The Founding of Pullman

TWO ACCOUNTS

In 1875 a man named Bolin Farr, in search of a homestead site, camped beside a Palouse meadow where three creeks were joined together. All night long the gurgling water lulled his sleep and with the coming of the morn, he heard the golden song of thrushes in the willow. "Here," said he, "is where I'll stake my homestead, and call it Three Forks Ranch." Bolin Farr worked hard to clear his land and plant his crops. Two years later, in seventy-seven, his first neighbors came—settling on homesteads cornering to his own. Thus, the town of Three Forks got its start, though the first post office and store were not established until 1881.

With the vision of a true pioneer, Bolin Farr set aside a tract of land and platted it to town lots, after which he cast about to find a name befitting such a place. George Pullman of the Pullman Company chanced to be a friend, so in his honor, Three Forks faded out, and Pullman took its place upon the map.—Radio Script, 1952.

In September of 1877, Daniel G. McKenzie of Kansas brought his family West and settled in the area of the Palouse known as Three Forks. The Bolin Farr family, and several others, came along a short time later, and set up their homesteads next to McKenzie.

The early settlers desired a post office, so in June of 1881, Orville Stewart suggested the name of Pullman, after the great sleeping car magnate. The United States Postal Service was a trifle slow in granting the request, so Mr. Stewart ran the Post Office with $100 of his own money as a gift to the community. Six months later, the Postal Service established an official Post Office at the town of Pullman.

With great ambition, the early settlers set out to build Pullman. As a result of their efforts, the town came out of public ownership in 1880 and 1881. With title to the land secured, the town fathers platted the land, and proceeded to begin in earnest the efforts to develop the town of Pullman.—From Lawrence R. Stark in Bunchgrass Historian, vol. 9 no. 2, 1981.
LOOKING FOR A SITE

A distinct feature of the town of Pullman are the four hills that surround it, playing a large part in the way the town has been developed. The hill to the northeast, new College Hill, was known as Mechanics Hill before and after the new college, Washington Agriculture College and School of Science, opened the doors of its first building, the Orb, in 1892. To the northwest lies Military Hill, given its name from the Military Academy, Pullman’s prep school of 1891. The school served the educational needs of Pullman’s young men for four years, after which it burned to the ground. Major Walker’s home, N. W. 325 True, is among the few remaining homes of the faculty.

THE FOUR HILLS OF PULLMAN

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WHY IS THIS TOWN LAID OUT SO FUNNY?

Fire of 1890:

IN SMOKING RUINS

“George A. Blitch, S. B. Crocker, and A. B. Smith, the committee appointed by Acting Governor Laughton to locate the agricultural college and school of science, have made a tour of the counties that are in the race for that institution.”

“At 4:30 o’clock in the afternoon they stepped off the regular freight train at the form of the Pullman depot. The kid band in uniform played soul-stirring selections and headed the throng of commissioners and citizens to Main Street.”

“The commissioners had many compliments for Pullman, its natural resources, fine stores, and store buildings, and it is believed that an impression for good was made upon their minds.”

Two sites, the Vedder and the rarr property, both adjoining the town, were shown to the commission, and no mistake will be made by them if they locate the college on either…—Pullman Herald, April 18, 1891.

High Hopes

Pullman intends to keep up with her rival cities Chicago, Spokane, Tacoma and Seattle.—Pullman Herald, August 2, 1890.

FIRE OF 1890:

IN SMOKING RUINS

“The handsome portion of Pullman is again in smoking ruins. Thursday afternoon, at 1:30 o’clock, fire was discovered in the rear of Lyle Brothers livery stable on Grand Street, almost as soon as it was seen it had completely enveloped the barn and was spreading to the surrounding buildings which were frame structures and burned like tinder. The wind was in the northwest when the fire started, but changed and swept the flames across the street and in two hours time nothing but charred and smoking embers remained of the handsome business blocks that had adorned our business streets.”

“The artiston wells were all opened up and the supply of water was unlimited but with only buckets to throw it, it had little effect.”

“The wooden buildings on Main Street have always been a menace to the town, and now that they are burned and fire limits have been established the town will build up on a safer basis. Handsome brick blocks will be commenced as soon as arrangement can be made, and in a few months the Great Fire of

FLOOD OF 1910:

PULLMAN LOSES FULLY QUARTER MILLION DOLLARS BY FLOOD

“Early Tuesday morning the southeast wind, augmented by a warm wave, started rivulets and streams down every hillside, and by 8 o’clock the South Pahoe, Dry Fork, and Missouri Flat creeks, which unite here, were raging torrent, all out of their channels and fast flooding the city. Dry Fork, which enters the city from the south, running the entire length of Grand street, its channel being undermined a 12-foot board walk on the east side of the street, filled with water from the west and at the Flats town its waters divided, nearly its entire volume flowing down Main street to meet the encroaching flood from the Pahoe.”

DAMAGE OF THE FLOOD OF 1910

“The waters were rising at the rate of five feet an hour, and caught the business men in a state of unpreparedness that was responsible for much of the loss that resulted.”

The flood subsided somewhat with the destruction of the bridges, but during the course of the afternoon, it stood from one to eight feet deep in the business houses along Main street, and not till evening did the water begin to fall so that merchants could cease the battle and survey the damage wrought in the few hours.”—Pullman Herald, March 4, 1910.
The Anawalt Building
North 10th Grand

The present two story brick structure was built in 1902 by Levi M. Anawalt following the fire of 1899, which destroyed the original wood building. Due to finances, however, it was not finished on the inside until 1899. E. H. Leithcamp bought it on a sheriff's sale and the building took his name. Other owners have been Aukney, Kelley, Kelly-Hughes, Hughes-Barton, and the Bruce Anawalt.

This building has been remodeled several times but was restored to its original look when it became the Anawalt Building in 1979. For many years the second floor has served as living quarters although in the early years it was used by those who rented the space on the floor below. Two entrances and a partition to divide the interior has made it possible to lease to two businesses at a time. Some long term renters have been The J. C. Penny Co., 1953-1958; Kimball Funeral Home, 1912-1930; the Pullman Grain Growers, 1930-1969; The Pullman Herald, 1956-1967; and The Pullman Printers, 1967-1976. Esther (Mrs. Stanley) Smith, 1984.

The Flatrixon Building South of Grand

Located between High and Grand streets and facing on Main the Flatrixon building takes its name and shape from the wedge of land upon which it is built. Planned by architect Wm. Swain as an office building it was built in 1904 and since its completion in 1905 has served as offices for many businesses. In its early years the front office was used by Grinnell & Company. From 1909 to 1917 it was occupied by the Pullman Savings and Loan Association, until they moved to new quarters on the corner of 3rd and Main in 1930. The building became Washington Mutual Savings and Loan. State Farm Insurance has been the occupant since 1957. Esther (Mrs. Stanley) Smith, 1984.