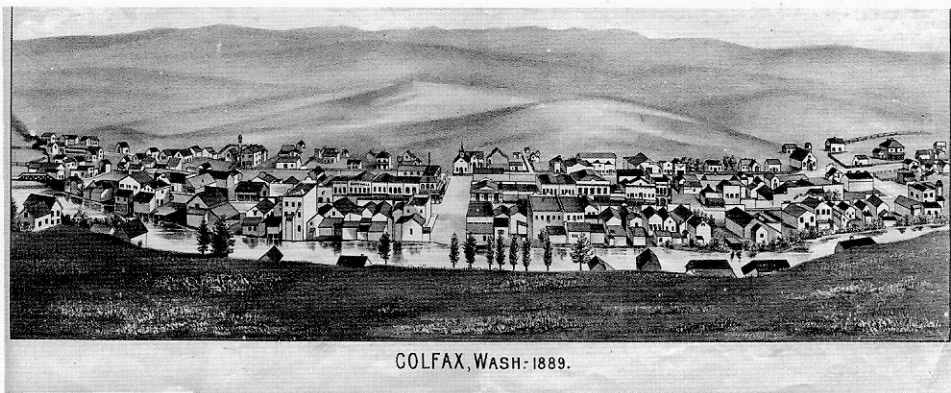


Bunchgrass Historian



**Whitman County Historical Society
Colfax, Washington**

Volume 46
Number 1
2020



Colfax 150th Anniversary 1870-2020

- **Founding of Colfax**
 - **The First Three Hotels in Colfax**
 - **Robbery at the U and I Saloon**
 - **Electrical History of Colfax**
 - **Telephones Come to Colfax**
-



Whitman County Historical Society Colfax, Washington

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COVER

Lithograph with a panorama of Colfax drawn about the end of 1888

This image was published in History of the Pacific Northwest: Oregon and Washington, Portland 1889, Vol. 2, p. 586. The view is from the west, looking along Wall Street, with the Baptist Church at the east edge of Mill Street. The Baldwin House can be seen at the intersection of Wall and Main Streets.

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FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of the *Bunchgrass Historian* is devoted entirely to the History of Colfax as a celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the settlement of Colfax.

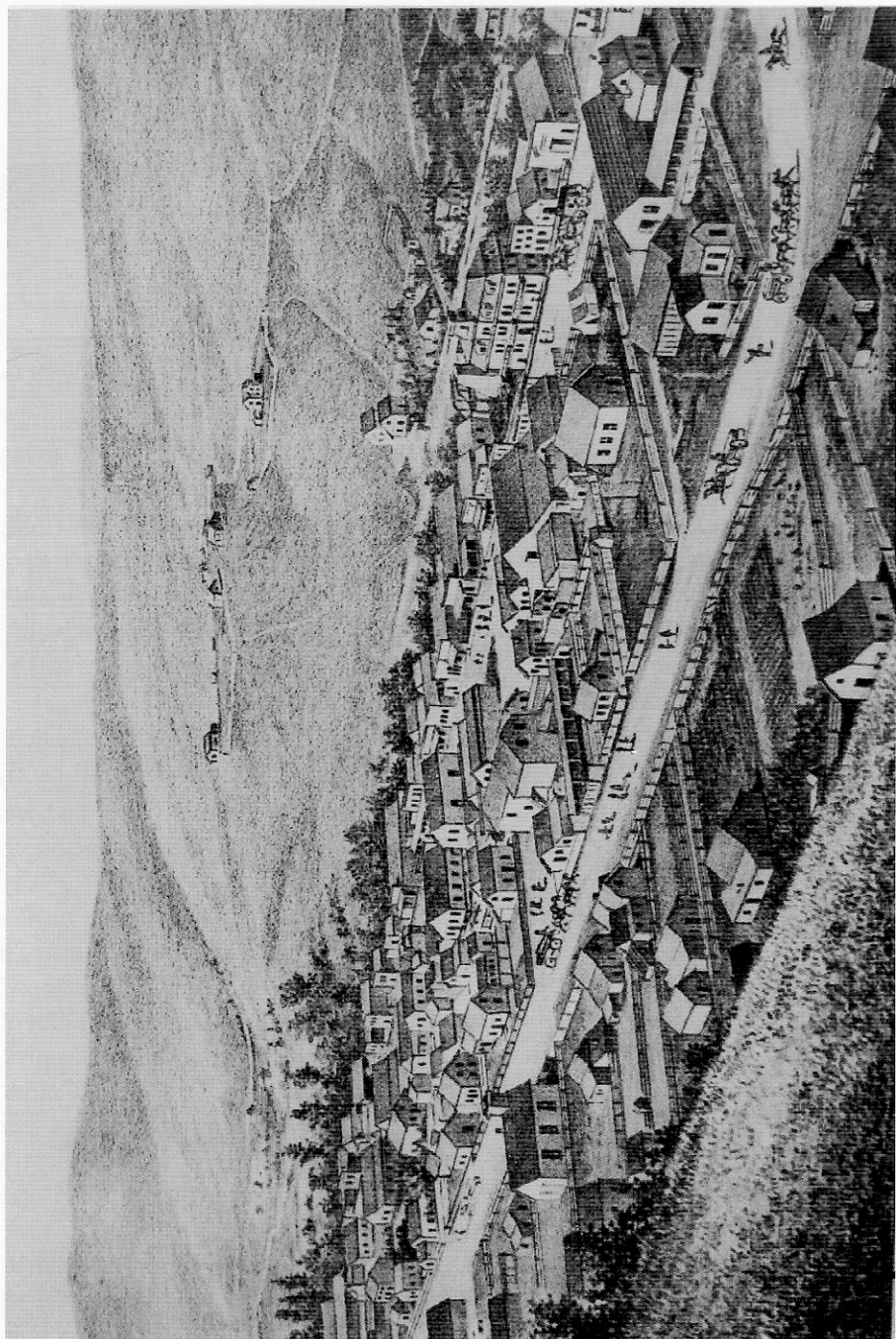
Minnie Perkins Tower, the eldest child of Colfax's first settler in 1870, wrote this account of the early years of the town where she was born on April 28, 1874. This version of her text is taken from Tabor Lafollette, *The History of Colfax*, a 1956 Report of the Town and Country Study Group.

This article by **Robert King** was inspired by his acquisition of a postcard depicting downtown Colfax in 1880. He was immediately intrigued by the impressive three-story building on Main Street. He soon identified it as the Ewart House. His continued investigation and research led to this insightful article on the role played by hotels in the growth of Colfax.

Alex Otero came across this curious story while doing research on Colfax's past. Since recently moving into Colfax and purchasing an old house, he has wanted to learn all he could about the town and its people (and his house). He is quite involved in historical activities in Colfax and with our Whitman County Historical Society.

This short selection is taken from the 1956, *Colfax Town and Country Report*, edited by **Tabor Lafollette**, pages 431-434. The information comes from a Washington Water Power Company's statistical manual titled "Reclassification of the Electric plant." It covers from the origins of electrical power in Colfax up to the state of the service in 1956.

The telephone history of Colfax is again taken from **Tabor Lafollette's** *Town and Country Study Group's* report in 1956. It briefly covers the central role played by Alexander Graham Bell and Charles B. Hopkins, who developed many of the early telephone systems in our area.



This 1881 lithograph of Colfax appeared in the West Coast Magazine in 1881.

FOUNDING OF COLFAX

by Mrs. Minnie Perkins Towers

Midst flat rolling hills, green with bunch grass, two crystal clear streams merged. The water abounded with unsuspecting trout. The valley rustled with trees, wild cherries, service berries, gooseberries, huckleberries, and wild flowers. A deer leaped past a rock. A prairie chicken rose from underfoot— and the lone traveler on horseback stopped to survey this “upper country” his eyes now beheld. Its fertile wealth, as yet untouched by white man, had been glowingly told by one Anderson Cox of Waitsburg—”the pioneer village below.” Nature’s marvels such as these could never be told in man-made words.

The traveler, a young Kentuckian, rested. Yes, this would be the place to build a home. The date was July 10, 1870, his name was James A. Perkins. Brunette and of medium build, he was to become the “father of Colfax,” and Colfax was to become the first town of eastern Washington.

Perkins is believed to have followed the Indian trails up the Palouse river from the Snake. He had ridden horseback over all this eastern country. The trails had led him as far north as the Spokane River where he had watched the water tumbling over falls, also in native, uninhabited beauty. Now he had returned to this little valley, well protected from storms, and well watered, and with soils that should lend themselves to any crop.

As a boy of eleven, Perkins had come West in 1852 when the Joel Perkins family had pulled up its Kentucky roots. Crossing the plains by covered wagon and oxen had taken six months, and enroute his mother had had twins. They had gone to a brother-in-law in Oregon City. Then they had lived in the foothills of the Willamette till 1861, when a severe winter had killed all their cattle, and kerosene had frozen in lamps.

When spring came, the Perkins family pulled stakes again, this time to the confluence of the Touchet and Coppei rivers (Waitsburg) and when 21, James had staked a claim next to his father’s. Next he sold that and bought land at nearby Huntsville. Now the 29 year old pioneer decided this valley of the “upper country” in Stevens county of Washington territory was the place, and he would take but half the valley.

He returned to Waitsburg, but to find another settler proved to be difficult. Several men followed in quick succession, but T. J. Smith was the first to stay. That summer (1870) they gathered and cured thirty tons of wild hay and cut logs for their cabins. Then Smith decided to move to Union Flat and took his logs with him. (Both Union Flat and Rebel Flat had several families by 1870). Smith’s de-



James Perkins built this log cabin in 1870. The property was purchased by the Whitman County Historical Society and restoration began more than one hundred years later in 1973.

parture left Perkins alone, except for the workmen helping with his cabin. He spent a lonely winter.

In May, 1871, Hezekiah Hollingsworth of Waitsburg yielded to Perkins' persuasion. Hollingsworth claimed the south half of the valley, Perkins had the north half. The dividing line is where Last street now is. The population of Colfax doubled. It now had two bachelors.

Soon settlers came into this upper country at quickened pace and a crying need for building materials arose. Perkins and Hollingsworth in partnership with Anderson Cox back at Waitsburg decided to build a saw mill. A race was dug (remains are still visible) and machinery was obtained. Rough lumber was cut. Eventually Hollingsworth became sole owner. He later sold to John C. Davenport, who established a flour mill on the site.

Prior to this all lumber had to be hauled from Lewiston or Walla Valla; therefore, most houses were built of logs chinked with mud or small sticks. Some were hewn on four sides, making a very substantial building. (The Perkins cabin, now sided, still exists, located behind the S. E. Perkins residence at N. 623 Perkins. Some of the poplars are from the original planting which lined the lane leading to

the growing business area.)

In an uninhabited country rattlesnakes had multiplied alarmingly. The young pioneers with spears and other long pointed instruments went in groups to the caves and rocks beyond Cooper's Lake (wide area of the river in south Colfax) and killed from 75 to 100 rattlers a day. Snakes plagued the early pioneers by crawling into homes and seeking warmth beneath pillows and like places.

Perkins called his town Belleville in honor of his sweetheart. But the name was soon changed with a transfer of the young bachelor's affections.

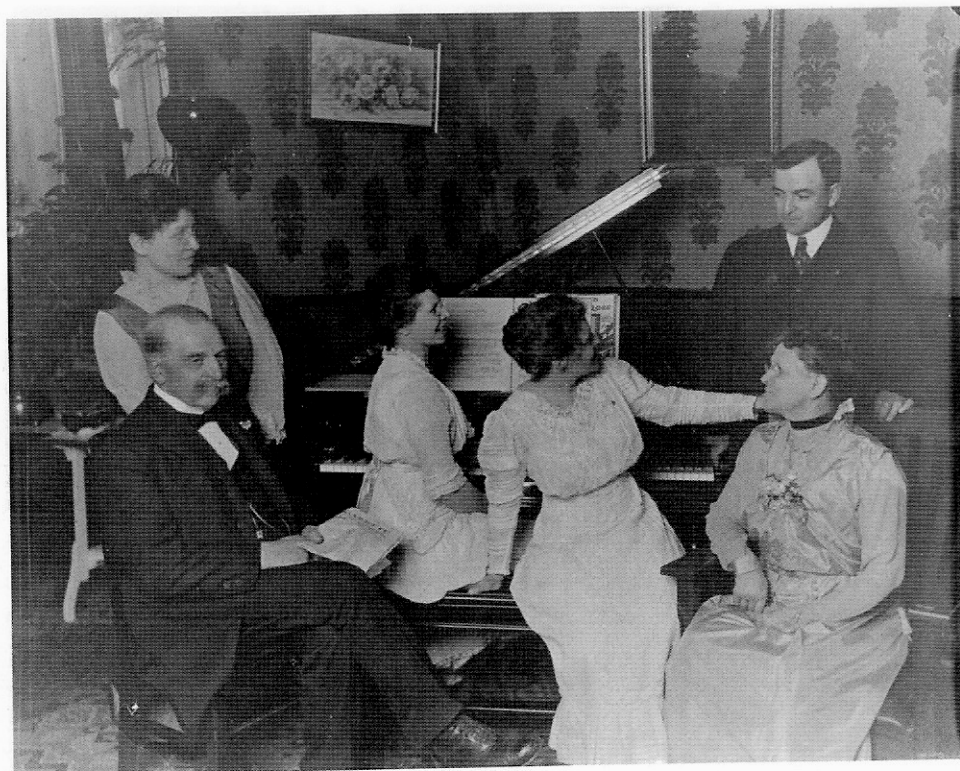
For Independence Day, 1871, Perkins went back to Waitsburg. There he met Captain James Ewart, who had a sixteen year old daughter, Sarah. The Civil War hero had closed up shop in Eaglesville, Missouri, bought 13 1/2 fares and loaded his family, wagon, horses, and household goods aboard a box car. The six weeks trip by rail and by wagon had brought them to Waitsburg just in time for the celebration. They were bound for Puget Sound, until Perkins persuaded Captain Ewart "to have a look at the Palouse country." Their first night in Belleville, the Ewart family camped by the river, where the court house now stands. Perkins met them with vegetables. Next day he took them to Union Flat. The family stayed, the Captain became that settlement's first Post master. Three years later he moved into Colfax.

Sarah became the sweetheart of Pioneer Perkins, and Belleville was renamed Colfax in honor of Schuyler Colfax, United States Vice President, 1869-73. The legislature of 1871-72, organized Whitman County. The bill was written by Anderson Cox, who became known as "the father of Whitman County." Cox was appointed to the committee to locate the county seat. Colfax had been platted and was named. The next election confirmed the site. Cox, then receiver of the U. S. land office in Walla Walla, also obtained the territorial road from Walla Walla to Colville via "The Forks" (Colfax). He died unexpectedly in March 1872 while returning to Waitsburg from Colfax.

The saw mill was the chief boost for Colfax as the town began to grow. Unlike many other frontier towns, Colfax attracted a generally educated and respectable citizenry among its earliest settlers. (According to the newspapers many of the other types also came.)

In October, 1871, James Milo Nosler came with his family, buying a claim three miles down the Palouse. His diary, recorded in the *Colfax Commoner* (April-May 1954) mentions on February 9, 1872, a petition for the first school district, and in April 1872, the start to incorporate Colfax. March 20, 1872, he mentions death of Mrs. Florence as the first in the county.

May of 1872, the forks of the Palouse began sprouting business buildings. May 6, a school was held in Colfax, and Nosler was appointed to the "Viewing" committee to locate the Walla Walla to Colville road. The road location trip was made June 1-12, (1872) with a Mr. Courtney of Stevens County and Mr. Mitchell



The Perkins family sits at the piano in their 1886 home. From left to right are Stella Perkins McDowell, James Perkins, Minnie Perkins Tower (playing the piano) Myrtle Perkins Scriber, Sumner Perkins, and Mrs. Perkins.

of Walla Walla.

July 4, 1872, was the first Independence Day celebration in Colfax with Perkins and a Mr. Gordon orating. The first school was built in July, and Sunday School was held in it August 4, 1872. Clem King's livery stable was enclosed, and Wolford and Davenport's department store was going up. Watten Belcher and Warren Witcher had opened stores. Bill Kenedy had started a blacksmith shop. Nosler's crop had failed. He built a small hotel, which opened August 11. In September school started. In October, 1872, Nosler was elected the first sheriff. His later entries concern claim disputes and young men accused of fighting.

Good Templars organized that fall. An earth quake occurred in December. A Christmas dance was held at the hotel. January 1, 1873 the Noslers had a little girl, the first white child born In Colfax. The Noslers, however, moved in 1874, and the child died before maturity. Therefore, Mrs. Minnie Towers, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James A. Perkins, born April 18, 1874, is honored as the first child born here.

The marriage of James Allen Perkins and Sarah Ewart was April 6, 1873, in the school house,—the civic center—with the Reverend A. W. Sweeney of Walla Walla performing the ceremony after he had preached a sermon on matrimony. The entire community was invited. A dinner for thirty was served in Nosler's hotel. The "infare" the day after festivities for relatives and friends was held at the Ewart home. Doctor P. D. Bunnell was best man and Nettie Taber, daughter of a pioneer farmer, John B. Taber, was maid of honor.

April 28, 1873, the area organized as "military country" to obtain arms. Two companies were formed: Nosler was captain of one. September 5, 1873, H. S. Hollingsworth, Julia Ann Cox and Nosler filed articles of incorporation for Colfax Town Company, whose business was to dispense property in subdivisions of lots and blocks. Nosler was given one of the twelve shares.

In October 1873 the machinery for the J. C. Davenport flouring mill arrived. The coming winter Nosler sold his hotel to Captain Ewart for a span of gray mares, a harness and \$350.00. Nosler had been named post master and clerked for Davenport in the store until May 1, 1874. Next he and Clem King went into partnership to put up a building for the post office and a drug store. September 17, 1874, he sold the drug store to Smith and King, and went into selling trees, and later into buying cattle, intending to drive a herd to Colorado in partnership with a Mr. Burlingame. The deal fell through. Nosler had also served as chairman of the Republican Central Committee. May 18, 1875, the Noslers left for Coos Bay, Oregon.

Many more people had come to the country, and town, among them several professionals, and Colfax began to put on a metropolitan air. Captain Ewart, a Mason, organized a lodge here. The Baptists, followed by the Methodists, started their church buildings in 1876.

Completion of the Baptist Church was delayed until 1878 by the Indian scare of 1877. War was raging with Chief Joseph's warriors on the Nez Perce reservation and the country was rife with rumors of coming massacres. The populace poured into Colfax, some half clad, others loaded down with jewels and other earthly treasures. Captain Ewart started a block house, but before the fortification was completed the scare was over. Chief Joseph's men had been captured at Big Hole, Montana.

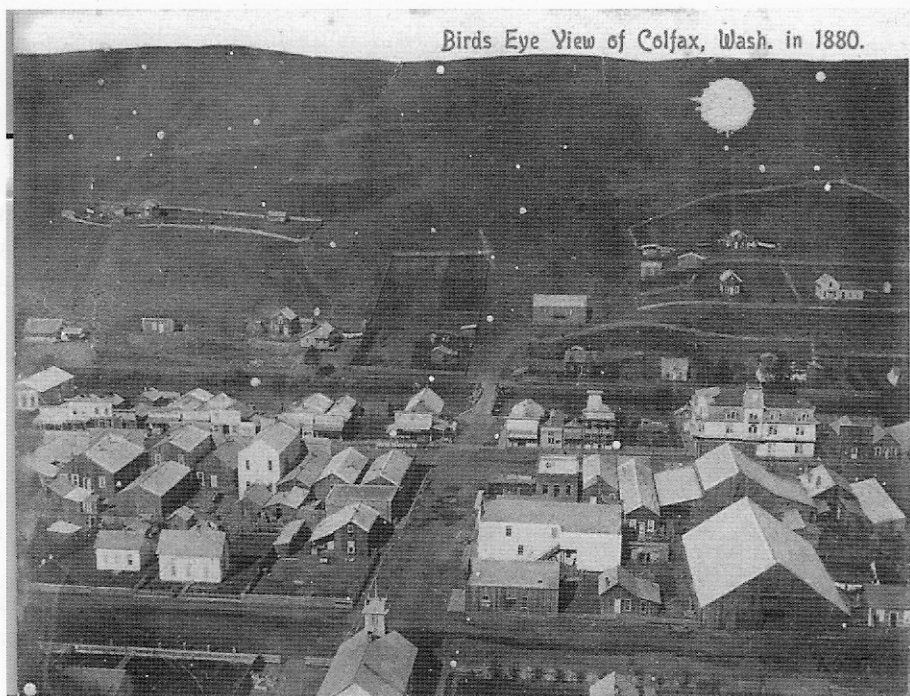
When the whites returned to their homes they found friendly Indians had been herding their stock from their grain fields, and dreadfully frightened for fear the whites would force war.

The Perkins family relied heavily upon Indian women for assistance with various household tasks, including even "baby sitting", and a particularly trusted Indian maiden was allowed to come into the kitchen to learn sewing by machine. Bands of Indians begged food in exchange for work. (End of Mrs. Tower's story)

THE FIRST THREE HOTELS IN COLFAX

By Robert E. King

Soon after Colfax, Washington, was first settled in 1870, there was need for overnight accommodations for travelers. For the first few years, a small lodging facility established by a family in their modest home, known as the Colfax Hotel, was sufficient for the town's needs. But by the late 1870s with Colfax's continuing growth, two large hotels were built in rapid succession: the Baldwin House and the Ewart House. Some of the earliest known photos of Colfax taken about 1880 show these impressive hotels standing along Main Street in what was then, and remains today, downtown Colfax. All three of Colfax's hotels contributed significantly to the town's development in its early years as it grew from a small pioneer settlement to a thriving town and county seat.



This is the 1880 postcard that was acquired by Robert King and inspired his investigation into the impressive building seen at the right of the postcard. When he began, King had no idea what structure this was. The view is looking west and the building in the foreground is the Baptist Church at the foot of Wall Street. The 3-story building on Main Street was the Ewart House.

The first known commercial business in Colfax to offer both meals and lodging for travelers was a small establishment owned by James M. Nosler and his wife Sallie. In 1954, James Nosler's diary was published in a Colfax paper and reported that on the day the business opened, August 11, 1872, he and his wife served meals to 18 people. Within a short time, they were sometimes serving over 200 meals on a single day. They also began providing a steady number of travelers with overnight lodging.¹ The small lodging and restaurant facility came to be called the "Colfax Hotel,"² (a name used for a different hotel some years later). In 1873, the Noslers sold their business to Capt. James Ewart (1831-1915), another early Colfax pioneer and Civil War veteran. His wife, Jannette "Jennie" (Huston) Ewart (1832-1915), subsequently became owner of the pioneer establishment.³

James and Jennie Ewart, both Scottish immigrants, had lived in Rhode Island and Illinois before the Civil War, and James had served in the Union Army, attaining the rank of Captain. After the war, they lived in Eagleville, Missouri, where James became a merchant. They moved to Whitman County in 1871 with their family and settled and farmed south of Colfax in the region later named Ewartsville in their honor. James Ewart, however, decided to resume his prior occupation. After purchasing the Nosler's thriving business, the Ewarts moved into the then very small settlement of Colfax, where James resumed the mercantile business and his wife became a hotel keeper.

The circumstances of how Mrs. Ewart's transition from homemaker to hotel keeper was described in the Colfax newspaper on September 27, 1878:

What a Woman Can Do. As an example of what a woman can accomplish, Mrs. James Ewart is, probably, an exception. Five years ago, Capt. Ewart purchased the diminutive hotel in Colfax for six hundred dollars, and deeded the same to his wife, who has always managed it herself. The hotel, though quite small, was amply large for the business of this almost unknown country, for years. From the earnings of this house Mrs. Ewart has helped to support and educate a family of nine children in a creditable manner, has always contributed liberally to every charitable object and public enterprise. . . . Such instances are pretty rare even in the Palouse country, but it is a pretty strong argument in favor of voting 'yes' on the woman suffrage article in the State constitution.⁴

In 1877-78, another hotel opened in Colfax called the Baldwin House. It was the town's second hotel and its first very large hotel. Its builder and owner was Ephriam J. Baldwin (1838-1893).⁵ He, his wife Susan Ann Baldwin (1838-1922), and their family arrived in June of 1877, after farming for a number of years in New York State, Illinois, and Michigan. They settled on farmland about four miles east of Colfax soon after their arrival. Leading up to construction of the hotel, Baldwin paid \$230 for Lots 1-3 of Block 2 in Colfax in the summer of 1877. The property was

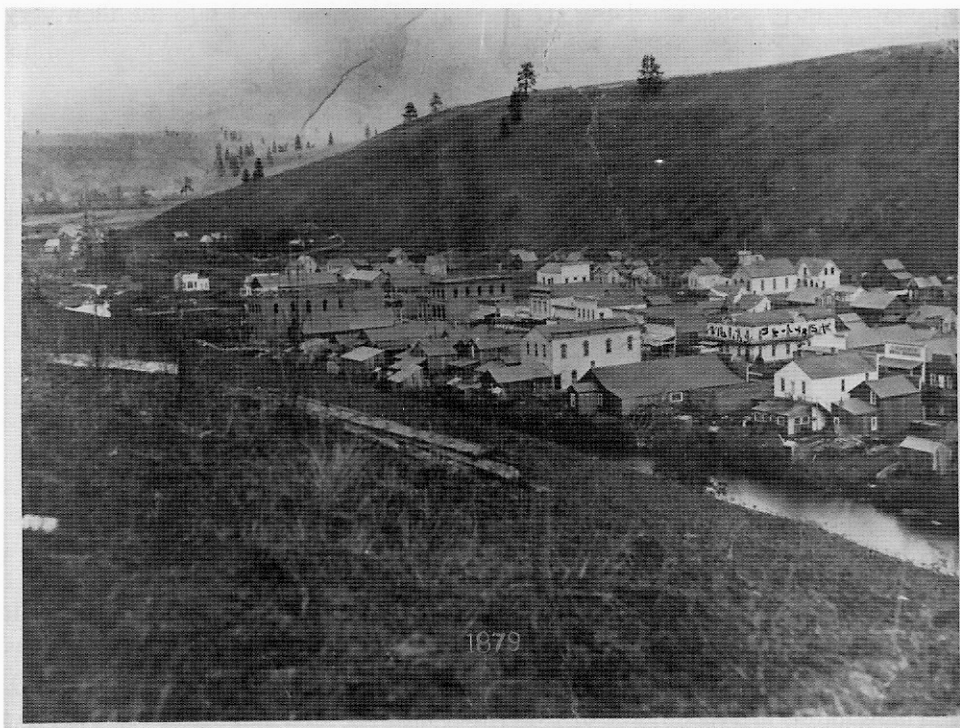
located on the east side of Main Street at the northeast corner of Main and Spring Streets. Today, this location is occupied by the Washington Federal Bank and part of Fonk's Coffee House (formerly Fonk's Variety Store).⁶

News of the start of construction of Baldwin's hotel appeared in the first issue of Colfax's *Palouse Gazette* on September 29, 1877, which today is still published as the *Whitman County Gazette* in Colfax. It reported:

New Hotel. Mr. E. Baldwin has laid the foundation for his new hotel, and work is progressing finely. This hotel, when completed, will be equal to any in Eastern Washington, and will be one of the solid improvements of Whitman county. It is to be 40 x 64 feet, two stories high, and well furnished.

The Baldwin House was located less than two blocks south of where Jennie Ewart operated the smaller Colfax Hotel. About five weeks after Christmas of 1878, news of the opening of the Baldwin House hotel appeared in the town's paper. Starting on February 2, 1878, front-page advertisements began appearing in *The Palouse Gazette*:

The Baldwin House. This hotel is now open and ready to accom-



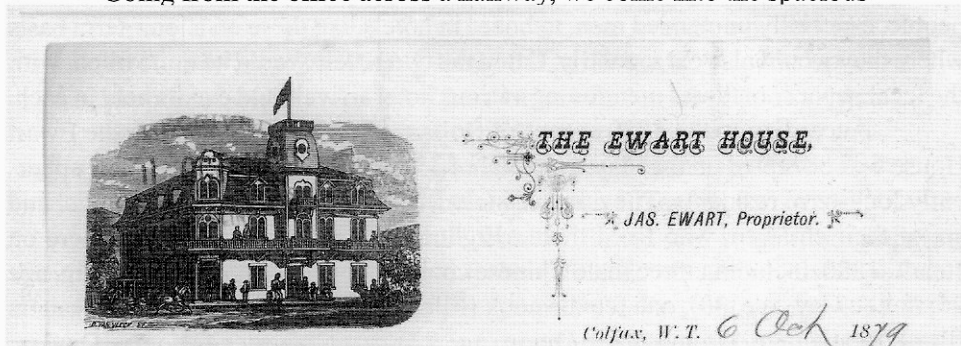
This northeast looking panorama photograph of 1879 clearly shows the Baldwin House at the right side; and above it one sees the Baptist Church on Wall and Mill Streets.

moderate the traveling public. Centrally Located. Large and Comfortable Rooms. Charges Reasonable. I respectfully solicit a share of the public patronage. E. Baldwin, Proprietor.

As the Baldwin House was neared completion in early 1878, construction had already begun on what would be an even larger hotel for Colfax. The Ewart House would become a major rival to the Baldwin House. Built by Capt. James Ewart and his wife Jennie, the new hotel was located next to the Colfax Hotel, about mid-block on the west side of Main Street between Wall and Upton Streets. In terms of today's structures occupying the site, the Ewart House was located approximately between the *Colfax Gazette* office at 211 North Main and the Fraternal Order of Eagle's Lodge at 217 North Main. The Colfax paper, the *Palouse Gazette*, January 5, 1878, reported the following as a front-page news article: "Mrs. Jas. Ewart is making preparations for the immediate construction of a three storey hotel, to be erected on the next lot below the Colfax hotel. The structure, we understand, is to be 30x73 ft. and will be completed by the first of June [1878], and contain all the modern conveniences." Presumably, Mrs. Ewart's Colfax Hotel ceased operation when the Ewart House opened.

A few months later, the Colfax paper published further news about the opening of the Ewart House:

The Ewart House. Colfax now claims a hotel not excelled in any respect, and equaled by only one other in this Territory. Mention was made last week that this house was now open for the accommodation of the public, and we will now give a description of the building. The main building is 30x60, with a wing of 20x30. The ground floor is occupied as an office, dining room, washroom, and baggage rooms; the office is 20x30, twelve feet and four inches between ceilings, all the rooms being of the same height. The Waitsburg and Colfax stage office will occupy a portion of the hotel office. Going from the office across a hallway, we come into the spacious



Collector Mike Markley has shared with us this letterhead from a piece of Ewart House stationery sent Oct. 6, 1879.

dining room which is 30x35 feet, with columned border, and of a general first-class appearance. Ascending the broad stairs, we come to the second floor. Here is the ladies' sitting room, 18x20, with six large windows facing Main street. This room has a bright, cheerful appearance, making one feel more at home than at a hotel. From the sitting room are a suite of rooms so arranged as to be convenient for a family. On either side of the hall are bedrooms, those on one side facing the street, while from the rear ones may be seen the pretty lake⁷ and high hills. The third story is occupied exclusively as bedrooms, approached by halls making in all, thirty-three bedrooms. Outside the building presents an imposing appearance; a balcony on the front side and south end will furnish a pleasant place to pass the evening hours and add much to the comfort of guests. From the great observatory one may get a view of the surrounding country for many miles. The house is the admiration of strangers, a living witness of the substantial growth of this young town, a credit to the workmanship and taste of Mr. Al. Phelps, the builder, and an honor to Mrs. James Ewart, the kind proprietress who will always be surrounded with guests and friends.⁸

Soon after its opening, the new hotel was the site for the wedding of a couple from out of town. The June 29, 1878, edition of the *Palouse Gazette* reported on the front page: "Married on the 25 inst., at the Ewart House in this city, by Rev. S. G. Havermale, Mr. James G. McMicken of Harrisburg, Oregon, and Miss Emma Augusta Weger of Spokane Falls." Other weddings and special events also occurred in the elegant three-story hotel, which otherwise provided overnight lodging for a variety of travelers, including those needing to transact business in the courthouse or with town merchants. The Ewart House, like the Baldwin House, also served the needs of traveling salesmen who went from town to town making a living selling goods or services to local residents. It was also typical at that time for some local people, especially unmarried men, to board in hotels like these on a long-term basis where they would also eat regularly. Often the two hotels would be quite filled, with the local paper sometimes mentioning various hotel arrivals and events held in each.

According to the 1880 census of Colfax, taken on June 1, 1880, the Ewart House was occupied on that day by a total of 33 people. Many of them were apparently long-term residents. The number included James Ewart, his wife Jennie, and six of their children, who lived there. Eight hotel employees also lived there on June 1, 1880, including three male Chinese cooks (Lee Wong, age 20; Lee Tong, age 25; & Lee Gay, age 30), one female cook (Ellen Fitus, age 20), two female waiters (Piper Beatie, age 17, and Katie Devin, age 23), a male porter (Thomas Donlan, age 49), and a male clerk (Frank Fitus, age 20). Frank Fitus (clerk) and Ellen Fitus (cook) were the only married employees.

In addition, the hotel included 17 boarders, most of whom were apparently local unmarried workers in Colfax. Below are their names, ages, marital status, and their type of employment as reported by the census:

Benjamin Burgender, 35, single, general merchandise store
Joseph A. Thompson, 33, single, carpenter
Rennick Taylor, 26, single, house sign-painter
Leon Kuhn, 34, single, "storing tin ware"
Julius Lippett, 29, single, general merchandise
Robert Bruce, 45, single, clerk in land office
William Oyster, 28, single, policeman
Lewis G. Frye, 30, single, clerk in store
Henry M. Liddle, 36, single, livery stable
Arthur A. Newberry [Newbery], age 31, married, no occupation
Pauline B. Newberry [Newbery], age 23, married, no occupation
Charlie E. Bartlett, 35, married, farmer
Charles Gordon, 31, single, watchmaker
John T. Noble, 24, single, tailor
Horace W. Livingston, 30, single, stoves & tin ware
George W. Anderson, 35, married, physician
James W. Armstrong, 36, married, Register of Land Office

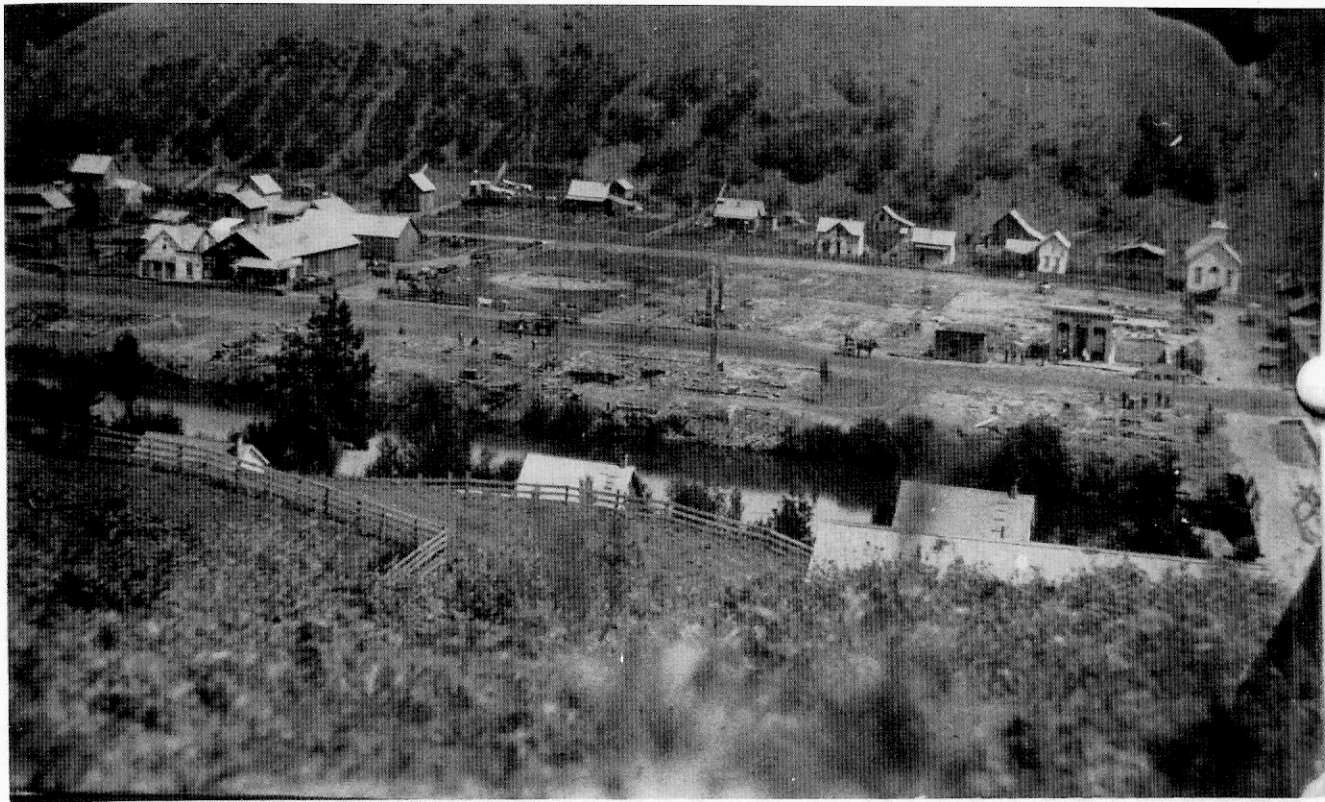
The 1880 Census does not reveal those staying in the Baldwin House. Otherwise, the Colfax paper on June 4, 1880 (p. 3) reported that for the week ending June 3, 1880, a total of 56 other people were "arrivals" at the hotel, presumably for shorter stays, including some who only stayed for one night.

In all, the Ewart House hotel was a thriving concern in early June of 1880, but soon a change in ownership occurred. On July 1, 1880, the Ewarts sold the hotel to Arthur A. Newberry, one of the lodgers reported as staying there on June 1, 1880. The Colfax paper disclosed the change in ownership:

Ewart House Changed Hands – Yesterday morning the sale of the Ewart House, business, furniture, etc., was completed, and Mr. A. A. Newbury [Newbery], lately of California, now looms up as proprietor. Mr. Newbury is a gentleman who has traveled in all the principal countries in Europe, and his extensive observations and business experience will fit him for the hotel business. The house will be conducted on strictly first-class principles.⁹

Apparently triggering the sale was the illness and surprising temporary departure from Colfax of Capt. James Ewart. He had suffered what was probably a breakdown from overwork. The paper sympathetically mentioning his illness as well as the welcome news of his recovery and return to the town in August of 1880.¹⁰

The new owner of the Ewart House, Alfred A. Newbery, a native of New York State, lived for some time in Colfax with his first wife, Pauline, while own-



THE FIRE OF JULY 22, 1881 DESTROYED THE BUSINESS SECTION BETWEEN WALL AND UPTON STREETS. A BANK BUILDING IS LEFT STANDING NEAR THE CORNER OF MAIN AND WALL. THE BAPTIST CHURCH IS AT RIGHT BACKGROUND ON MILL STREET.

ing the hotel. But within a few years the couple had moved to Spokane. Soon after buying the Ewart House, Newbery made changes to the dining room and kitchen of the hotel. He also converted what had been the private quarters occupied by the Ewart family in the hotel into “a neat suite for patrons of the house.”¹¹ Thus, the Newberys obviously didn’t live in the hotel as had the Ewarts.

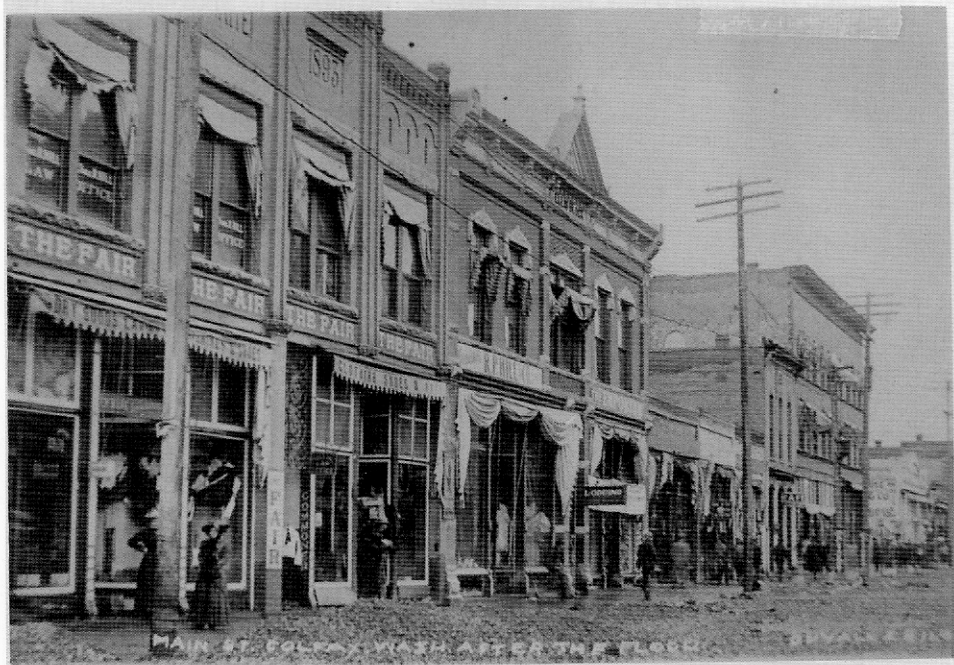
A particularly notable development at the Ewart House under Newbery’s ownership was the establishment of a location within the hotel for the town’s first telegraph office. On July 16, 1880, the Colfax paper (p. 3) reported this story:

Our Telegraph Line. The military telegraph line was completed to this city last Friday afternoon, and an office arranged in the Ewart House, which was opened at half past five. J. Hoover, Esq. had the honor of sending the first message over the wires, which was to a Walla Walla paper, and contained a few Democratic nothings. The second dispatch was as follows: ‘Colfax. June [July] 9. – Walla Walla Union – Telegraph line connected to Colfax Hurrah for [President] Garfield, [Vice-President] Arthur and John B. Allen. Palouse Gazette.’ In less than half an hour the answer came back as follows: ‘Walla Walla, July 9. – Ed. Gazette. Hurrah for these emblems of progress – the telegraph and the Republican party. P. B. Johnson.’¹²

With two new large hotels, the Baldwin House and Ewart House, open by the late spring of 1878, it was inevitable that they became rivals for customers, including for the increasing number of travelers coming through and to the growing town. But that rivalry ended on July 22, 1881, when the Ewart House hotel and what had once been the adjacent Colfax Hotel burned to the ground.¹³ One memory of the Ewart House’s destruction by fire in 1881 was told by the Ewarts’ granddaughter, Minnie Belle (Perkins) Tower (1874-1965), who was seven years old at the time. She recalled that her grandfather, James Ewart, “had brought the first piano into the area,” which was in the hotel when it caught fire. In saving it, one leg of the piano was destroyed. Consequently, her grandfather “then sold the piano at a low price” after which the leg was repaired. In 1992, it was still in a Colfax home and presumably may still survive today as one of the few surviving reminders of that fire.¹⁴

While the Ewart House was not rebuilt by Alfred A. Newbery, a smaller hotel, the Golden Eagle Hotel, was later constructed on part of the former Ewart House location. This had occurred at least by August of 1884, and, by May of 1888, it was called the Farmer’s Hotel.¹⁵ This suggests that this hotel changed hands more than once in the 1880s.

The Baldwin House, which survived the July 1881 fire, did not remain in the ownership of the original builder, Ephriam Baldwin. In early 1882, the following article about its second owner, Edward N. Beach (1840-1914), appeared in a Colfax paper. It provided some details of the business, including that Baldwin had



The east side of Main Street between Wall and Upton after the flood of March 1, 1910. The 1893 Waite and the 1892 Ellis buildings are at the left (these buildings still stand). The Benton Building is the two-story brick building just left of the large structure at the right side of the block. Sid Benton built this building in 1882 and operated his "Delta Saloon" out of it. This is the location of his later "U and I Saloon" where the 1901 robbery took place. The Ewart House was on the opposite side of this block.

sold his hotel to Beach less than a year after it opened in 1878:

The Baldwin House, owned by Mr. E. N. Beach, is the only hotel in Colfax.¹⁶ It was erected over four years ago by Mr. E. Baldwin, and purchased by Mr. Beach some three years ago [about 1879]. The house has always enjoyed a good run of custom[ers] and is a paying institution. Some months ago, Mr. Beach leased the dining department to Mr. A. H. Butler, but still holds the lodging department which is always fully occupied. Mr. Beach is an old resident of the upper country and is very extensively and favorably known. Colfax has no better citizen than E. N. Beach.¹⁷

A second article in the same January 6, 1882 issue of the Colfax newspaper told more about the restaurant part of the Baldwin House:

Among the prominent business houses of Colfax is the Baldwin House Restaurant under the proprietorship of Mr. A. H. Butler, a gentleman of experience in the restaurant business and one of

the solid men of the city. Since Mr. Butler's advent in business in Colfax, some six months ago, his restaurant has been steadily growing in popularity as will be readily noticed from the class of men numbered among his regular boarders. The tables are under the supervision of Mrs. L. A. Smith, a lady bearing a high reputation as a cook, and one who knows in an instant just what will please each individual customer. Since Mr. Butler assumed charge of the Baldwin House Restaurant, we are happy to say he has enjoyed a very profitable business.

In retrospect, the sale of the Baldwin House in 1879 may have been fortuitous for Ephriam Baldwin, because on July 14, 1882, the hotel and its restaurant burned in another major Colfax fire. In contrast to the Ewart House, however, the Baldwin House was rebuilt on the same location and survived for over a decade before again burning in 1893. Although Baldwin had not owned the business since late 1879, the re-built hotel retained the name "Baldwin House."

From 1882 until April 1893, various newspapers carried stories of events that occurred at the new Baldwin House. For example, on January 2, 1885, Colfax's *Palouse Gazette* included a Business Directory, which listed "Baldwin House, D. [Daniel] Lewellyn and Mrs. H. Whittenberg, props. [proprietors], one door north of post office." The Business Directory listed Edward N. Beach as the operator of the Baldwin House livery stable. With most hotel patrons arriving by horse or horse-drawn vehicles before a railroad came into Colfax, having a place to take care of their animals was vital. In November of 1889, Joseph Thomas Wightman was reported to be the proprietor of Baldwin House.¹⁸ Previously, Wightman and his wife Ida farmed at Garfield, Washington, but by 1900, they resumed farming at Ewartsville, near Colfax.

It was during Wightman's tenure as hotel owner in the late 1880s and early 1890s that the Pullman paper carried several noteworthy stories about events at the Baldwin House in Colfax. One reported that on Christmas Eve 1889 the hotel nearly caught fire. According to the December 28, 1889 *Pullman Herald* (p. 5): "...about nine o'clock, the stove in the Baldwin House parlors fell down and completely over, spilling its burning contents out upon the carpet. The cries of the ladies who were in the parlor at the time, soon brought a number of gentlemen to the room from the office below, and what might have resulted in a conflagration was happily averted. As it was, only a large hole was burned in the carpet."

Another story involved a shocking death. On September 13, 1890, the *Pullman Herald* (p. 8) reported that Harry T. Loomis, a member of the Felix and Eva Vincent Theatrical Troop, "dropped dead of heart failure" in the office of the Baldwin House. He was said to have been talking normally but suddenly fell over into the arms of two companions in the troop and died immediately.

Even more colorful was a story about an attempted murder on February

3, 1891, by a man staying at the Baldwin House hotel. The incident was carried in several papers, although their accounts varied somewhat in the details of what happened. One of earliest accounts appeared in Seattle's *Post-Intelligencer* on February 5, 1891 (p. 2), which identified the would-be murderer as "Ward Nicklin." It gave a colorful account of the incident and speculated that he was a relative of the notorious outlaws, Frank and Jesse James. However, the *Pullman Herald's* later account on February 14, 1891 (p. 2) called him "Wade Hicklin" and made no reference to possible criminal relatives. It said that long-time Colfax Police Chief James Brooks Mackay (1854-1936) was called to the Baldwin House due to a reported disturbance caused by Hicklin who was in a state of intoxication. The officer told Hicklin that he was too drunk to remain in the main part of the hotel and tried to lead him to his hotel room to sleep it off. Hicklin refused to cooperate with Officer Mackay and "burst forth in a volley of profanity," leading to his arrest for drunkenness and disorderly conduct. However, Mackay, in arresting him, found that the large man was too uncooperative to immediately frisk for a possible weapon, as would normally be done. Instead, Mackay thought that he would have better success by first locking Hicklin into a jail cell. Upon arriving at the Colfax jail, Mackay turned for a moment to unlock the cell door. That gave Hicklin just enough time to pull out a concealed 38-caliber revolver with which he shot at Mackay's head from six feet away. Barely missing him, the bullet lodged in the jail's wall. Mackay immediately grappled with Hicklin and eventually overpowered him after a considerable struggle. The prisoner was initially held under a \$500 bond for an appearance the next day before a city judge.

Another story about the Baldwin House appeared in a Spokane paper just over two months later. On April 21, 1891 (p. 8), the *Spokesman-Review* described a lawsuit brought against hotel owner Joseph T. Wightman by "H. H. Carter, a former waiter, for the recovery of wages alleged to have been due." The result was that the Colfax justice court ruled in favor of Carter, and Wightman was required to pay the money owed, as well as court costs.

The final notable story about the rebuilt Baldwin House hotel involved its destruction by fire on April 27, 1893, which ended its tenure as Colfax's last-surviving hotel with roots in the 1870s. The following account from the *Semi-Weekly Spokesman-Review* gives details of the fire at the Baldwin House:

Among the guests at the Baldwin House at the time of the fire was Father John Stack, who once had charge of the Catholic Church in Colfax. His trunk, containing all his clothing, except the garments of everyday wear, was burned up. While hurrying down the stairs with his shoes in his hand he dropped one of them, but could not stop to pick it up, as people were pushing down behind him. He got out consequently with only one shoe and hopped on that to a place of safety. The children of Manager Robinson of the Baldwin

house were saved by a servant girl, Miss Cora Olson, who thought of them and carried them from the building soon after the alarm was rung. It was in going back for his children, whom he could not find among the throng, that Mr. Robinson sustained some burns about the head.¹⁹

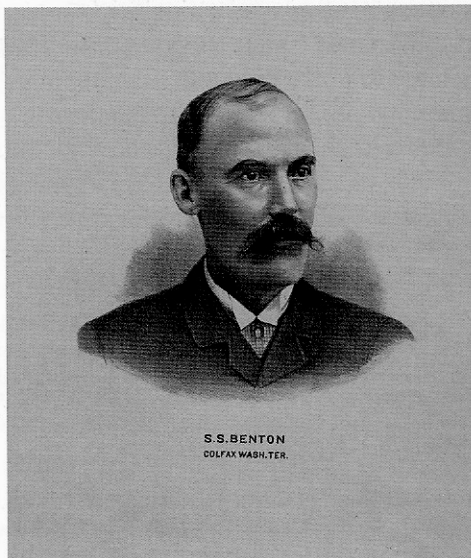
After the destruction of the second Baldwin House hotel in 1893, it was not again rebuilt. Today, memories of this important hotel, as well as Colfax's also remarkable Ewart House hotel that existed during 1879-1881, and the smaller Colfax Hotel, are all but forgotten. Nevertheless, in their time, all three of these, the town's first hotels, were the pride of early Colfax in the 1870s. Moreover, these three establishments played a significant role in the early development of an aggressive and successful business community. Thus they are quite important in the story of the growth of Colfax from a small pioneer settlement established in 1870 into the important town it remains today.

- 1 Edith Erickson, *Colfax 100 Plus*, private printing, 1981, p. 238.
- 2 *Palouse Gazette*, Colfax, W.T., Sept. 29, 1877, p. 1.
- 3 *Palouse Gazette*, Colfax, W.T., Oct. 12, 1877, p. 1.
- 4 *Palouse Gazette*, Colfax, W.T., Sept. 27, 1878, p. 1.
- 5 The unusual spelling of Baldwin's first name as "Ephriam" is from his gravestone in Mountain View Cemetery in Farmington, Washington. A grandson named for him spelled the name "Ephraim" Baldwin (1901-1939). In most records, the builder of the Baldwin House was referred to just as "E. Baldwin."
- 6 Sally Elder, "Baldwin Sisters' Recall Earlier Days in Colfax," *Palouse Magazine*, Vol. 6, no. 12, p. 10.
- 7 For many years, Colfax had a small lake within its downtown area, for which Lake Street was named.
- 8 *Palouse Gazette*, Colfax, W.T., June 8, 1878, p. 1.
- 9 *Palouse Gazette*, Colfax, Wash., July 2, 1880, p. 3.
- 10 *Palouse Gazette*, Colfax, Wash., July 30, 1880, p. 3.
- 11 *Palouse Gazette*, Colfax, Wash., July 9, 1880, p. 3, and July 16, 1880, p. 3.
- 12 *Palouse Gazette*, Colfax, Wash., July 16, 1880, p.3.
- 13 There is a gap in the microfilmed copies of the Colfax paper with none for the period Sept. 24, 1880 to Sept. 16, 1881. Consequently, details of the fire and events that followed are unavailable.
- 14 "Narrative of a Pioneer: Minnie Perkins Tower As told to Howard W. Lawrence, 1955." *Bunchgrass Historian*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1992, pp. 22-23.
- 15 This smaller hotel is shown on the August 1884 and May 1888 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Colfax under these two later names.
- 16 As noted, the Ewart House and adjacent former Colfax Hotel had burned a few months earlier in July of 1881.
- 17 *Palouse Gazette*, Colfax, W. T., Jan. 6, 1882, p. 3.
- 18 *Spokane Falls Review*, Spokane, Wash., Nov. 24, 1889, p. 7.
- 19 *Semi-Weekly Spokesman-Review*, Spokane, Wash., April 27, 1893, p. 5.



SID BENTON AND THE ROBBERY AT THE U AND I SALOON

Sidney Smith Benton (1838-1902) arrived in 1856 in California as young man to work as a miner; in 1861 he moved to Nevada to become the underground foreman of the Savage Mine. He married Martha (Mattie) Estella Bower (1838-1926) in 1863. They, with their son Thomas H. Benton (1873-1941), moved to the Colfax area in 1878. With the exception a few years around 1897 when he went to Iowa, Sid Benton was active in Colfax as a saloon keeper. His first saloon, the Sample Rooms, was destroyed by fire. His next saloon, the Delta, was opened in 1882, was built of brick on Main Street between Wall and Upton, and was opposite the J. A. Perkins Bank. Originally a one story structure, in 1886 he added a second story. It was known for its pure liquors and fine Havana cigars. It remained open until the late 1880s. By 1890, Benton and partner John Adams ran the Benton and Adams saloon and billiards parlor on Main Street. And as the following story reveals, after his return to Colfax in 1898, he ran the U and I saloon, presumably in the same Benton Building, which he had only leased out during his short stay in Iowa. After his death, Mattie continued to run the saloon being listed in a 1905 Polk Directory as "saloon keeper."



Portrait of Sidney Benton courtesy of University of Washington Library Special Collections

Our story begins with the report of the robbery on September 17, 1902, as reported by the *Colfax Gazette*, Colfax, September 19, 1902, p. 2:

TOOK A "BANK ROLL"

Mike Carter, Unmasked, Holds Up a Gambling House.

The Bold Robber Took a Sack Containing About \$300

From the U. and I. Saloon.

Wednesday morning shortly after 12 o'clock as Sid Benton, the proprietor of the U and I saloon, was putting away the "bank rolls" from the roulette table and the faro game, he was relieved of his "roll" in a very unceremonious manner. The money from the tables had been counted and placed in a canvas bag which Mr. Benton laid upon the safe while he opened the combination. Mike Carter, a



Exterior of the U and I Saloon, circa 1910

It was then owned by Edgar W. Moore, who stands at the far right. After the death of Sid Benton, the saloon was run by his son Thomas H. Benton until 1905. The name U and I appears just below the cougar and above the deer. The shop at the far left is that of the tailor Frank Bakala. This photograph was shared by Mike Markely.

"tinhorn" gambler, exsoldier and veteran of the Philippine war, was in the saloon and had been in conversation with various parties in the resort during the evening. Everyone had left the saloon with the exception of Mr. Benton, Tom Branon the bartender, and Mike Carter. While Benton was unlocking the combination Carter reached over with one hand and picked up the sack containing the money, while with the other he produced a revolver, saying: "I guess I'll take charge of this," and started for the door keeping Benton covered with the gun. Carter had a smile on his face as he walked toward the door and Benton and the bartender thought Carter was playing a "josh" and stood looking at him, expecting every moment that he would turn around and come back with the money. When Carter got to the door, however, he made a quick rush and was gone, hid by the darkness and lost to view. It then dawned upon them that they had been held up and robbed by a man without a mask and with whom they were quite well acquainted. An alarm was at once given and a chase followed, but no definite trace of the fleeing robber was secured. He made good his getaway and as yet has not been captured, although the sheriff's office has been working upon the case for the past three days. Carter has been around Colfax off and on all summer. He returned the last time about a week or ten days ago and has been hanging around ever since. He is known to a large number

of the “sporting fraternity and the following is a good description of him: Height 5 feet six inches; weight 174, but looks to weigh about 160; age 22 to 26; light hair; very light complexion, somewhat sallow; thin face; light blue eyes; smooth face, cannot grow much beard; gold filling in right eye tooth, shows plainly; very large legs, arms and shoulders; small hands with short fingers; large wrists. When last seen was wearing a blue black suit, square cut coat with double breast, pink shirt, red bow tie, turn down collar, a ring on little finger of left hand with four opals in set. Wore heavy shoes with thick and broad soles. He served in the Philippine war in Company F, New York Light Artillery. All round athlete. Quiet

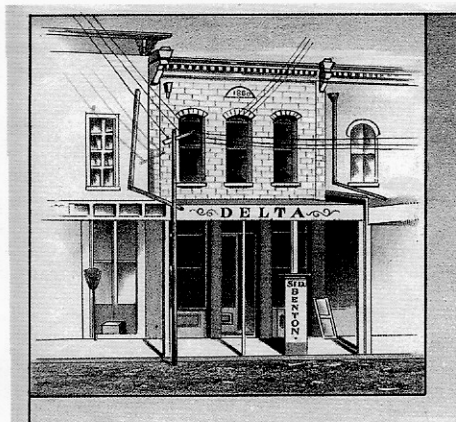
disposition. About \$300 was secured by the robber, the greater portion of which is silver coin. Carter, during the time he was around Colfax, was able to borrow money from some of the boys, among them being Tom Branon, the bartender. On Tuesday, however, he was around and paid up his debts and at night proceeded to “sin out” by taking everything in sight while the proprietor and bartender were watching him.

A short time later before any more developments in the case, Sid Benton died. His obit ran in the *Colfax Gazette* (Colfax) November 14, 1902. p.2:

Death of Sid Benton

The people of Colfax were surprised Tuesday to learn of the sudden death of Sydney S. Benton, who died at his home in the South End from the effects of a paralytic stroke sustained early in the day. Mr. Benton had only been sick a few days. At the time of his death he was aged 63 years, 5 months and 11 days, and was a member of Hiram Lodge, F & A. M., of the city. The funeral was held from the Masonic Temple yesterday afternoon at 1:30 o'clock. The deceased first came to Colfax about the year 1879 and remained sometime, after which he went to Iowa, where he resided a number of years, returning to Colfax about four years ago. At the time of his death he was the proprietor of the “U and I” saloon on Main street. The saloons and gambling houses closed yesterday afternoon during the funeral hour, out of respect to his memory. The deceased leaves a wife and one son to mourn his loss.

Again shortly after the death of Sid Benton, the robber Mike Carter was



Lithograph of the Delta Saloon

This image was published in History of the Pacific Northwest: Oregon and Washington, Portland 1889, Vol. 2, p. 586

arrested as reported in the *Colfax Gazette* (Colfax) February 27, 1903, p. 2:

Mike Carter is Arrested.

Sheriff Joseph Canutt received a telegram Wednesday from the chief of police of Chicago that Fred Hart, alias Mike Carter, the young man who held up Sid Benton in the U. and I. saloon last September, was arrested at the home of his mother in that city, and that he would be held awaiting Whitman county officials advice. Sheriff Canutt was enabled to effect his capture through the detective force of the Chicago police. Having located the home of Carter's mother, Sheriff Canutt put detectives upon the watch and was enabled to land the young outlaw. It will be remembered that this is the man who at the point of a revolver held up Sid Benton and relieved him of a sack containing over \$300, and was able to make a successful escape from the officers. Someone from the sheriff's office will go to Chicago after the prisoner just as soon as the proper papers for bringing him back can be secured.



The Sid Benton home on the NE corner of Island and Lake

This image dates from the mid-1880s when Sid was living here. He and his two dogs are shown in the photo. The church at the left is the Congregational built by Rev. Eells.

One month later, the *Colfax Gazette* (Colfax) March 27, 1903, p.8, gives the end of this story:

TURNED HART LOOSE

Lawyers Secured His Release On Writ of Habeas Corpus.

Hart Admitted That He Robbed Benton and Said the Money "Looked Good" to Him.

Fred Hart, alias Mike Carter, wanted in Whitman County on the charge of robbery, has been released from custody and is now a free man, a Chicago court having sustained the habeas corpus proceedings brought to prevent his extradition from the state of Illinois to state of Washington. After 18 days of fighting in the Chicago court, Deputy Sheriff A. L. Steward had to return to Colfax without the criminal. It will be remembered that on the 19th of last September "Mike Carter" held up Sid Benton in the U. and I. saloon in Colfax and robbed him of a sack containing about \$350. Carter made his escape and was not apprehended until last month when Sheriff Canutt received information which led him to believe that Carter was in Chicago. The Chicago police were notified and Carter was arrested and held as a fugitive from justice awaiting the arrival of an officer from this county to bring him here for trial. Requisition papers were signed by Gover-

nor McBride and forwarded to Governor Yates of Illinois, who signed them and signified that Carter should be turned over to Deputy Sheriff Steward for return to Whitman County, Washington.

After Carter was arrested, his mother Mrs. Hart, telegraphed to Sheriff Canutt offering to make good the money alleged to have been stolen from Benton and to pay all costs in the case. The sheriff's office answered her that no compromise could be made. After this Mrs. Hart proceeded to employ lawyers and fight the extradition. When Deputy Steward reached Chicago the requisition papers had not been received from the governor and Mrs. Hart again renewed her offer to compromise the matter and make good all losses and costs in the case if her son would be turned loose. Deputy Steward positively refused to listen to any sort of a compromise and demanded his man as soon as the papers were received from the governor of Illinois. Carter's attorneys secured a writ of habeas corpus and hearing was postponed from day to day for a number of days. At the final hearing the court sustained the habeas corpus proceedings and ordered the criminal released from custody. Friends of Carter were waiting at the door of the court room with a carriage and the criminal was hustled into the vehicle and driven away. The Chicago officers positively refused to rearrest Carter or hold him in any manner.

Carter's relatives spent a large sum of money to secure his release. The criminal recognized Deputy Steward the moment the officer stepped into the jail, and reached out his hand to shake hands. Steward shook hands with Carter and the criminal told the deputy sheriff that he would never be taken back to Colfax. He admitted that he took the sack of money, but said that he had a right to it.

Carter said that while in Colfax his uncle sent him \$350 and that he was inveigled into a poker game in the U. and I. saloon and robbed. He said that when he saw the sack of money which Sid Benton had, that it "looked good to him" and he took it and thought that he was only getting his money back which they had robbed him of. Fred Hart, or Mike Carter as he was known here, is said to be one of the shrewdest crooks in the city of Chicago. It is known that he was working as a motorman on the electric lines, simply to "fill in time until things would come right to turn another trick," His attorneys were the shrewdest criminal lawyers in Chicago and his friends and relatives had money. That statement will tell the story. Deputy Steward secured the state's attorney to prosecute the case and did everything within his power to secure the man, but without avail. The officers around the police court were heard to say that the state of Washington could not expect to secure the extradition of a fugitive in Chicago, in view of the fact that Illinois had recently made a requisition upon Washington for a fugitive arrested in Seattle and they never received their man. The sheriff's office is greatly chagrined to think that the man should be turned loose by the Chicago authorities.

WASHINGTON WATER POWER COMPANY IN COLFAX

The following early description of Colfax and the electrical history is taken from the statistical manual titled: "Reclassification of the Electric plant," of the Washington Water Power Company.

To the south of the City of Spokane and in the central portion of what is known as the Palouse wheat farming area, the town of Colfax is located. Its population in 1910 was 2,783, and it was known as the richest town per capita in the State of Washington. Electric service had been supplied to the town of Colfax as early as 1890 when the Colfax Electric Light and Power Company, a Washington corporation with a capital of \$125,000.00 was in the business of generating and distributing electricity. In 1897, this company experienced financial embarrassment, and one of the mortgages on the property was foreclosed. Codd and McKenzie, a partnership, purchased the property and continued to do business under the name of Colfax Electric Light and Power Company. Up until the year 1906, power was supplied from a local steam plant which was also used to operate a saw mill and a planing mill owned by Mr. Codd. The waste from the lumber mill was used for fuel. Power was furnished on a dark to daylight basis from the steam plant. Break-downs and consequent interruptions to service appear to have been frequent and often prolonged affairs.

In the year 1906, the Washington Water Power completed its 60,000 volt line to Colfax, installed a sub-station and thereafter furnished whole-sale power to the local company with the steam plant being maintained for stand-by and peak purposes. The steam plant continued in service until 1922.

About March 1, 1910, Colfax experienced a severe flood. At the peak, the generating station was under four feet of water, during which time many of the distribution poles were washed out completely. Under these conditions, Codd and McKenzie were interested in a sale of the property. The Washington Water Power Company investigated the Colfax property and found its acquisition would be advantageous. The history of the Colfax Company under the operation of its owners had been that of a profitable venture. It was felt that under the ownership of the Washington Water Power Company with adequate funds for expansion, revenues could be increased materially and the benefits of electricity widely extended. The rates were higher than those of the Washington Water Power Company and it was anticipated that the introduction of the lower rates of the latter company would result in considerable increase in use as well as in reduction of cost of electricity to the consumers. During this year, (1910) the revenues of the company from its Palouse

transmission line commenced to show a perceptible decline, probably due to the introduction of the Tungsten filament lamps with an increased lighting efficiency of nearly 400 per cent over the old type carbon filament lamps,

The Washington Water Power Company acquired the Colfax properties from Codd and McKenzie on June 1, 1910.

Even though Colfax rates were lowered by the Company upon its acquisition of the property, revenues in that area were maintained, and in fact increased by expansion and load-building efforts. Satisfactory growth of revenue also occurred in the towns of Diamond, Endicott, and St. John, to which service was extended from Colfax shortly after acquisition of this system.

That the acquisition of this property was of considerable benefit to the users of electric service in the area is illustrated by the growth of annual kilowatt-hours per customer and the reduction in average cost per kilowatt-hour for residential service. With a residential consumption of under 250 kilowatt hours, electric service utilization was increased rapidly during the fifteen years following 1916 to the end that in 1931 consumption of approximately 2,800 kilowatt-hours per year was recorded.

In 1912, an average cost of nearly 15 cents per kilowatt-hour is noted, while eleven years later it was about 2-1/2 cents per kilowatt-hour. It is interesting to note



Compare this image with that on page 25 and you notice that Colfax now has electricity and fire hydrants. The building barely seen at the right is the Courthouse. This home was still owned by Sid Benton at the time of his death; but he and his wife had rented it out. It was torn down by 1905.

that today the average cost per kilowatt-hour is less than 1-1/2 cents. Customers on the Washington Water Power Company lines are using an average of 7,800 K.W.H. per year.

Presently expanded electrical generation facilities are providing an ample power supply for new industrial uses in the Inland Empire, of which the Colfax area is an important part.

Electric service is provided by the Washington Water Power Company. With the completion of its Noxon Rapids Dam in Western Montana, 400,000 KW will be added to its system capacity. It is a member of the four company Pacific Northwest Power Company, now seeking authority to develop two major power sites in this region. It also is a member of the nuclear team studying the application of nuclear energy to power generation.

The electrical generation and transmission facilities of this company are also a part of the "Northwest Power Pool" which interconnects all of the power systems making electric service even more dependable. The present capacity of the Northwest Power Pool is approximately 9,000,000 KW, which is scheduled to increase to more than 12,000,000 KW in 1960.

Electric Power for industry in the Colfax area is sold at rates that result in costs less than three-fourths of the average of cities of the United States of comparable size.

Colfax is fed by three separate 110,000 volt lines any one being capable of carrying the load, should a fault occur on the other two.

Just recently one of the largest electric capacitor banks in the Northwest was placed in service at Colfax by the Washington Water Power Company to increase efficiency and reliability of service to the utilities' customers served by its two main transmission lines extending southbound from Spokane.

These capacitors automatically compensate for any variation in voltage on the two 110,000 volt transmission lines which serve the Palouse, Moscow and Lewiston areas. The capacitor bank will assist in maintaining a proper voltage during high load periods, even if one of the transmission lines is out of service for any reason.

The capacitor represents an investment of approximately \$150,000. The company plans to install two more of the massive units within this area in the next two years. Now surrounded by a seven foot high 60x 40 foot steel fence, the capacitor has several interlocking safety devices which enable maintenance with maximum safety.

Technically known as a 21,600 KVAR capacitor, the unit was built by the Westinghouse Corporation and installed by Washington Water Power construction crews.

PACIFIC TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY, COLFAX

The telephone was invented by Alexander Graham Bell, a student of speech and of sound, and a teacher of the deaf. Bell was born in Scotland, moved with his parents to Canada in 1870 when 23 years old, and shortly thereafter came to Boston where, in addition to his professional work as a teacher, he carried on the experiments which resulted in the invention of the telephone.

It was Bell's interest in the human voice and his knowledge of the physics of sound rather than his knowledge of electricity that suggested to him the possibility of the telephone. He was only a dabbler in electricity to begin with.

Bell verified his principle of the telephone on June 2, 1875, but words could not be understood. Continued experiments however, result in an instrument that, on March 10, 1876, transmitted a complete sentence. Even so, more than a year of demonstration and development work was required before the first telephones were leased for commercial (private lines) service in May 1877.

The first Spokane telephone company was established in 1887 by Mr. Charles B. Hopkins who also organized the Colfax exchange, only eleven years after Alexander Graham Bell's invention of the telephone. Charles B. Hopkins, at that time, first publisher of the *Colfax Gazette*, took over an old Army telegraph line between Colfax and Almota and converted it into a telephone line to help speed the delivery of news for his paper. He called his wife from Almota to establish the first long distance telephone call in Washington territory two years before Washington was admitted to statehood. By the end of the first year, it was serving twenty-five telephones. Now [1956] it is serving more than 2,200. Approximately 9,300 calls



An early Whitman County telephone operator



A Uniontown telephone operator in 1911

Charles Hopkins established the town's system and soon had it connected to Colfax and other towns.

including long distance originate each day. In 1945 there were 26 telephone employees in Colfax. Today there are 54 with an estimated local pay roll of \$208,800. In 1956, Pacific Telephone paid \$25,613.00 in property taxes to Whitman County.

\$400,000 was earmarked for Colfax in 1955, to complete an extensive overall telephone improvement project. It includes a modern, custom built dial system and "metropolitan" telephone numbers. "EXbrook" prefix followed by five numbers ties Colfax into the nation-wide 7-digit numbering plan. Eventually when the program is complete, telephone subscribers will be able to dial their own long distance calls.

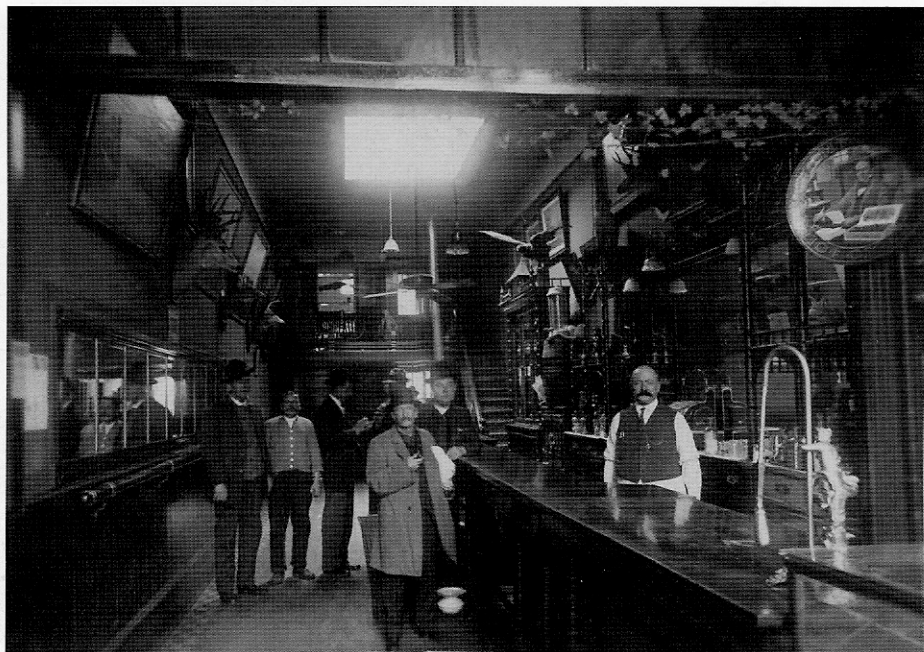
The fundamental policy of the Company is founded upon the long term undertaking to furnish the best possible telephone service at the lowest cost consistent with the financial safety and fair treatment of employees. In carrying out this undertaking our Company recognizes a threefold obligation to the telephone-using public, to the employees and to investors.



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*Interior of the U and I Saloon taken c. 1908
Photo courtesy of Mike Markley*