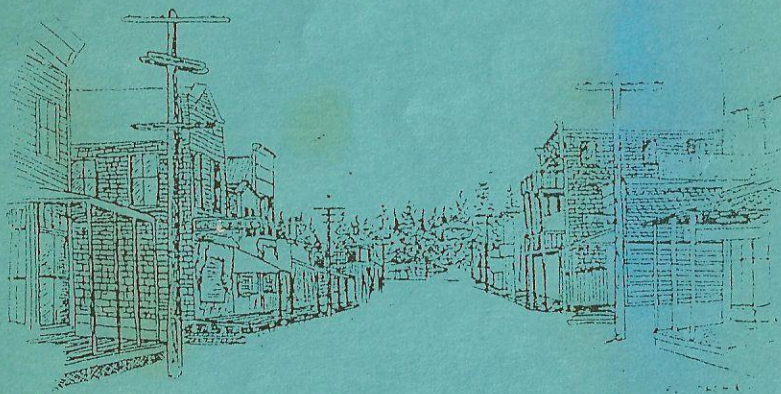# TENINO

The First Hundred Years

A Brief History and Historic
Photos of Tenino's Past

By Art Dwelley

TENINO

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Photos of Tenino's Past

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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Ask ten residents how Tenino was named and you'll probably get at least five different answers. Among the stories you'll hear are: it was named after a locomotive with the number 1090; its name was taken from a railroad survey stake marked 10-9-0; others will say it is an Indian word, and here again, it is hard to get an agreement on the word's meaning — some say it means "meeting ground" and others "fork in the road". One thing is certain—there was a Tenino Indian tribe on the Columbia River long before Tenino was named. A stream in Oregon and a Columbia river boat also were named Tenino. In view of the many versions of how Tenino was named and the fact that none can be authenticated — we suggest you pick the story that appeals to you — you'll probably be as close as anyone else!

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TENINO

Before the coming of the white man the little prairie where Tenino now stands was said to be the meeting and trading place for the Indians of Puget Sound, the Coast Indians, and the tribes of the Columbia River. According to the story it was a neutral ground where commerce was not affected by the many inter-tribe rivalries. Actually, the site was within the territory of the Nisqually Indians, but there is no evidence they ever inhabited it for any length of time or established a major village there.

The Indians of the area had a comparatively easy life. Game was plentiful, berries and edible plants grew in profusion, and every fall the streams were filled with salmon beyond number. Because of the bounty of the land they raised no crops and their migrations were limited to excursions to hunt, pick berries or dig camas roots.

In general, the Indians have left little sign that they were once quite numerous in the area. Occasionally a farmer plows up an arrowhead, and a few fine examples of stone work have been found in the immediate area. The lack of any large permanent settlements undoubtedly accounts for the relative scarcity of local artifacts.

By the early 1800's the influence of the white man began to be felt by the tribes of the area. Although few if any had ever seen a white man, the products of civilization began to filter over the Indian trade routes from early contacts in the lower Columbia River and from Indians of the Coast. A lucrative fur trade was gaining momentum and ships of a dozen countries began to frequent the Northwest Coast.

Strangely enough, the exploration of the Tenino area by the first white men came from the Columbia River and not from Puget Sound. First to penetrate the interior of Southwestern Washington were the Astorians. Robert Stuart of Astor's Pacific Fur Company claimed to have ascended the Cowlitz River for many miles and his description of the countryside gives considerable validity to his claim. Stuart later was credited with establishing the route of the "Oregon Trail".

Following the War of 1812 and the purchase of Astoria by the North West Company, fur traders again began to follow the Cow-

litz River north in search of better trapping areas. Their activities were short-lived however, as the result of an unfortunate clash between a group of Iroquois Indians trapping for the North West Company and a band of Cowlitz. It seems that one of the Iroquois trappers attempted to force his attentions on one of the Cowlitz squaws and was killed by her husband. The rest of the Iroquois promptly returned to Astoria (then Fort William) and reported an unprovoked murder of their comrade. The fur company, not about to allow the killing of one of their men to go unpunished, promptly sent the Iroquois back under the leadership of Peter Skene Ogden to apprehend the murderer. However, before Ogden was aware of their intentions, the Iroquois massacred the entire band of the man who killed their comrade. The massacre aroused the Indians to the point that the area north of the Columbia was closed to further activities of the fur trade for a number of years.

In 1821 the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company merged, ending a bitter and bloody rivalry that had nearly destroyed both companies. Under the merger, the name of the Hudson's Bay Company was retained and for the following quarter of a century the area between the Columbia and Puget Sound was dominated by the company and its Chief Factor, Dr. John McLaughlin.

By the mid-1820's the Hudson's Bay Company had made peace with the Cowlitz Indians and had begun to use the natural route northward from Fort Vancouver via the Cowlitz River and across the prairies to Puget Sound. In 1833 the establishment of Fort Nisqually southwest of the the present site of Steilacoom, made the route become even more important. Leaving the Cowlitz at Cowlitz Landing, near the site of the present town of Toledo, the trail ran north to Jackson Prairie, and on to the Chehalis River valley where Centralia and Chehalis now stand. At Grand Mound Prairie the route turned eastward, following the Scatter Creek Valley through Tenino and to the old ford on the Nisqually River south of Yelm. From the river the trail led northward to Fort Nisqually.

Fort Nisqually was not primarily a fur trading post, although Puget Sound Indians were encouraged to bring their furs there. It was an important link on the overland route between Fort Lang-

ley on the Fraser River and Fort Vancouver, and was used extensively for raising sheep and cattle for the Hudson's Bay Company trade with the Russian-American Fur Company in Alaska. In its heyday the Fort was a complete, nearly self-sufficient community, and claimed land of several thousand acres.

The Hudson's Bay Company broadened their operations in Southwest Washington in 1839 with the establishment of the Cowlitz Farm near the present town of Toledo. The farm grew in size until in 1846 there were 1,500 acres fenced and under cultivation, 11 barns, approximately 1,000 cattle, 200 horses, and 2,000 sheep. It was a big operation and stimulated even more traffic back and forth through the Tenino area.

It should be noted that some of the individuals who passed this way in those years are famous today in the pages of history. Among them were Sir George Simpson, Governor-General of the Hudson's Bay Company, Peter Skene Ogden, David Douglas, Dr. William Tolmie, and others whose names and deeds have lived long after them. Sir George Simpson was a character worthy of special mention. At the height of his power, this one man held almost absolute power over an empire that stretched from Hudson's Bay to the Pacific Coast and from the Arctic Ocean to the Great Salt Lake. Not one to run his company's affairs by remote control, he regularly inspected his domain by canoe, horseback, and on foot. Ever the gentleman, he traveled complete with cook, valet, and even his personal bagpiper!

In 1844 the beginning of the end of British control north of the Columbia was in sight. In that year a group of Americans came north to the falls of the Deschutes River at what is now Tumwater. Michael Simmons took advantage of the natural site to build a water-powered mill, and a freed Negro named George Bush settled on the prairie which is now the site of the Olympia Airport. The door was beginning to open for settlement, and in a few years the rumble of emigrant wagons became a familiar sound in the Scatter Creek Valley.

In 1851, Tenino's founder and first resident, Stephen Hodgden, filed a donation claim on most of the present site of Tenino. A "Down-Easter" from Maine, Hodgden had come west in 1849 to the goldfields of California. Failing to strike it rich, he came

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north and finally settled on the banks of Scatter Creek. His first home was just east of the present bridge on the north city limits.

Tenino's second settler was Samuel Davenport, who filed a donation land claim adjacent to Hodgdon's to the west. The Davenport homesite was approximately where the depot now stands. Meanwhile the surrounding country was beginning to be settled. On the Skookumchuck River J. T. Ticknor, J. Mabie, A. S. Yantis, the Northcraft brothers, W. Mize, G. H. Frost, and Aaron Webster had all staked their claims. West of Tenino were the claims of Ignatius Colvin, Abraham Tilley, J. Gibson, W. Martin, Lawton Case and C. Byles. Several miles east of Tenino on the banks of the Deschutes River were the donation claims of Thomas Glasgow and Thomas Linklater. Linklater, a Scot, came to the northwest in 1834 with the Hudson's Bay Company and held a number of positions with them until settling on the claim. On the Linklater land was a blockhouse that had been built by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1848. The building survived for many years, but was destroyed by fire in the 1930's.

In the mid-1850's an outbreak of Indian troubles prompted the settlers to gather together and build forts or blockhouses for protection. Inhabitants of the Tenino-Skookumchuck area joined with Grand Mound residents in building Fort Henness on the Grand Mound Prairie. Fort Henness was a substantial establishment, about 100 feet square with a log palisade twelve feet high. On opposite corners of the palisade were two-story bastions from which sentries had a clear view and field of fire along the walls.

Along the inside walls of the fort were lean-to shelters for the settlers and their families, and a guard-room stood in the center of the courtyard. The quarters must have been cramped for the more than 100 inmates, but as time passed with no major Indian problems in the area, the population steadily declined. Actually, more than one hardy pioneer family displayed their trust in the local Indian tribes and considerable courage by remaining on their farms throughout the entire period.

The Tenino area suffered only one casualty in the Indian War, William Northcraft, killed while hauling supplies for the militia. The death of Northcraft was doubly sad because he was alone and unarmed when the Indians ambushed him near the present town

of Rainier. William and his brother, Phillip, had only one rifle between them and it was decided that Phillip should keep the gun to defend the home place on the Skookumchuck. Today Northcraft Mountain stands guard over the land that Phillip was never called on to defend.

Tenino almost was the site of a brush between Oliver Shead's Wagon Guards and a small band of hostile Indians. Protecting a wagon train of military supplies on its way from Cowlitz Landing to Olympia, the wagon guards found hostile Indian sign just above the Scatter Creek crossing. The wagons were pulled into a circle on what is now the Fairgrounds, but no attack came and the train continued to Olympia the next day without incident. Chein Hill, just north of town, is said to be the site of a carefully-planned ambush to kill Territorial Grovernor Isaac Stevens. However, the Indian plot was foiled when the Governor took a different route.

After the Indian scare was over, emigrants once more began to swarm into the area. On April 17, 1860, Stephen Hodgden became postmaster of the first post office in the area, which was named "Coal Bank". Coal Bank took its name from an exposed ledge of coal on the Webster place south of Tenino and was a political precinct consisting of Tenino (still called Hodgden's Station at that time), Frost Prairie, Skookumchuck, part of Violet Prairie, and the McIntosh Lake area on the east.

Coal Bank had three more postmasters before 1870 — Jos. Gibson, Abraham Tilley, and Mrs. Martha Rhodes. In 1870, the U. S. Census found that a total of 170 people were living in the Coal Bank precinct!

In the first year of the 70's, the most popular conversation concerned the coming of the railroad. Tracks were inching their way north from Kalama and a whole new era of transportation was on the horizon. Public transportation at that time consisted of three stage coaches a week between Olympia and the Columbia, and it was not unusual for the paying passengers to spend considerable time helping push the coaches out of mudholes on the way.

In the summer of 1872 railroad survey crews moved through the area and grading and track-laying crews were not far behind. As "Hodgden's Station" marked the end of this particular track-

laying contract, an office and depot became the first commercial building to be built on the site of Tenino. On October 8, 1872, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the final spike on this section of the Northern Pacific was driven into place. The station was named "Tenino", and the seed of a town began to grow.

Tenino was to become "the end of track" for almost a year. The railroad company had run into financial troubles and all work to complete the line to Tacoma had halted. Regular train service from Tenino to Kalama began on October 14, 1872, and about the same time a hotel was constructed next to the depot. According to a contemporary report in the "Puget Sound Courier" the first hotel keeper was a man named McGraw. However, local pioneers insist that William "Uncle Billy" Huston built the first hotel. Regardless of who built Tenino's first hostelry, Billy Huston was one of the town's early pioneers and was a prominent resident for many years.

Tenino's first retail establishment was established by Fred Brown, who had followed the railroad with his tent store to serve the construction crews. With the halt of construction, Mr. Brown decided to set up a permanent store to serve residents of the area. On November 17, 1873, the name of the post office was changed from Coal Bank to Tenino, and Fred Brown was appointed postmaster.

In the spring of 1873, the Lake Superior and Puget Sound Company submitted the plat for the town of Tenino to Thurston County Commissioners. The original plat consisted of ten blocks, bordered on the north by what is now Sussex Street, on the south by First Street, on the east by Stage Street and on the west by A Street. Original street names (still in use) were Howard, Olympia, Stage, Hodgden and Central. "Hodgden's Addition to Tenino" approved almost at the same time, added 14 more blocks to the original plat. Shortly thereafter, William Ragless purchased the property of Stephen Hodgden, and later added an addition of his own to the town. Ragless was another pioneer Tenino business man and operated a blacksmith shop and later a real estate and insurance company.

From 1872 to 1878, Tenino was Olympia's lone overland connection with the outside world. Railroad passengers and freight

for the state capitol came to Tenino and then were hauled by stage coach and wagon to Olympia. Naturally, this situation was a little galling and inconvenient for the Olympians who at one time had expected to be the terminus for the Northern Pacific on Puget Sound. After several abortive attempts, the Olympians completed their own line in July of 1878, under the name of the Thurston County Railroad Construction Company. The name of the narrow gauge (3 ft.) line was changed to the Olympia and Chehalis Valley Railroad in August of 1881, and ten years later became the Port Townsend Southern Railroad Company. In 1914 the little line was purchased by the Northern Pacific and abandoned upon completion of NP's new line from Tacoma to Tenino via East Olympia and Plumb Station.

Through the late 1870's and 1880's Tenino grew slowly, becoming a trading center for the southern part of the county. By 1887 the town had a population of 75, two general merchandise stores, a hotel, two blacksmiths, and a telegraph and freight office. Joseph Blumauer had purchased the Fred Brown store in 1882, and Solomon Blumauer was appointed postmaster the same year. Isaac Blumauer became postmaster in 1884, and the Blumauer name became a familiar one in the area as the family branched out into the logging business and real estate. Blumauer Hill remains today as a reminder of this pioneer family.

In 1888 an industry which became an integral part of Tenino's economy for many years was born — sandstone quarrying. In that year S. W. Fenton and George VanTine, searching for a source of good building stone, were led almost by accident to Tenino. The men had come to Olympia where they found financial backing for a stone quarry and had come out to Plumb Station to investigate the possibilities of a small quarry there. Missing the train back to Olympia the two men stayed the night with Sam Spurlock who had a stone fireplace made from stone cut at Tenino. The men came on to Tenino, found the stone outcropping where the Tenino swimming pool is now located to be of a superior grade of sandstone, and a new industry was born. VanTine and Fenton formed the Tenino Stone Company, and soon were followed by the Eureka Sandstone Company. Coming on the scene later were the Tenino Sandstone Company, and its successors, Hercules Sandstone Com-

pany, and the Western Quarry Company. A number of Tenino's prominent families today (mostly of Scotch descent) came to Tenino originally when their menfolk were brought in as skilled quarrymen, stone cutters, and stone masons.

Before building stone was outmoded by the use of concrete in construction, the quarries of Tenino supplied the materials for many of the important buildings of the northwest. Among these were the Portland and Seattle libraries, the Old State Capitol, Science Hall at Washington State College, and many others. Quarry sites were the swimming pool area previously mentioned, the Hercules quarry (later Western) visible on the hill west of town, and Hercules No. 2, on the Old Military Road just east of Tenino.

With the founding of the stone quarries the population of Tenino took a jump to 339 in 1890, and by 1910 was well over 1,000. This was a boom period for Tenino and quarrying, logging, milling, and mining operations provided a steady payroll for the bustling community. In 1905, T. J. McClellan, another pioneer merchant, built the town's first telephone system, and in 1906 added another first — an electric generating plant. The first power plant was located on the Blumauer Mill site south of Tenino and was later moved to a site near where the town pump now stands. The power company was later sold to S. W. Fenton and Dean Hays, then to the North Pacific Power Company of Portland, and finally to Puget Sound Power and Light Company.

The first newspaper in Tenino was the Tenino Herald with C. E. Berry as publisher. The Herald was shortlived, however, perishing in one of the financial panics not long after its founding in 1890. In 1905 the Tenino News, P. C. Kibbe, publisher, began publication, with John (Cap) Zenner later taking over the reins. The Tenino Journal with Maurice MacDonald as publisher came on the scene about 1914, but didn't last out the rest of the decade. The Tenino Independent was born in 1922, with G. E. Parks as publisher and was purchased in 1926 by Don Major, who was active in its publication until 1966, when purchased by its present owners.

Retail stores grew in number through the 1890's, and in 1899 the firm of Campbell & Campbell came on the scene and grew to become Tenino's largest. In business for over 50 years, the store

at one time had the largest volume of any in the county. Founded by A. D. Campbell, still an active resident, and his sisters, Bel and Anna, the pioneer business firm closed its doors in 1954 when Mr. Campbell retired. Another long-time merchant still a resident of Tenino is L. A. McLain, who came in 1911 to open a hardware store and later went into the grocery business. McLain's Market is still in business today, operated by Don McLain, and holds the record for longevity among retail businesses.

In 1905 fire struck the business section of Tenino, wiping out most of the south side of Sussex Street. Most of the sandstone and brick buildings of the business district were built after this time. The disastrous fire was apparently the work of a "fire bug" who had twice before tried to start blazes in business buildings.

Actually, for a time in the 1890's there was some doubt as just where the business district would be. Two real estate promoters named Joe Snyder and J. B. Stevens purchased the Davenport property west of the existing town and began to promote a new town on the site. Giving impetus to the promotion was the fact that the Port Townsend Southern Railroad was moving their tracks from the original right-of-way which crossed Sussex Street about where the Tenino Independent is now located, westward to near where the Burlington-Northern main line now runs. The promotion nearly succeeded and several buildings were actually moved westward to the new townsite. A determined effort by citizens and merchants stemmed the tide, however, and the original townsite finally prevailed.

As Tenino's business life began to flourish, so did its social life. Tenino's Masonic Lodge was formed in 1890, and the Order of Eastern Star followed in 1893. The Degree of Honor Lodge was founded here in 1896, and the Fraternal Order of Eagles in 1904. In 1910 the Home Study Club was formed, later becoming instrumental in establishing the Tenino Public Library. All of the aforementioned organizations are still active today.

Tenino remained unincorporated from its founding in 1871 until 1906, when an election was held on forming a town government. The incorporation was approved by a vote of 76 for and 36 opposed to the idea. Creamery owner Henry Keithahn was elected first Mayor of the town, and the first Council consisted of: Fred

Spencer, George Sumption, Hardy Ogle, W. H. Waddell and Harry Richards.

In 1909, a magazine article in "The Coast", lists Tenino's industries as three saw mills, two stone quarries, two coal mines (the Great Western and the Black Bear), the Clarkson Pump and Cylinder Co., the Clarkson Washer and Nutlock Co., and the Tenino Creamery. Two of the mills, Mentzer Brothers, and the Blumauer Lumber Company, operated their own railroads. The magazine story also lists a business directory consisting of a state bank, two general merchandise stores, two hardware and furniture stores, three groceries, a drug store, jewelry store, milinery, confectionery, two barber shops, meat market, three hotels, restaurant, two livery barns, blacksmith shop, law offices, doctors, real estate offices, and a weekly newspaper.

Another aspect of the stone quarrying business provided an economic boost to Tenino in the early 1900's — that of supplying rock for government breakwater projects at Grays Harbor. The Hercules Company, owned by H. P. Scheel and William McArthur, supplied over one million dollars worth of sandstone from the Tenino quarries and later had a contract to supply granite from a quarry in the Skookumchuck River gorge. The Skookumchuck quarry necessitated building a railroad line from Tenino to the gorge, approximately three miles above the present Skookumchuck dam. The project ended when the government cut off funds for harbor improvements in World War I.

Following World War I, Tenino's economic boom ended and the population dropped by several hundred. Sandstone was no longer in great demand and the quarries slowly went out of existence. Logging and farming became the main occupations of the area and Tenino once more was mainly just a trading center for the south county. In the 1920's several oil drilling projects provided speculation and interest for citizens, but none ever produced any oil. A sign of the times in 1929 was the letting of a contract for an air mail beacon light in Tenino.

The "Great Depression" hit Tenino as hard as most other areas of the country, but did manage to make the town famous at the same time. As the "home of wooden money", Tenino hit the front pages of newspapers all over the world, was mentioned in the

Congressional Record, and drew reams of other publicity. The "wooden money" scheme grew out of a Tenino Chamber of Commerce plan to issue emergency scrip to relieve the money shortage caused by the failure of The Citizens Bank of Tenino. The original scrip was on paper and was given to bank depositors in exchange for assignment to the Chamber of up to 25% of the depositor's bank account balance. Shortly afterward, the scrip was printed on "slicewood" of spruce and cedar, and immediately became famous as the original wooden money. Eight issues were printed between 1932 and 1933 with a total of $10,308 of the wooden currency put into circulation. It became a collector's item and only $40 was ever redeemed by the Chamber.

Through the 1940's and 1950's Tenino's main claim to fame or infamy was a certain notoriety for being a "speed trap" on the old Pacific Highway. Regardless of whether the reputation was deserved or not; the traffic problems on Tenino's main street were considerable in the post World War II years. Until the opening of the new freeway in 1954, more than a few of Tenino's businesses were oriented to serving the traveler and a number of them closed after the freeway opened. In the late 50's there was again some excitement over oil exploration in the area and the Shell Oil Company sank an unsuccessful well near McIntosh Lake.

The 1960's saw Tenino begin to take part in the growth that had begun to be felt in the Puget Sound country. No definite upsurge was noticeable, but once more the town was growing in population. In 1967 announcement was made of the proposed building of a thermal-electric generating plant in the Hanaford Valley south of Tenino and the re-opening of the once active Tono coal fields. The plant, now nearly completed, is expected to go into operation in the fall of 1971. The building of the generating plant and of the Skookumchuck Dam which will control its water supply have been significant factors in the past few years of Tenino's economy.

Tenino's latest brush with fame came in 1969 when the "Sky River Rock Festival" played to approximately forty thousand young people just north of town over the Labor Day weekend. Despite national and international publicity and more than a few

uneasy moments, the town survived the event to reach its centennial year relatively unscathed.

Today Tenino is enjoying its greatest growth in the past fifty years and faces the future with the assurance of a town that has seen boom and bust, fire and rock festival, and a hundred years of the vagaries of fate, and survived them all.
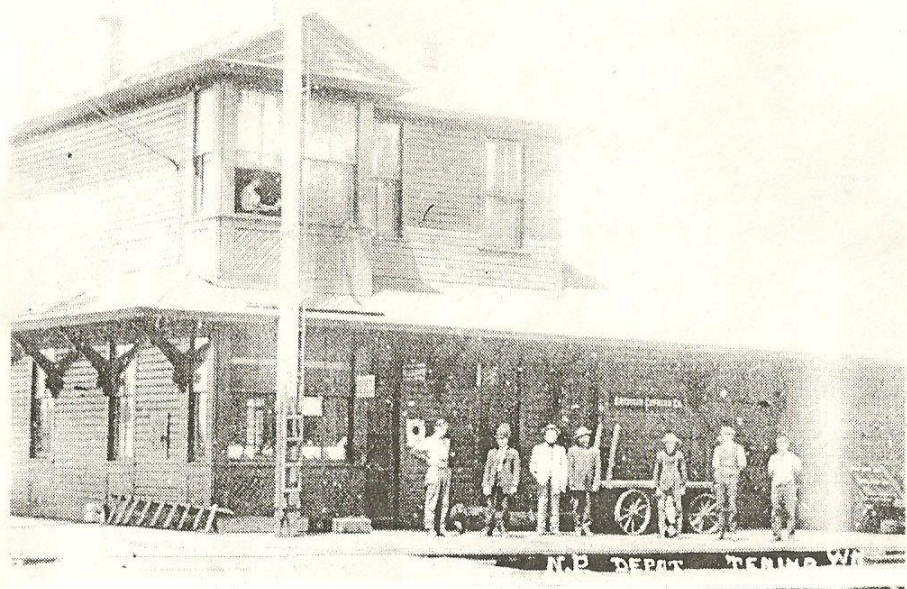
Author's Note — This glimpse of Tenino's past is admittedly little more than a thumb-nail sketch. In the space available it was impossible to mention more than a small number of the people and events that have made up Tenino's history. Research for even such a short history was considerable and covered a wide range of sources. We extend our thanks to the staff of the Washington Room of the Washington State Library, Del McBride, curator of the State Museum in Olympia, C. R. Jensen of Littlerock, and all those who contributed historic photos of Tenino.

Top, Hudson's Bay Blockhouse that once stood on Silver Springs Ranch; bottom, drawing of Fort Henness with inset pictures of Capt. and Mrs. Henness.
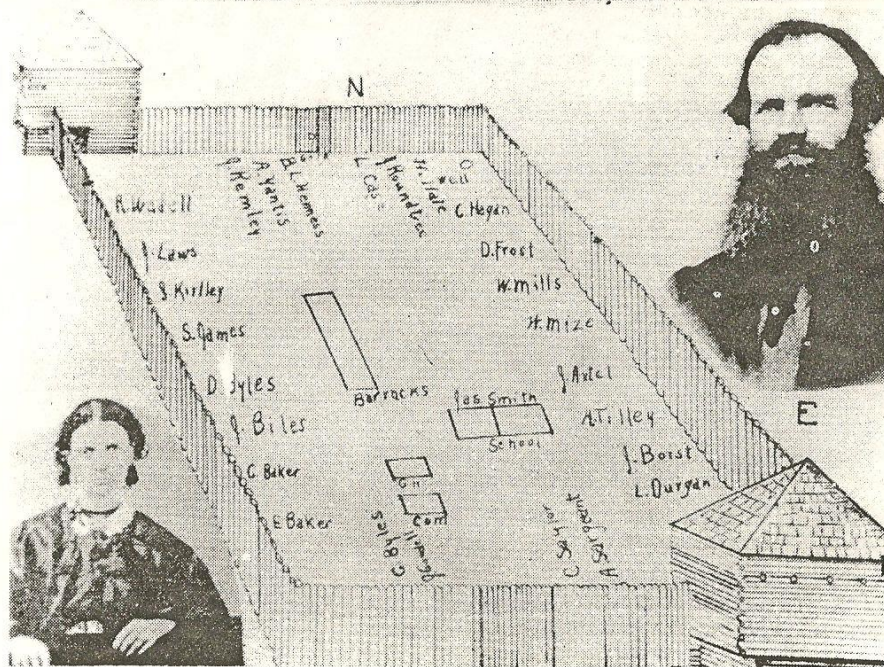
"Billy" Huston, one of Tenino's first businessmen.

TENINO SCENES OF
LONG AGO

RESIDENCE DISTRICT TENINO WASH.
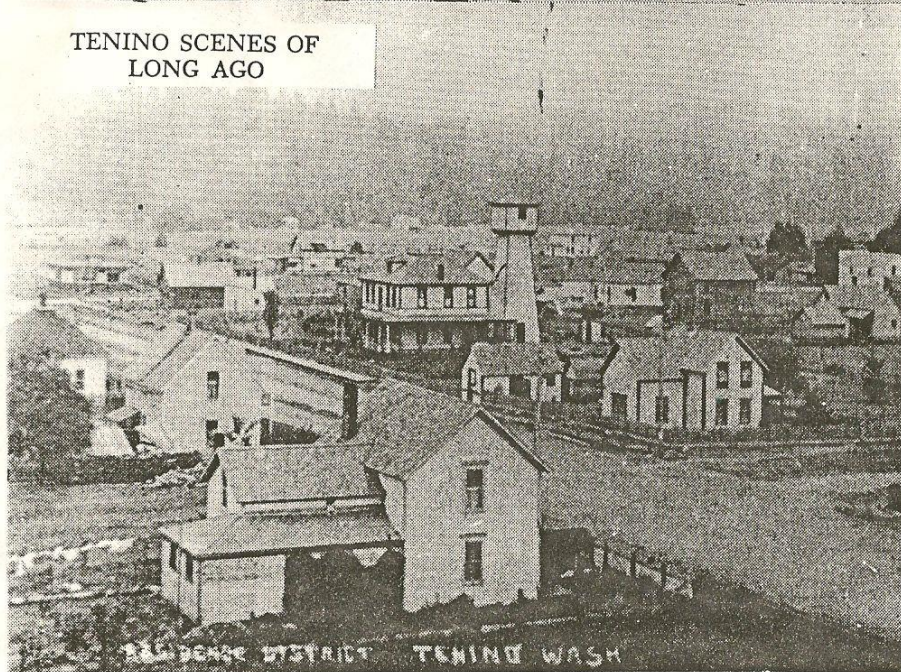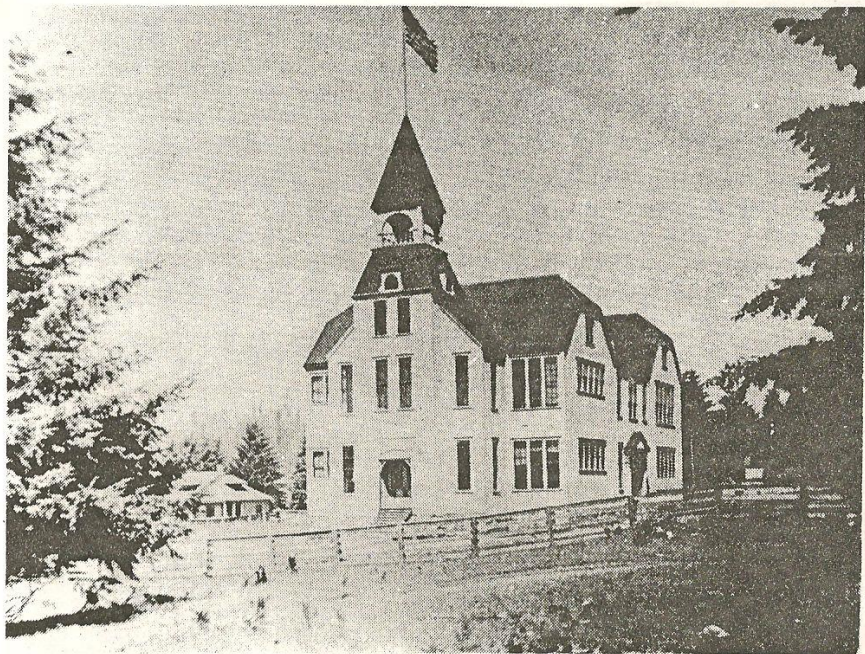
Top, the first Tenino High School; bottom, view of Tenino in early 1900's.
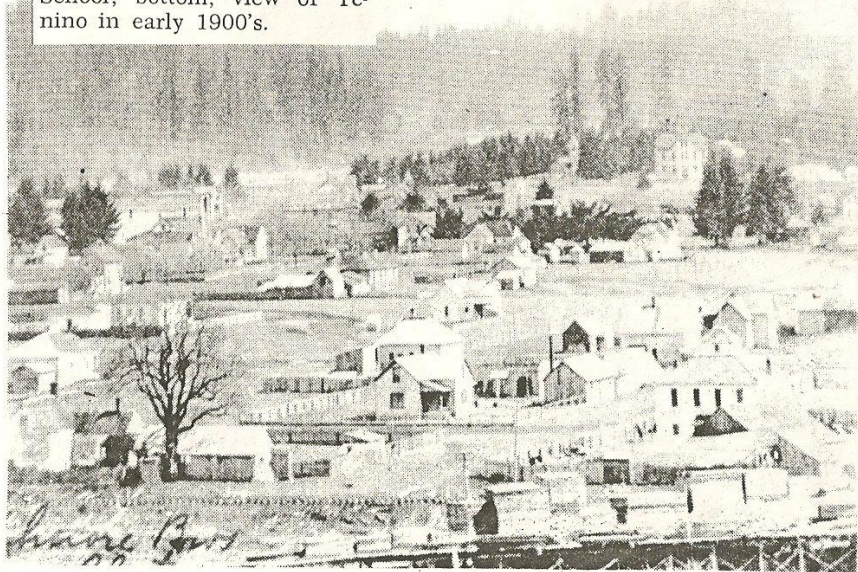
SAME SCENE, 50 YEARS APART — looking east from where new Liberty Market now stands.
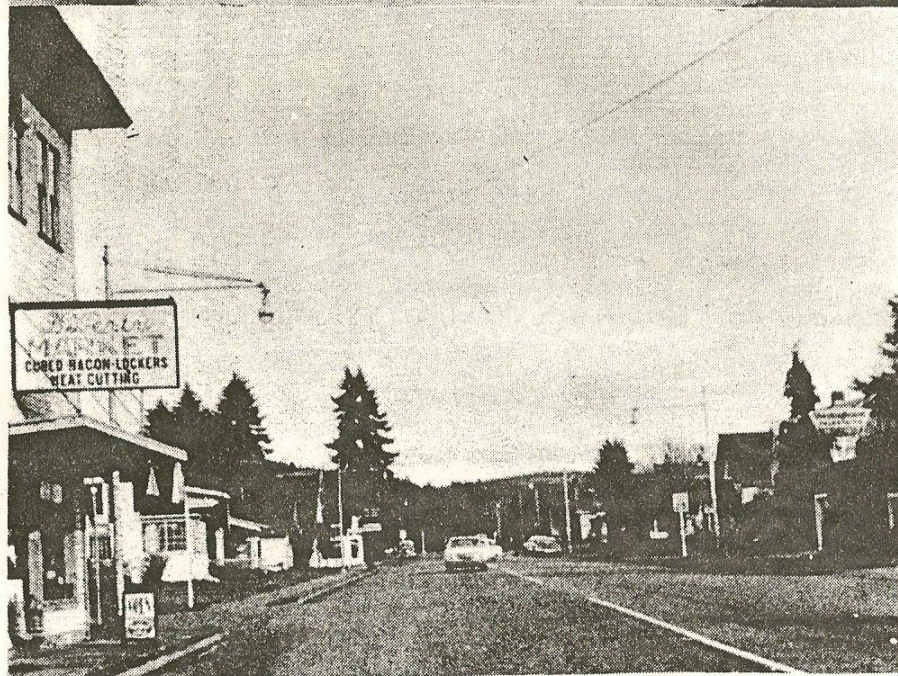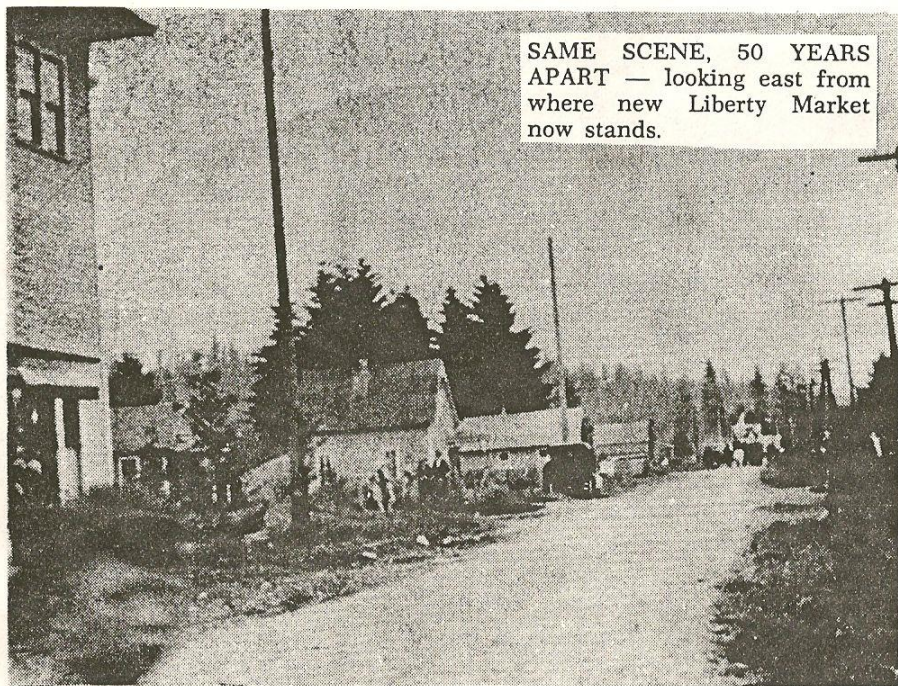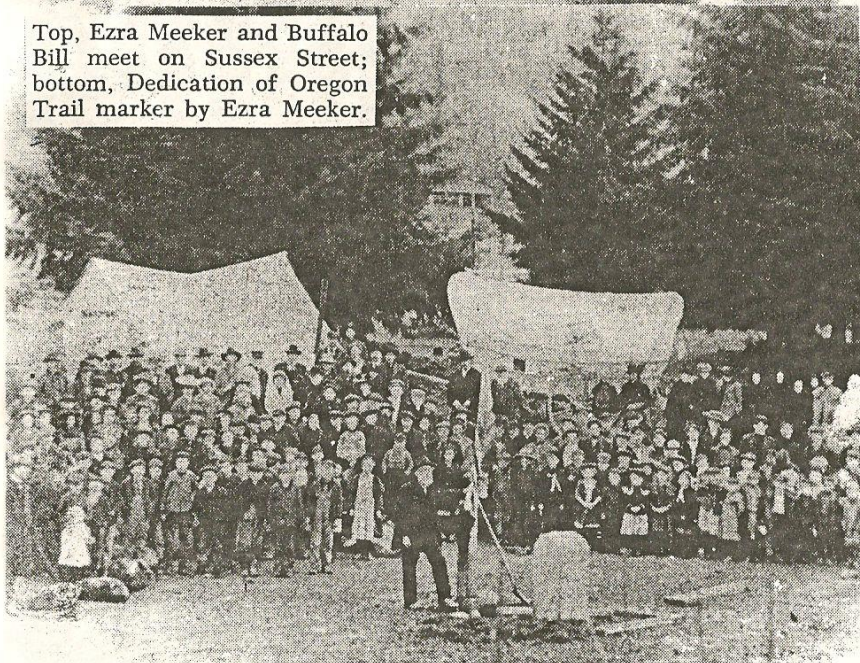
BUSINESS SCENES — top, Frank Newell driving delivery wagon; bottom, Mose Calloway's blacksmith shop (Mose in center of photo).
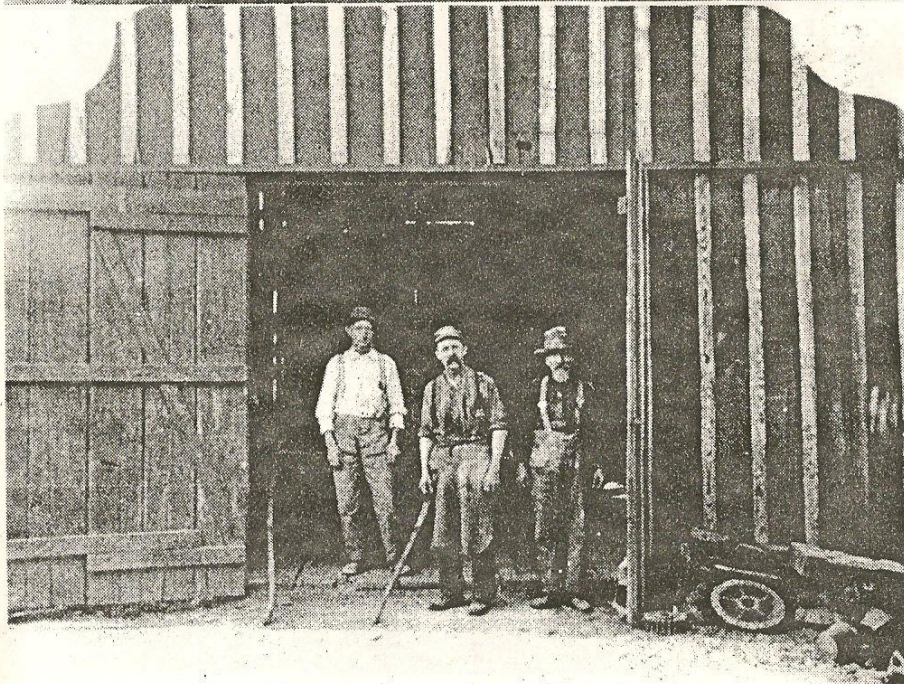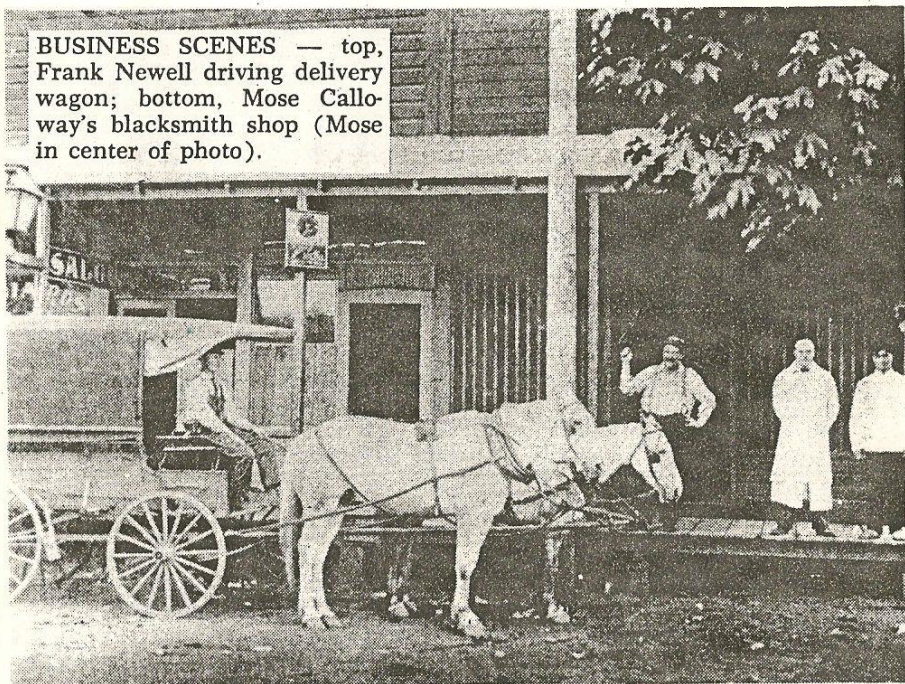
Top, Ezra Meeker and Buffalo Bill meet on Sussex Street; bottom, Dedication of Oregon Trail marker by Ezra Meeker.

Ezra Meeker poses with Oregon Trail marker.

Horse-drawn floats in early-day parade.
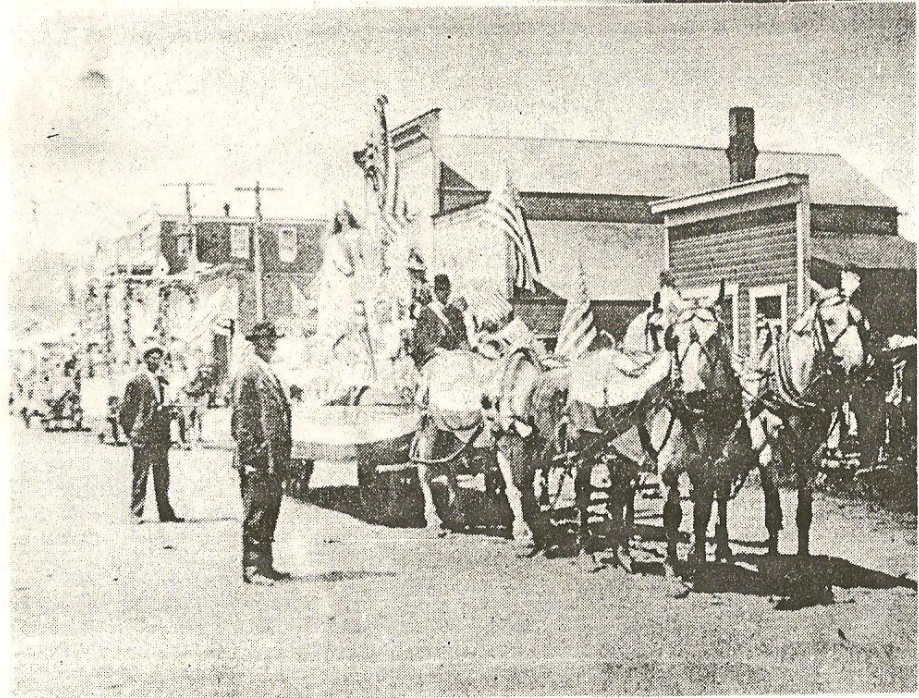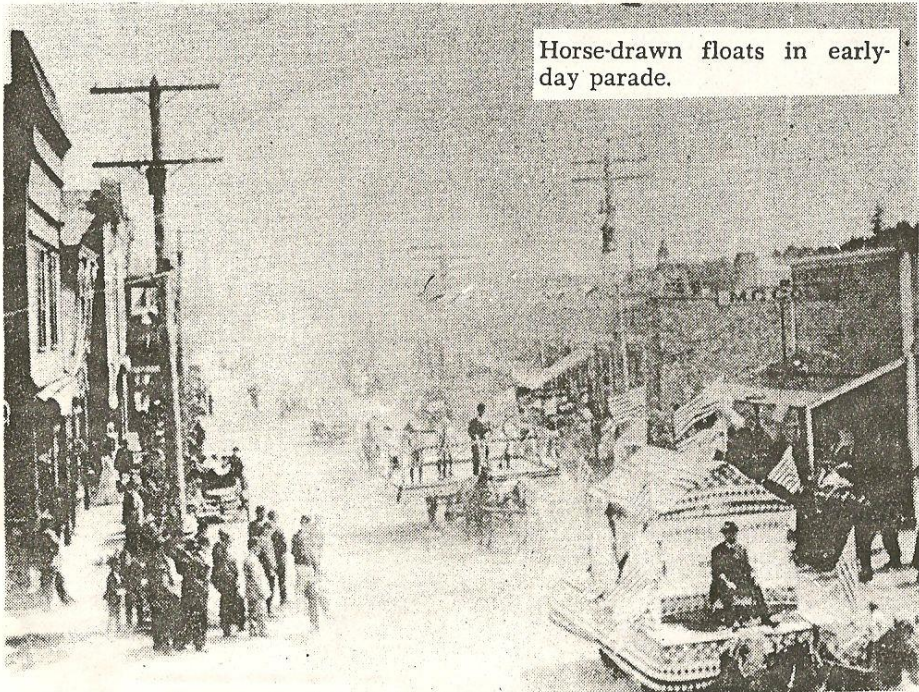
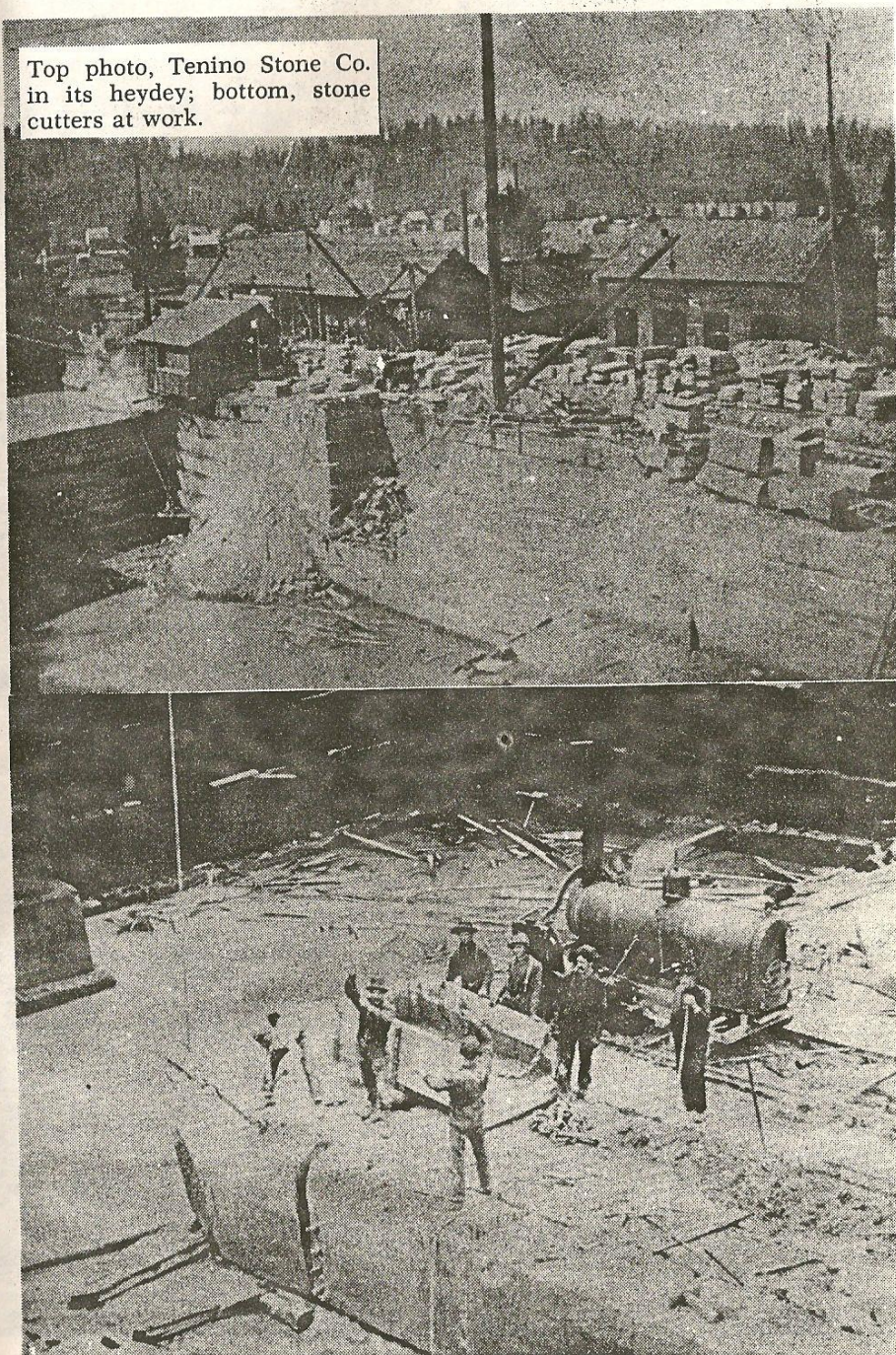LOGGING IN OLD DAYS —
Top, Blumauer Logging Co.
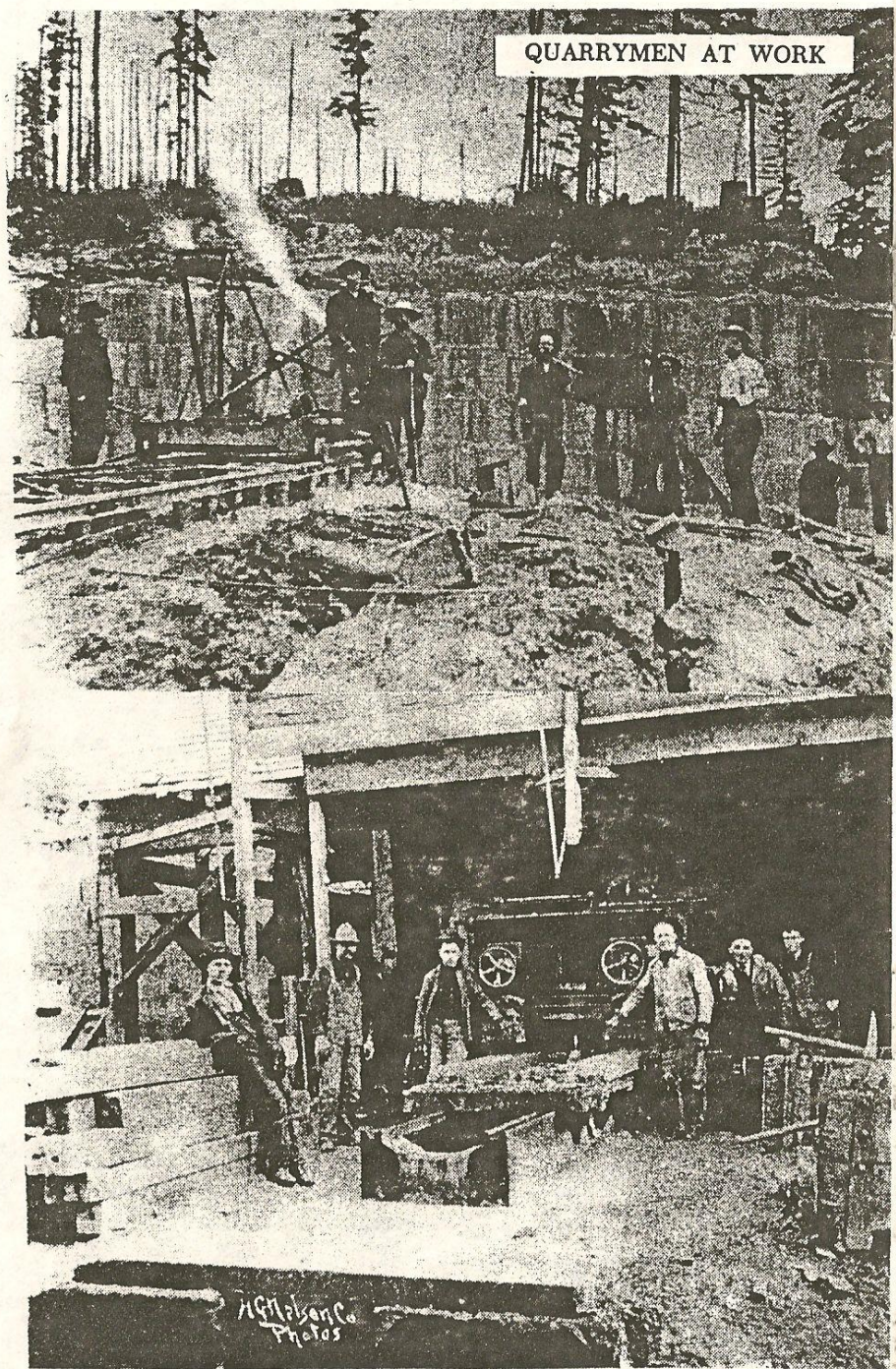train and crew; bottom, log-
gers pose with a big one.
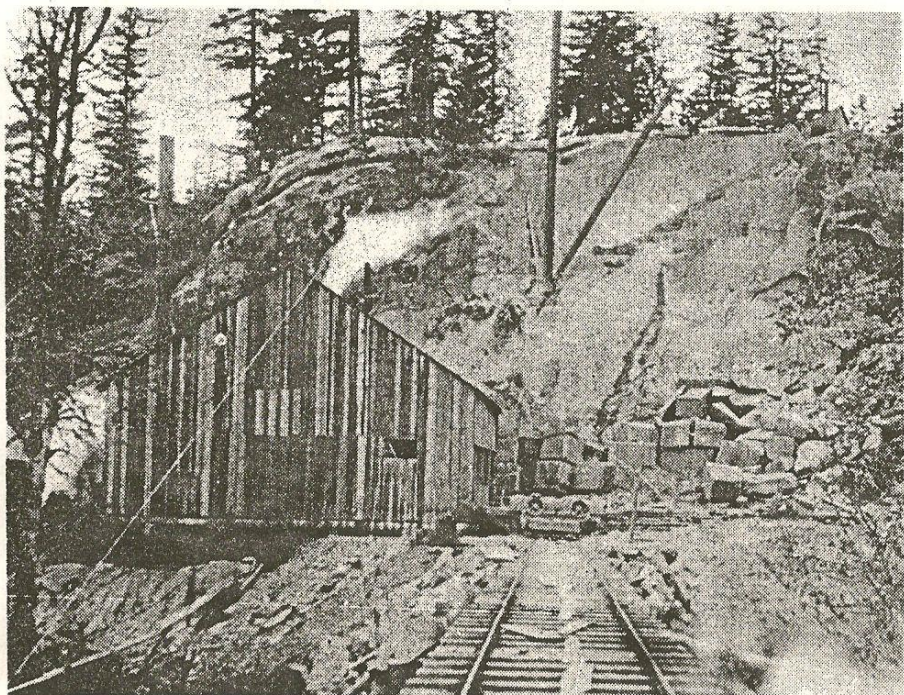
HERCULES STONE QUARRIES: top, quarry west of town on Lemon Hill; bottom, Hercules No. 2, on Old Military Road.
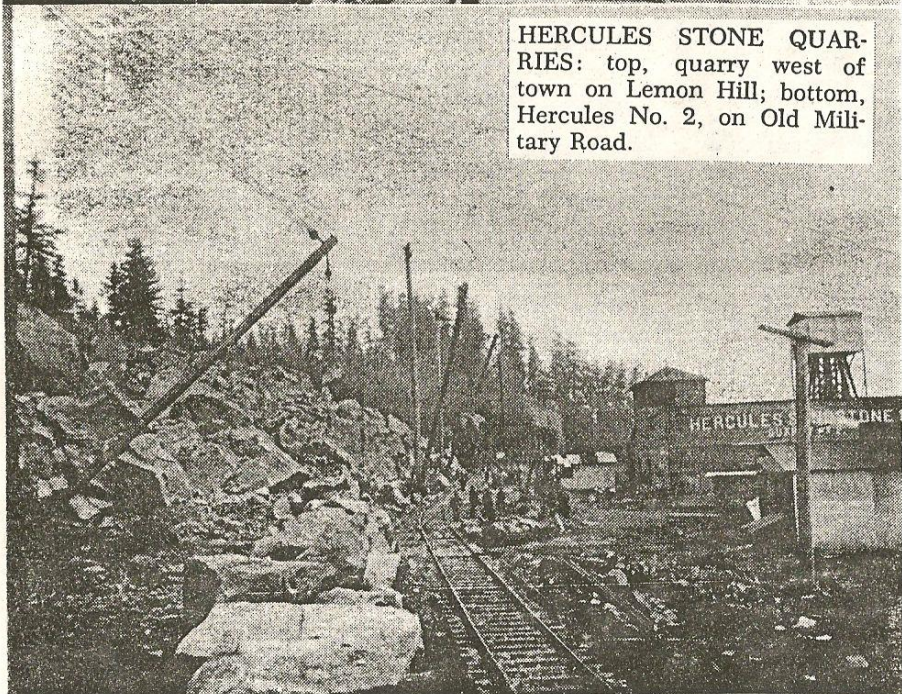
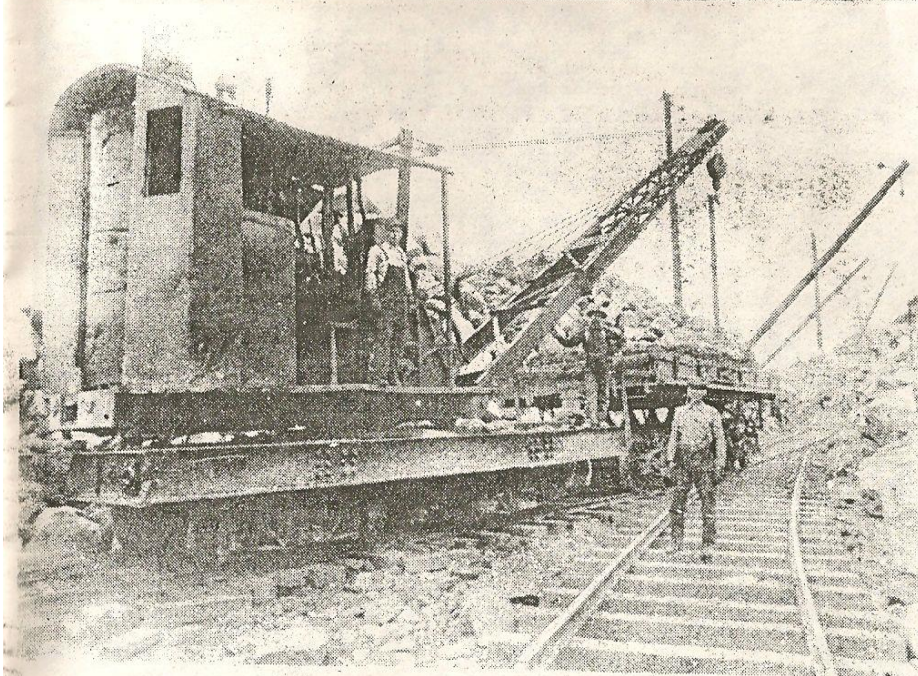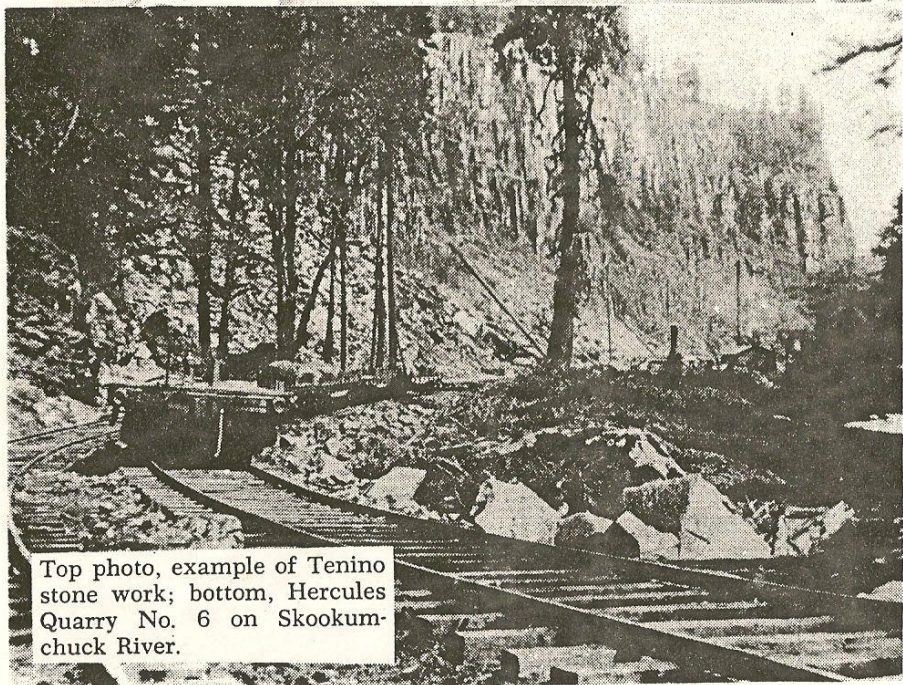Top photo, Tenino Stone Co. in its heydey; bottom, stone cutters at work.

QUARRYMEN AT WORK

H.G. Nelson Co.
Photos

QUARRYING ROCK FOR BREAKWATER

Top photo, example of Tenino stone work; bottom, Hercules Quarry No. 6 on Skookumchuck River.

BUILT OF TENINO STONE—top, Old Capitol Building in Olympia; bottom, Leadbetter mansion in Portland, Oregon.