Chatfield, Smith, Marble and Nelson built a grist mill known as the Klickitat mill, at Goldendale, and not long thereafter Thomas Johnson built the Goldendale mills. The first wheat shipped outside of the county was in 1876, comprising a thousand bushels. The following year 14,000 bushels were shipped, in 1878 46,000 bushels and in 1879 over 100,000 bushels. In the face of this showing, the cattlemen had to give up their contention that Klickitat county was a stock county only and that wheat could not be grown there.

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The stockmen believed that the building up of Goldendale would encourage settlers to come in and thus ruin their back range, so they fought Goldendale bitterly. At the election held in November 1878 five-sixths of the votes cast were for Goldendale for county seat. Four months later the county commissioners ordered the sheriff to move all county property from Rockland to Goldendale. As the county had no money to invest in a courthouse, the residents of Goldendale and vicinity built a courthouse by private subscription, of money and labor. In this way a \$3500 courthouse was secured for the county without any expense to the taxpayers. Every year or two the territorial legislature would make changes in the boundary of the county, sometimes adding to it, but usually taking a slice from it. The last change made was on November 20, 1881.

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On February 28, 1889, some of the leading citizens of Goldendale met and adopted articles of incorporation for a proposed railroad to run from a point on the Columbia river somewhere between Kalama and Columbus, to run in an easterly direction to Colville. The capital stock was fixed at ten million dollars. The directors elected were D. W. Pierce, E. B. Wise, Sol Smith, H. D. Young, R. O. Dunbar, William Cummings, John J. Golden, Joseph Nesbit and R. S. Reinhart. R. O. Dunbar was elected president, E. B. Wise, vice president, William Cummings, treasurer and C. S. Reinhart secretary.

The name of the proposed railroad line was the Columbia Valley and Goldendale Railroad Company. R. A. Harbersham was employed to make the survey as far as Pasco. On April 8 the Columbia Valley and Goldendale railroad consolidated with the proposed railroad being formed at Pasco, the name of the railroad being changed to the Pasco, Goldendale & Columbia Valley Railroad Company.

The route as surveyed passed through Cleveland, Bickleton, on through the glade into the Horse Heaven country and thence by way of Badger canyon through the Kennewick country to Pasco. In spite of the enthusiasm of its backers, a ten million dollar railroad was a little beyond their means, so the plan fell through.

Numerous other projects waxed and waned. Finally, after years of hopes deferred, on December 7, 1902, a locomotive entered Klickitat county, having been transferred across the Columbia with 32 cars and a steam shovel. On April 25 the Columbia River & Northern Railroad was finished as far as Goldendale.