

WALLA WALLA 2020 HISTORIC RESEARCH & PLAQUE SERVICE

If you would like to honor a building by obtaining a research report on its history all the way back to when it was bare ground owned by local Tribes, and by displaying a handsome plaque listing the date it was constructed, along with the names of its owners and builders, you can do so by contacting the Walla Walla 2020 Historic Research & Plaque Service.

For qualifying properties, Walla Walla 2020 will research the complete title and occupant history, and provide a written report, along with proposed plaque language. The research fee for residences is \$100, and for other properties ranges from \$150-\$250 depending on the complexity of the title and occupancy.

Qualifying properties may be in any neighborhood but must be at least 50 years old, and have retained their architectural integrity. For those properties accepted, a photo of the property along with the completed research report will be included in the Walla Walla 2020 Interactive Map of Historic Properties available on the internet at www.ww2020.net under the Architecture & Neighborhoods tab.

Following completion of the report, the property owner may order a plaque for display on the property. The cost of a basic 9"x 6" six-line plaque is \$50, with additional lines and sizes available on request.

Application information is available online at www.ww2020.net under the Architecture & Neighborhoods tab.

Historic Sites & Markers Project. *If you would like to help with the marking & interpretation of other significant sites in the Walla Walla area, please send tax-deductible donations to Walla Walla 2020, PO Box 1222, Walla Walla WA 99362, email ww2020@charter.net or call 509-522-0399 for more information*

THANKS

Thanks to the many individuals and organizations who assisted with our research to learn the history of the Walla Walla County Poor Farm, and with our efforts to honor those who lived and died there.

Specific thanks to:

- Bill Brown, whose grandfather was a resident of the Poor Farm
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- Mark Spinks, Walla Walla County Public Information Officer
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- Connie Vinti & Diane Harris of the W.W. County Commissioners Office
- Dell & Lenore Wagner, former owners of the Poor Farm property, and their daughter Gail Wagner Bobbitt
- Steve & Theresa Wheeler, Country Estates MHC

We hope you will visit the Poor Farm and other historic sites in order to learn more about the interesting history of the Walla Walla Valley.

--Daniel Clark, Coordinator
Walla Walla 2020
Historic Research & Plaque Project

WALLA WALLA COUNTY POOR FARM



including information on the Poor Farm Cemetery, the Poor Farm House, the Poor Farm Hospitals, and the Poor Farm Barn



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THE WALLA WALLA COUNTY POOR FARM

The Walla Walla County Poor Farm was established in 1891, and at one point included 200 acres extending from the present 12th Street in College Place south to Taumarson Road, and from just east of Myra Road to College Avenue. The farm was owned and run by Walla Walla County as a place where indigent residents could live and work.

Poor Farm residents lived in the large house at the corner of what is now SE Scenic View & Robin Drive. The house, which is still standing, has ten bedrooms and a large attached kitchen. There were various outbuildings on the grounds, and both a separate hospital and a tuberculosis sanitarium were connected to the house by covered walkways.



The Poor Farm house and related buildings
Photo courtesy of Dell & Lenore Wagner

Many of the residents of the farm were ultimately buried in the Poor Farm cemetery at the corner of Mockingbird & Sandpiper in College Place. You will find signage regarding the Poor Farm and the Poor Farm cemetery placed by Walla Walla 2020 at both sites.

The Poor Farm barn, constructed with wooden pegs in place of nails, is still standing on private property on Robin Drive just north of Scenic View.

A tuberculosis hospital building located behind the farm house has been moved to the corner of Scenic View and Larch where it is in use as a private home.

The story of the Poor Farm and the tuberculosis hospital located there is partially told in a novel

available in local book stores and libraries titled "The Diary" by Francis Potts, whose mother was employed and whose father was a patient there.

The Poor Farm was closed sometime after the federal Social Security system was created and counties were no longer solely responsible for indigent welfare. The last burial and the closure of the farm took place in about 1954.

The land, except for the cemetery, was then sold by the county and became a dairy farm for many years, before the establishment of a mobile home community there. While the Poor Farm barn is used for storage as part of the manufactured home park, the vacant Poor Farm house is in separate ownership. The last officially recorded burials in the Poor Farm cemetery took place in the early '40s.

THE POOR FARM CEMETERY

The Poor Farm Cemetery was also established about 1891. Deceased Poor Farm residents along with unclaimed remains from the Walla Walla County Coroner's office were buried there in the cemetery in rows running north to south that are still visible.

Most graves were marked with small concrete cylinders bearing only a number. Upright markers were later placed on several of the graves by friends or family members.



Poor Farm Cemetery at Mockingbird & Sandpiper
in College Place

The names and location of people buried in the cemetery could be found by consulting records maintained at the county courthouse, which until recently were thought to have been lost.

After the Poor Farm closed and as the adjoining land was being developed as a manufactured home park in the early 1970s, all large grave markers were removed, the small concrete cylinders were covered with soil, grass was planted over them, and playground equipment, footings for which are still visible, was installed on top of the graves.



Several of the grave markers leaning against a tree.
Photos courtesy of Joe Drazen

Ownership of the cemetery was transferred by Walla Walla County to the City of College Place in 1965. This and other historic cemeteries are now protected from further disturbance by the Washington Historic Cemeteries and Graves Act, adopted in 1990.

A partial list of burials is shown on a sign at the cemetery placed by Walla Walla 2020. A full list of the approximately 700 people buried in the cemetery is shown in the county records, copies of which are available on the Walla Walla 2020 website.

More information on the County Poor Farm and the Poor Farm Cemetery is available on the internet at www.ww2020.net/historic-sites.