

## General History\*

Genesee, probably the greatest wheat market in the famous Palouse country, is located at the terminus of the Northern Pacific Railway, 113 miles southeast of Spokane. Built on a hill overlooking the Genesee valley, the 'Garden Spot of the Palouse' it commands a view of the snowclad mountains of three states. Its location is healthful, natural drainage perfect, water abundant and of excellent quality...

The Genesee valley lies directly north of the Lewiston valley. Speaking of the naming of this beautiful little vale of Latah county, Idaho, John P. Volmer, the Lewiston Banker and merchant said: 'During the summer of 1870, Alonzo Leland, later editor of the Lewiston Teller, a man named Stone, who was the O.R. & N. agent for their steamboat line and myself went one day for a drive over the high prairie north of the Clearwater River. There was but one habitation in all that vast country then, Caswell & Hall's cattle ranch at the summit of the Clearwater bluff. As we drove along we passed down the creek and through a sequestered little valley still in its natural state, Stone exclaimed: 'this reminds me of my old home, the Genesee valley in New York state.' The suggestion was made that we so name it and from that time on it bore that name. When Leland started his newspaper he always referred to the valley by the of name of Genesee and so it became universally known by that appellation. Sometime in 1871 Jacob Cambitch took a ranch on Cow Creek and he may be termed the pioneer of Genesee.

Settlement was slow until 1872 and in that time quite an immigration to this prairie country took place and the first large settlement was made. From that time on scores flocked to the 'Hog Heaven' country...

In 1875 Mr. Curtis started a town about a mile east of the present town of Genesee, which soon became a thriving village. In 1886 A.M. Cannon, A.W. Newberry, Paul F. Mohr, John P. Volmer and others organized the Spokane & Palouse Railway. That year the road was constructed to Belmont. Then it was pushed to Marshall Junction and in 1888 these men built a train terminus at the present site of Genesee. About the time they decided to extend the road to Genesee that townsite fell into the hands of Jacob



Rosenstein whom they thought asked too much for right-of-way privileges and grounds. The men objected and the result was that Volmer purchased a tract of forty acres from J.H. Evans a mile west of the old town and laid out the new town, calling it Genesee also. When the railroad came through, it stopped one mile west of the old town. This immediately broke up the old town and Jacob Rosenstein headed the removal to the new town by moving his store over on wheels. Soon the old town was a relic of the past. The railroad company built a roundhouse and laid out quite a yard system and the population of the town jumped to several hundred people within a comparatively short time. Two pioneers of the old town not mentioned above were A. Levi, who established a general store in 1878, and E.T. Platt who was the pioneer attorney and was also justice of the peace.

The first business structure in the present town was put up by J.S. Larabee, hardware dealer and the second by W.J. Herman, general merchandise. J.J. Owen moved a 16x24 frame house there from Moscow, which was the first shingle roof house in town. William Brown with his own labor put up a building and opened the pioneer barber shop. C.F. Burr was the pioneer real estate dealer there and George Stelz the first building contractor....



The town was incorporated October 23, 1889, with

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the following trustees: J.C. Martin, W.C. Cox, W.J. Herman, J.J. Owen, and E.S. Cameron. The metes and bounds description of the townsite is as follows: commencing at the northeast corner of the northeast plat of Section 14, in township 37, north of range 13 Boise meridian; thence running south 3300 ft then west half a mile; thence north 530 feet; then in a southeasterly direction 1520 ft; thence north 180 feet; thence east 140 feet; thence northeast; thence east 1380 feet; thence north 1110.95 and then east half a

mile to place of beginning....

As a home city Genesee possesses many advantages. Climatic conditions are almost ideal. Its location is about 2700 feet above sea level, but mountains in all directions keep out the storms and cold indigenous to less favored regions and at the same time render the air absolutely pure and wholesome....

Genesee derives its support from the rich agricultural and horticultural districts surrounding it. Its growth has been coincident with the development of these natural resources. The same appearance of thrift and prosperity which characterizes the town and its schools, churches, handsome residences and substantial business structures is apparent in a marked degree in the country. Nice farm buildings are the rule rather than the exception. The Genesee valley is embraced within the eastern part of the famous Palouse district and in extent and production easily takes first rank....

Genesee was a prospering city in the 1900's and continued to be all the way to 1940. The city was self-sufficient and the people who lived in Genesee also worked in Genesee. The economic base of the city was primarily agriculture, as it is today. With the advent of the modern highway system the city has lost much of its population base to the larger Lewiston and Moscow. These towns are now only fifteen minutes away, while back in the 1940's it took almost forty-five minutes.



\* an excerpt from History of North Idaho

## Early School History

Genesee, garden spot of the Palouse, has had the advantage of public schools for a century. Yes, the first town school was established in September of 1879, in the "old Town", about a mile east or our present town site. This was 11 years before Idaho attained statehood and 10 years before Genesee was incorporated. The schoolhouse was located near the four corners, now the Luedke place. Mr. Vernon and Mr. Dent were the first teachers and commanded the overwhelming salary of \$150.00 for a three month stint. Lewis Jain was a trustee in 1883, with Miller and Evans.

In 1883, school was held in the old fort located near Cow Creek on land belonging to Mr. Beeman. The Fort, surrounded by a stockade, had been built as a precaution around 1877. Church services were held in the same building. Lettenmaier now farms the land that is the site of the old fort. School term was three to four months at that time. Later that year, it was decided to sell the building and build a new structure. The building sold for \$21.00.

In 1884, school was held in a warehouse and construction was begun on a new building. This was completed in 1885 and stood ¼ miles east of old Genesee. The building was 24 inches wide 36 long and 12 high. Teachers were paid 20 and month plus board.

In 1888, the railroad was constructed to Belmont-then to Marshall Junction. A terminus was build at Genesee. Jacob Rosenstein, an early day merchant,



asked too much for right-of-way, and as a

result John Vollmer purchased 40 acres a mile west of the original town. By some coincidence the railroad stopped there. Businesses were moved to the new site as the old town broke up. A special meeting of the school directors was called and it was decided to move the schoolhouse to the new town. This was done for \$100.00. Six lots were purchased for \$200.00 for a school site.



The population of Genesee was booming and several hundred people lived here by 1889. 146 students were in the district and a new addition was built. The contract was let for \$3,374.00 for construction. In 1889, the town was incorporated and in 1890, the year Idaho became a state, another wing was added to the school.

Mr. Hartzell Coff was the first high school superintendent and served for 11 years. The first high school offered a three year course but later a 4 year course was adopted by the board. The independent school district was formed in 1894, was district no. 2.

Salaries in those early days? Janitors: \$2.00 a day, principal: \$75.00 a month, superintendent: \$82.00 a month and other teachers \$55.00 a month. The principal and the superintendent both taught classes and ruled with an iron hand or a willow switch! In fact, the principal stated to the board that (and I quote) "in his opinion marble playing was not conducive to good discipline on the grounds and he requested the board to stop it". They did.

In 1895 the first American flag was purchased for \$17.50.

The first graduating class was the class of 1896 and had four members "from small beginnings".....

Between 1902 and 1910, running water and a sewage system were installed. Another new wing was added, this time to the east side of the building. Several decisions were made including deciding that students must continue to buy their own books and ... NO MARRIED FEMALE TEACHERS would be hired!!!

Basketball was started in 1910. Since the beginning of basketball in Genesee teams have always fared above teams from other schools of the same size. Teams comprised of the wardrobes, the grays and Herb Martinson became famous in the inland empire. One of these gentlemen, Wm. Gray, established a scholarship and as you know many Genesee graduates have been and will continue to be recipients. Those early teams played and won from the university of Idaho prep and Washington state college, among others. Schools were played in Spokane. Genesee won the Inland Empire championship in 1911-12. A right to the championship was disputed and a game played on a neutral court. Genesee defeated Rathdrum for the championship 18-16.

Football was introduced in 1910. The first season record: played 4 – won 1 lost 3. Well-records improved!!

In 1912, the wooden structure was sold for \$300.00 and a new school built. This is part of the present elementary school with classrooms and the superintendent's office. The year 1912 is recorded on the cornerstone. The original wooded building was torn down and wood used to build the highway barn and the Comnick house, south of the city park. The new brick structure was built and furnished for the sum of \$21,220.00.

Consolidation of the country schools was begun in 1936-37. A bus was purchased by a private individual and children were brought to town. During the winter of 1937 several students from the rural areas were snowed in town for a week. Snowplowing was done by local farmers and often after plowing all day, the roads would be blocked by snow by the time the farmer returned home. Temporary consolidations was completed n 1937 and all students budded to town.

The county schools closed forever.

In 1947, the courthouse records reveal permanent consolidation of the Genesee Joint School District. Manes of the rural schools include Aurora #15, Pine Grove #16, Smith #35, Keene #39, Lone Star #56, Ebel #67, Gray Eagle #28, Jain #64, Lenville #26, Aspendale #27, Union #63, Part of the south

Thorncreek #3, Blaine #21 and fix ridge #17. With consolidation and bussing, an addition was needed. The smallest class was 4 and the largest class was 43. The assessed school worth in 1903 was 7,000 dollars. 22 superintendents and 428 teachers have been employed.