

HISTORY OF THE GARDEN SITE

THE MILL CREEK FLUME RAILROAD

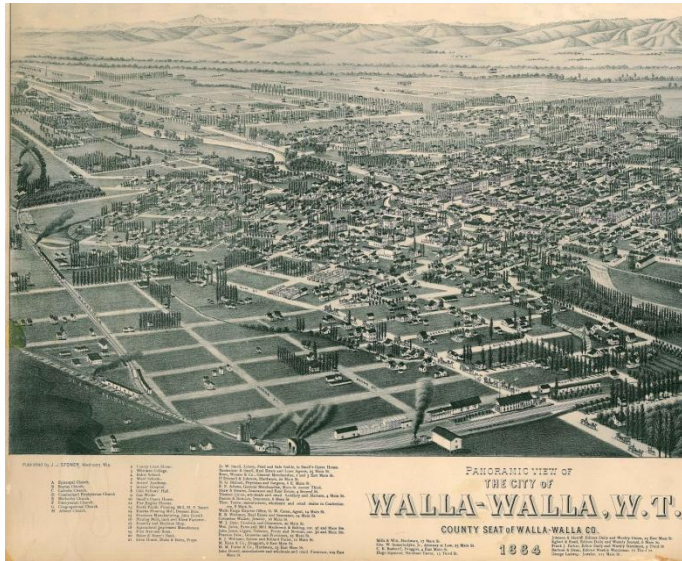
The railroad bed located at the Rees and Sumach Community Garden is part of a narrow gauge line opened in 1881 by Dorsey Baker's Mill Creek Flume & Manufacturing Co. It was built as a lumber railroad from Walla Walla to the Blue Mountains where the lower part of the company's flume ended eight miles east of here along Mill Creek. The line and this site are shown on the left side of the adjacent 1884 bird's eye map of Walla Walla and on the 1889 map below.

Dorsey Baker, a pioneering merchant, banker, physician, farmer, and railroad builder, bought what is now our current garden site in 1871. In 1877, Baker deeded this land to his flume company for use as part of the new railroad. Miles C. Moore, who was Baker's son-in-law and the last governor of Washington Territory, was company president.

A branch of this rail line was extended in 1882 from a point two miles below its terminus on Mill Creek to the village of Dixie, known then as Baker City. In 1887, a controlling interest in the railroad was purchased by the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company, which was acquired by the Union Pacific Railroad in 1891. The UP operated it until 1903 when this line was sold to an independent operator called the Mill Creek Railroad. Mill Creek then sold it in 1905 to the Northern Pacific as part of its Washington & Columbia River Railway. The NP converted seven miles of the line from Walla Walla to the Tracy grain elevator on Mill Creek to standard gauge the same year. At that time the branch to Dixie was abandoned.

Though this line to Tracy was eventually to be abandoned in 1970 by its new owner Burlington Northern Railroad, the track continued to be operated by the UP and its lessee Blue Mountain Railroad up to this corner until about 1995. In 1998, Whitman College acquired the land from the Union Pacific Railroad. The college leases this site to the North Main Area Neighborhood Association for garden use at a nominal rent.

One of the three narrow gauge engines used on this line was the Blue Mountain, built in Pennsylvania in 1878 for the Walla Walla and Columbia River Railroad. The engine was sold to Mill Creek Flume & Manufacturing Company for this line in 1881. After service with the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company from 1887-1890, the Blue Mountain returned to service on the Mill Creek flume line in 1894, and was used here until 1905 when the Northern Pacific ended narrow gauge operations in the area. The engine then served on two Alaska lines until 1921 when it was dumped off a pier as part of an underwater sea wall. It was recovered from the sea and partially restored in 1970 by its current owner, the Washington State Railroad Historical Society. The Blue Mountain returned to Walla Walla in 1992 where it was put on display at Baker Boyer Bank. It is now being restored for display at Fort Walla Walla Museum.



The Blue Mountain narrow gauge engine ran on this track in 1881
Photo courtesy of Herb Banks Collection, Nez Perce County Historical Society.

PACIFIC COAST ELEVATOR

The Rees & Sumach Community Garden is on the site of the Pacific Coast Elevator, a large grain elevator established in the late 1880s by the Pacific Coast Elevator Company, an arm of Portland Flouring Mills. Under the management of Theodore Wilcox, the company dominated the grain trade in the Pacific Northwest as well as in China for a considerable period. In later years, the taller wooden Pacific Coast Elevator was replaced by two round metal grain elevators operated by Harvey Farms of Walla Walla. These were removed after the property was purchased by Whitman College in 1998, except for their circular foundations.

The Pacific Coast Elevator is shown below on the 1889 bird's eye map of Walla Walla as item #5, next to the Walla Walla Creamery, later Shady Lawn Antiques, item #6.

WALLA WALLA CREAMERY

The Walla Walla Creamery, now Shady Lawn Antiques across from the garden, was established in 1889 by the Walla Walla Creamery & Cold Storage Company. David Small, owner of Small's Opera House in early Walla Walla, was president of the company. By 1898, Ward Emigh owned Walla Walla Creamery, and members of the Emigh family operated the business as a creamery, cheese and ice cream factory. After the name was changed to Shady Lawn in 1922, the Emighs continued to operate the creamery until 1992. In 1994, David & Jill Emigh opened Shady Lawn Antiques in the old creamery building, and are members of our garden association.

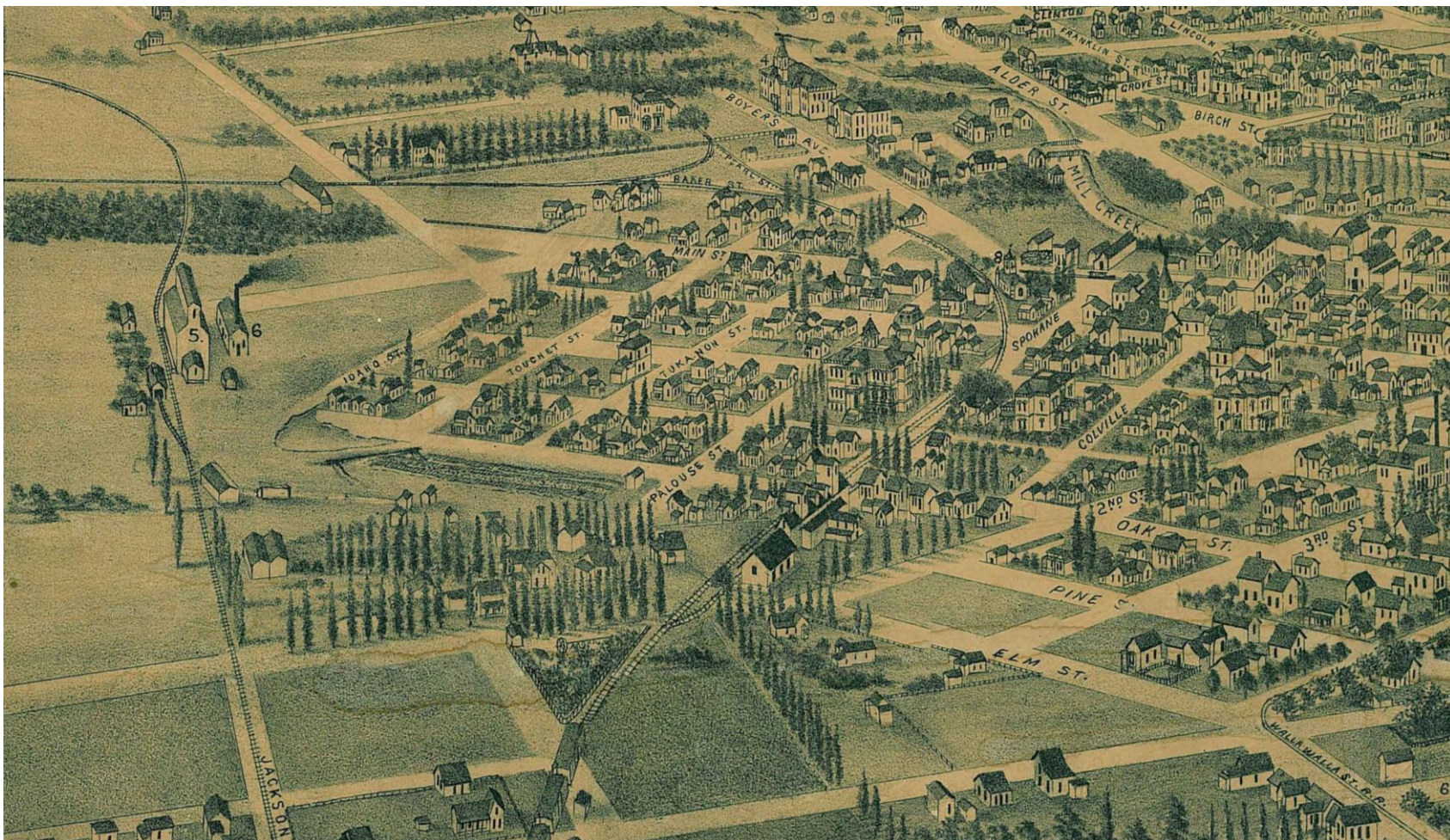
WALNUT GROVE ADDITION

Our garden is part of the Walnut Grove Addition to the City of Walla Walla. The addition was platted on May 2, 1892 by Baker Boyer Bank, established by entrepreneur and railroad builder Dorsey Baker.

Walnut Grove took its name from the large black walnut grove shown just above this site on the adjacent maps. Baker's Mill Creek Flume Railroad snaked through the grove on its way to upper Mill Creek, passing behind where large homes are now located on the north side of Isaacs Avenue.

Nearly all remaining walnut trees in the neighborhood have been recently removed because of disease.

12-29-10



From the 1889 bird's eye Map of Walla Walla. More information on the Rees & Sumach Community Garden and its history can be found online at www.reesandsumach.org.