

THE
CLAYTON/DEER PARK
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mortarboard

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The C/DPHS is an association of individuals dedicated to the preservation of the history of our community. To the preservation of the region's oral history, literary history, social history, graphic and pictorial history, and our history as represented by the region's artifacts and structures. To the preservation of this history for future generations. To the art of making this common heritage accessible to the public. And to the act of collaborating with other individuals and organizations sharing similar goals.

“Clayton Burns!” The Clayton Fires of 1897, 1908, & 1957.

by

Wally Lee Parker

... Clayton's founding ...

The beginning of what would become the Washington Brick & Lime Company — and eventually the town of Clayton — can be traced back to the November 15th, 1879, arrival in Spokane Falls of Mr. J. T. Davie, a Scottish immigrant and skilled brickmaker who had previously been working in California. Mr. Davie managed to establish a brick plant near Latah Creek — the exact date of that founding currently undiscovered. However, Mr. Davie is quoted, as saying, “In 1882 I made 400,000 brick,” assumedly at said factory.

In late March or early April of 1883, Henry Brook (1842-1908) arrived in Spokane Falls. Mr. Brook, an English immigrant, had previously been a Methodist minister active in Minnesota until throat trouble forced him to retire from the pulpit. Once in Spokane, it's evident that Mr. Brook became involved in the building trades as a contractor and building

materials supplier.

The two became partners as described in Nelson Durham's *History of the City of Spokane & Spokane County* — published in 1912. In that volume Mr. Davie is quoted as saying, “In 1886 I moved my plant from Latah Creek up to the present location of Cannon Hill Park. Henry Brook and I bought eighty acres of land up there from Calvin Robertson.” Mr. Davie also noted, “Mr. Brook handled all the brick I made, using most of them himself for the buildings for which he contracted.” This partnership was active for two years, until, as Mr. Davie reported, “In 1888 I sold out all of my interest in the business, including the land, to Mr. Brook, and took the season off for rest and repair.”

Joseph H. Spear (1853-1920) arrived in Spokane in 1887. A native of Springfield, Illinois, Mr. Spear had previously been a partner in a Springfield lumberyard, and then a resident of Chicago — his employment at that time as yet unclear. The 1888 *Spokane City*



Illustration from “The Telephone Review,” May, 1914.

A Growing Archive.

As assured in our mission statement, the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society is “dedicated to the preservation of the history of our community,” and specifically “to the art of making this common heritage accessible to the public.” Our publications, both print and online, are currently the primary manifestation of that part of our mission. All prior editions of our newsletter — the Mortarboard — are available online without charge. All prior editions of the Mortarboard are also available as bound editions in a print-on-demand format for a small donation — said donation intended to cover our print cost. We also have four volumes of earlier archival material in a print-only set titled “The Reports.” For further information on our print titles, contact anyone in the “Society Contacts” box found on the last numbered page of this issue.

— the Editor

Free — Take One

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Directory lists Mr. Spear as being involved in two companies, Spear, Belt & Company, “brick manufactures,” and Belt, Spear & Company, “financial, loan and real estate agents.”

It’s probable that Washington Brick & Lime Company was founded in 1888. But it was definitely in operation by 1889, since that year’s *Spokane City Directory* list Henry Brook as “president, Washington Brick & Lime,” and Joseph Spear as “secretary treasurer, Washington Brick & Lime.”

One area of potential confusion is the company’s actual name. The issue arises from the fact that the corporation was reformed at least three times. It was first incorporated in 1888 or ’89 as “Washington Brick & Lime Company.” Very late in 1891 — or very early in 1892 — it was reincorporated as “Washington Brick, Lime & Manufacturing Company.” In 1910, to emphasize what had become a major part of its production, it was renamed the “Washington Brick, Lime & Sewer Pipe Company.” After its financial reorganization in 1939, it returned to its original name, “Washington Brick & Lime Company.”

It’s suspected that sometime during the Washington Brick, Lime & Sewer Pipe Company era a shortened form of the company’s name came into use — the apparent acronym “WaCo,” was likely pronounced the same as the city in Texas.

... the fire of 1897 ...

The history of Washington Brick & Lime’s growth to dominance began in earnest on the first of November, 1893. On that date construction of a major new brick plant was begun just north of the soon to be founded company town of Clayton. By the next year this factory, located in southeastern Stevens County, was in full operation — as described in the following article ascribed to the first year of the factory’s operation. Under the title “Home Product Made By the Washington Brick, Lime and Manufacturing Company,” the article states, “Many who have admired the

handsome brick now being used in the erection of the Spokane County Courthouse in this city are not aware that it is a home production, many thinking it of eastern manufacture.

“At the time the plans were adopted for the courthouse the specifications called for the exterior to be built of dry pressed brick, but as the manufacture of that kind of brick had never been attempted in this locality, most of those interested supposed that it would be necessary to ship the brick from the east in order to get a satisfactory quality, but Spokane’s enterprising firm, the Washington Brick, Lime and Manufacturing Company, had been quietly making experiments, and submitted samples that were superior to anything offered by eastern or other outside manufacturers, and at prices that were lower than the eastern market, and agreed to put in a plant not only for the manufacture of the pressed brick, both square and ornamental, but also for the hollow building tile, floor arches, etc. The proposition of this firm was cheerfully accepted by D. R. Fotheringham, the successful bidder, who is now erecting the courthouse.

“The Washington Brick, Lime and Manufacturing Company at once commenced the erection of their new plant at Clayton, Wash., a few miles north of the city on the Spokane Falls & Northern railroad. Breaking ground on the first day of November, 1893, they put a large force of men at work and by early spring were manufacturing the handsome brick now to be seen in the courthouse building.

“A powerful engine gives motive power to the works. In the clay room thousands of tons of clay are stored. This, when properly prepared, is passed through a powerful pan crusher, from which it is elevated to the top of the building, from where, after passing through screens, it reaches the several modern dry pressed brick machines, where it receives a pressure of about eighty tons, and is discharged in the shape of brick ready for burning.

“The patent kilns are conveniently

located under the same roof, as are also the switch tracks, and cars can be placed close to the kilns for loading.

“On the second floor of the building can be seen the only steam pottery, or stoneware plant, in the northwest where skilled potters are manufacturing all kinds of stoneware, such as jugs, milk pans, jars, flower pots, etc.

“In another part of their works is being manufactured the fire proofing for the courthouse and a high grade of fire brick. — September 16, 1894.”

The publication in which the above article was printed is currently unknown. It exists only as a clipped newspaper or magazine article held in the archives of the Spokane Public Library. But we can be fairly confident that it’s an accurate description of the plant.

Of particular interest is the article’s statement that the various kilns were “conveniently located” inside the plant’s main structure, which was described in the article below as “one large building of frame (read wooden), 130 x 200 feet.” That fact would tend to lessen our surprise at the *Spokesman-Review*’s July 22nd, 1897, front-page headline, “BURNED AT DAWN!

The article following the headline stated, “The large plant of the Washington Brick, Lime & Manufacturing Company at Clayton, 33 miles north of Spokane, was destroyed by fire at daylight yesterday morning. The plant was erected in 1893-4 at a cost of about \$50,000, and manufactured pressed, fire, paving and common brick, fire-proofing, and pottery. General Manager Joseph H. Spear said last night that it was impossible at this time to determine the exact loss, but he thought there would be considerable salvage. The company carried \$23,000 insurance, divided among a number of companies.

“The fire was discovered by the night watchman at 3:30. It originated near one of the chimneys, but the origin is unknown. When the watchman made the discovery, smoke was rolling from the windows in a dense cloud. He tried to enter the burning

building and to get at the fire hose and water tank, but the smoke drove him back. He then blew the whistle and called out the employees, but the flames were under such headway that nothing could be done to save the buildings. A messenger was sent to Deer Park to telegraph to Mr. Spear, who went up on the morning train over the Spokane Falls & Northern road.”

Though Henry Brook was and would continue to be listed as president of the company until shortly before his death in 1908, it’s very likely that as of 1897 factual control had already been assumed by the company’s secretary/treasurer, Joseph Spear.

The article, quoting the secretary/treasurer, continued, “When I first left for home,” said Mr. Spear, who returned last evening, “the debris was so hot that it was impossible to get at the machinery or the kilns to determine the extent of the damage. I think there will be considerable salvage. We shall rebuild the plant as quickly as possible. We have an extra engine and boiler which will be set up at once for the manufacture of common and paving brick. I think we can resume that part of the industry inside of 30 days. The rest of the machinery must be ordered in the east, but we hope to have the entire plant reconstructed inside of three months.”

When asked if the factory’s destruction would interfere with the company’s contract to supply paving brick to the City of Spokane, Mr. Spear replied, “Not in the slightest. We have been burning a small kiln of paving brick, and it was not damaged, being away from the building. These brick will be out as soon as they can cool.”

The reporter composing the article continued, “The works were under one large building of frame, 130x200 feet. This made a hot fire, and the flames leaped upward to a great height.

“At the time of the fire the company was employing about 25 men, and had a number of large orders ahead. In one of the kilns were the brick for the new residence which D. C. Corbin is erecting in the city. The brick for

*It's believed this panorama shows
the Clayton brickyard just before the fire of 1908.*

Image #1.



The above panorama of the Clayton brickyard, extending from the Great Northern depot on the left to the terracotta factory on the right, was copied from Professor Solon Shedd's "The Clays of Washington: Their Geology, Mineralogy, and Technology." This book, published by the State

College at Pullman in June, 1910, does not state whether this photo was taken before or after the combustible parts of the Washington Brick & Lime's brick factory, along with the majority of Clayton's business district, was consumed by fire in early August, 1908. However, the configuration

of the roofline of the Great Northern depot differs from what we believe to be the outline of the post-fire building, for which we have at least one photo. We believe the above photo may have been taken in commemoration of the terracotta factory's completion in early 1907. Due to the nature of the

camera's panorama lens, some distortion is seen at the image's edges. News reports state the terracotta building was not touched by the fire. In fact, two of the 1908 photos seen in this article appear to have been taken from the terracotta's upper windows or roof.

Spokane County's new court house were from the kilns of this company and its plant was one of the largest in the northwest. Henry Brook of Spokane is president of the company. Manager Spear will return to Clayton tomorrow when he expects to be able to make a close estimate of the loss of the company."

The next reasonably complete description of the factory currently known to exist is found in Solon Shedd's book, *The Clays of the State of Washington: Their Geology, Mineralogy, and Technology*. Though this gentleman, described on his book's title page as "Assistant State Geologist and Professor of Geology," at Pullman's "State College of Washington," published the volume in 1910 — two years after Clayton's second devastating fire — he's careful to note in his text that his description of the factory complex was drawn from notes obtained during a visit to the grounds in January of 1907, a year and a half before the brick plant's second catastrophic fire.

Part of the professor's text reads, "The brick are all burned in circular downdraft kilns, there being seven of these,

each having a capacity of from 38,000 to 80,000 brick. There are also three muffle kilns in which the terracotta is burned. The brick machinery and the terracotta works have all been in one large building up to the present time (January, 1907), the molding room, the drafting room, and the drying room for the terracotta all being on the second floor in one end of the building. A large new building has just been completed, however, for the terracotta works.

"The two boilers, one an 80 and the other a 40 horsepower, furnish steam for an 80 horsepower engine, which drives the machinery, and also for heating the drying rooms. There are also the necessary warehouses and shed in which to store the burned ware."

Professor Shedd was careful to note in a footnote to the above, "Since the above was written, the plant of the Washington Brick, Lime & Manufacturing Company has been very much enlarged and improved." The implication to this — though the professor, for some reason, seemed reluctant to use the word fire — was that the indicated enlargement and

improvement occurred during the factory's rebuilding subsequent to the disaster of 1908.

The professor's book described a much-enlarged factory over the one that burned in 1897. He also notes that "the brick machinery and the terracotta works have all been in one large building" — the inference being that the kilns, since they're not mentioned as being inside, had been removed from the interior of the main factory during the rebuild of 1897. While this did seem to eliminate a severe fire hazard inside the factory itself, the next great fire approached the factory complex from an apparently unanticipated direction.

... the Clayton fire of 1908 ...

With temperatures reaching the mid-90s in Spokane, the first week of August, 1908, was sweltering by any standard. Adding to the local misery was the fact that since July a forest fire of growing dimensions — its smoke column doubtless visible to residents of the Little Spokane River Valley — had been burning to the north; burning in what would

become Pend Oreille County once that area was officially separated from Stevens County in 1911. The July 23rd edition of the *Newport Minor* stated the fire was "raging in the vicinity of Ruby Creek, from near Blueslide (on the west bank of the Pend Oreille River) nearly to the peak of Calispell Mountain." The area continued to burn into August, by that time being joined by a number of smaller outbursts, some threatening the town of Newport.

With fires burning in Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Oregon, and a forest fire overrunning and consuming the town of Fernie, British Columbia, the Monday before Clayton's fire, it's understandable that Clayton's problems went largely unnoticed beyond the regional press.

The first known newspaper notice of Clayton's plight appeared on the day of the fire, Tuesday, August 4th, 1908, when Spokane's evening paper, the *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, announced the event with a headline, "Flames Sweep over Clayton." The following article explained, "The town of Clayton, 33 miles north of Spokane, is stated to have been wiped out by fire today.

“The dispatcher’s office on the S. F. & N. division (Spokane Falls & Northern) of the Great Northern received a report this afternoon that the business portion of the town was completely destroyed, including the big plant of the Washington Brick & Lime Company, the Great Northern depot, and four freight cars.

“All wire communications with Clayton is cut off and the report received by the dispatcher’s office came through Deer Park, word having been brought to that place by a train conductor.

“At noon today J. H. Spear, president of the Washington Brick & Lime Company, received notice that the company’s plant at Clayton was on fire. Being unable to get anything definite he left by automobile at 1 o’clock for the scene of the disaster.

“The town of Clayton is stated to be widely scattered, but in the midst of brush and timber. Timber fires may have been the cause of the conflagration.

“Clayton has 400 or 500 inhabitants. Its chief industries are the manufacture of brick and lumber.

“The telephone operator at Deer Park states that the fire started from some unknown cause in the rear of Olson’s mercantile store, which is located on Main Street, in the center of the business district. The flames spread to other buildings and at 2 o’clock all of the business district of the town was in flames and would be practically destroyed.

“The residence district, which is more scattered, may be saved. Assistance has been sent from Deer Park. At the latest report no loss of life had occurred. The Washington

Brick & Lime Company’s plant is said to be a total loss.”

The next evening, August 5th, the *Chronicle* carried an extensive quote by Joseph Spear, president of the company — having assumed the role of Washington Brick & Lime’s president after the death of the prior winter of the company’s former president, Henry Brook.

Mr. Spear stated, “The Washington Brick & Lime Company will rebuild its plant at Clayton as quickly as possible. ... The new plant will be the same capacity as the old and will be different in the respect that it will be fireproof. Machinery is being ordered now and we expect to have the new plant in operation within 60 days. The terracotta works was not destroyed, but is shut down for lack of power, the power plant being damaged in yesterday’s fire. However, we expect to be making terracotta in a few days. We expect to be able to fill most of our contracts, but a few may be delayed for 30 days.”

On Thursday, August 6th, the *Newport Miner* took time from its extensive report on the fires in that town’s vicinity to note, “Another Stevens County town has been practically wiped out by fire. Clayton, on the S. F. & N., was visited by a destructive fire on Tuesday afternoon, and practically all of its business section wiped out, including the plant of the Washington Brick & Lime Co. The total loss will be fully \$100,000.”

Perhaps the most informative description of the fire was printed the following Saturday of the *Colville Examiner*. On page 4, under the headline “Clayton Burns,” the newspaper reported, “The business portion of the

Were Images 2, 3, & 4 Taken on August 5th?

It’s likely these aftermath photos were taken on August 5th, the day after the blaze. We’re basing this assumption on the statement made in *Spokane Daily Chronicle* on the evening of the fire. The report printed by the *Chronicle* stated “at 2 o’clock all of the business district of the town was in flames.” Since the distinct shadows in the photos of the fire’s aftermath (especially Image #4) suggest the images were captured around noon, and since the photos show the town’s business district essentially leveled — leaving it with plenty of smoke, but no visible flame — we believe at least one day had passed since the fire started.

Photo from the
Patty (Shives) Wainwright
collection.



Image #2.

Looking West from the Terracotta Factory.

This photo of the fire’s aftermath was taken looking west from an upper window or the roof of the unscathed four-story terracotta building. The board-sheathed roof seen in the photo’s lower right corner appears to be the receiving shed for the clay brought in by aerial tramway from the distant drying shed. It’s possible the missing segment of elevated tramway — elements of which still appear to be smoldering — was cut away and toppled in order to protect the terracotta building from the fire’s spread (this is a speculation and not known to be fact). It is difficult to determine the nature or condition of the large structure still standing in the distance, though it could be the gutted remains of the brick factory, the wooden parts having been consumed, or perhaps an unburned clay shed beyond. The terracotta factory reportedly went back into production as soon as electrical power, previously generated in the brick factory, was restored.

town of Clayton is in ruins as the result of a fire which broke out there at 5:30 Tuesday morning. The loss is estimated at \$100,000, and there is not a store standing in the city. Details are few, as the telephone exchange was burned out and the town cut off from communications with the outside.

“A load of hay, which had been unloaded in a barn near the store of the Clayton

Mercantile Company, either caught fire or was set by an incendiary, the barn caught, the flames spread to the mercantile company’s building and in a few moments the town was in flames. No one was hurt.

“The heaviest loser is the Washington Brick & Lime Company, the main building of its plant and the bunkhouse being burned. In the plant was a large quantity of valuable ma-



Image #3.

Where Clayton's Business District Once Stood.

In the foreground, this photo is believed to show the three muffle-kilns — terracotta burning kilns — mentioned in Solon Shedd's pre-fire description of the factory complex as found in his book, "The Clays of the State of Washington." The upper of the two lines of railroad track were likely those of the Great Northern Railroad (previously the Spokane Falls & Northern Railway). Across the track are the smoldering remains of Clayton's business district. As for the poles seen rising amid the smoke parallel to the railroad tracks and road just beyond, doubtless some of these were related to telegraph and long-distance telephone services following the railroad right of way. While it's possible some may have carried electrical lines, we're currently uncertain as to whether or to what degree the brick plant's generator supplied electricity to the business district. The one object seen rising beyond the line of poles may be an un-toppled chimney.

Photos on this and the facing page are from the Patty (Shives) Wainwright collection.



Image #4.

Exhausted & Bewildered.

The four gentlemen appear to be taking a smoke break along Railroad Avenue where it fronts the ashes of Clayton's former business district just to the right.

chinery and its loss has necessitated the closing down of the plant. Among the other losers were A. T. King, general merchandise, whose stock is estimated from \$15,000 to \$20,000; The Clayton Mercantile Company's store and stock; Joel Huffman, general merchandise; Johnson's restaurant; the Ratke Meat Market; Jelle's Confectionery and Pool Room; the railroad depot; telephone offices; residences of A. T. King and Knute Jelle, and several smaller buildings.

"The town had no fire protection and it was only through a change in the wind that the entire town was not swept. The brick and lime company is the main industry of the town and its closing down will have a serious effect.

"The Great Northern depot was also burned, but the people seem to think that it is no great loss to the town, as the Great Northern will now build a good depot.

"Several hundred thousand feet of

lumber were burned and the lumber sheds destroyed. The residence portion of the city was all saved.

"The business portion of Clayton was practically all burned, but the inhabitants are not suffering for supplies. The big boarding house of the Washington Brick & Lime Company was saved and was well stocked with supplies, which were put at the disposal of those who were destitute."

The fact that the northeastern part of Washington and the Idaho Panhandle were being scorched by forest fires added to Clayton's worry, as noted by the phrase "it was only through a change in the wind that the entire town was not swept" in the above article. It's also likely that the multitude of regional fires diminished the column-inches the region's newspapers devoted to Clayton's plight — newspapers in which we've yet to find a single photo of the fire published.

Regarding those regional fires; the August, 1908, edition of the Department of Agriculture's *Monthly Weather Review* — in its summation regarding the "Portland, Oregon, Forecast District," which includes "Oregon, Washington, and Idaho" — it stated, "The month was quiet, and storm warnings were neither issued nor required. Temperatures averaged slightly below normal and there was about the usual amount of rainfall. Numerous small forest fires occurred until the 25th when light but general rains cleared the atmosphere."

Another segment of the *Monthly Weather Review* stated that Spokane's precipitation for the entire month of August was 0.57 inches — Spokane being the only city in northeastern Washington State the *Weather Review* was printed data for at that time.

Though the regional fires that the *Monthly Weather Review* had characterized as "small" doubtless seemed anything but to those communities in peril, the August 27th, 1908, edition of the *Newport Miner* confirmed that the rains mentioned in that publication had in fact effectively ended the region's fire crisis. As Newport's weekly newspaper noted, "Supervisor Fromme, of the Kaniksu National Forest, reports that the fires in the forest are now out, the heavy showers of the past week having proven very beneficial as aids to the fire fighters."

Again, the rains of late August — the ones the *Monthly Weather Review* had, from its distant offices in Washington D. C., portrayed as "light but general" — became "heavy showers" to those on the fire lines. Proving once again, it's all a matter of perspective.

... Clayton's brick plant closes ...

The summer of 1957 was a difficult one for the Clayton community. Although there may have been rumors concerning the fate of the community's sole industry, the brick plant, it's probable that any said apprehension skyrocketed when, on the 30th of May,

the *Spokesman-Review* announced "Sale of Washington Brick & Lime Company plants at Dishman and Clayton, Wash., and clay properties, to Gladding McBean & Company has been approved by directors of both firms, Neal R. Fosseen, president of WBL, said yesterday."

A hint at the possible outcome of that sale was suggested as the article continued, "C. W. Planje, president of the California firm, said operations would continue at the Dishman structural glazed tile unit, but plans were 'not finalized' for other products, including the Dishman and Clayton brick plants."

Regarding the purchasing company, the newspaper said, "Gladding McBean is the West's largest ceramics firm with seven plants in California, one at Mica and one at Renton, near Seattle."

The C/DPHS has yet to discover when the decision to close Clayton's brick plant was announced to the workers, or the date when said closing actually occurred. We expect the factory was well into shutdown by July, and that all activity had probably ceased by September. That estimate is based on several items appearing in Bill Roll's weekly chat column, "Shavings from the Mill," as it appeared in the August 15th, 1957, *Tri-County Tribune*. To quote Mr. Roll, "The plant here (the Deer Park sawmill) is beginning to look like a combination brick plant and lumber mill since the Clayton brick plant was closed with all the brick plant boys coming here to work. We have Bob Huffman, Vern Jarrett, Jim Stelling, Harold Klawunder, Bob Kenney, Emmett Baynes, Kenny Newsome, Martin Keeney, and a few others." That week's column also noted, "Harold Klawunder is a new department employee, having started a week ago Monday."

A week ago Monday would have been August 5th.

That last line adds a degree of significance to the following quote taken from an interview this writer conducted on behalf of the C/DPHS with Mr. Klawunder early in 2004. A condensation of that interview was first published in the August 4th, 2004, edition of the *Deer Park Tribune*, then archived in

Volume One of the *Reports to the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society*; that first printed in 2005.

As Harold related, "Emil Tobeck, Ben Renner, and me was loading out the last of the brick — loading it into freight cars. Ben was working his usual supervisor wage, but me and Emil were contracting. So there was a couple of days where we each made over a hundred dollars. That's what made it so hard when my youngest brother, Clifford, asked his boss, Harvey Coe, about getting me a job at the Deer Park sawmill. Harvey called me. I told him we had about a month's worth of work yet. But Harvey said, 'If you want this job you'd better come down here tomorrow'. So I gave up a month's worth of great wages to drive lift-truck at the sawmill."

The above suggests that by late July or early August, all manufacturing had ceased at Clayton, and only a few personnel remained onsite to ship what remained of the fired production away.

... the Clayton fire of 1957 ...

On Thursday, July 11th, with the brick plant's closing pending, and the major disruptions of personal lives it was sure to cause weighing heavy on the locals, another disaster hit Clayton's business district.

According to local newspaper correspondent Clarence Glasbrenner's write-up in the following week's *Tri-County Tribune*, smoke was first noticed "oozing" from the rear of the E & E Mercantile store's roof at 7:30 a.m. E & E Mercantile, Clayton's only grocery at the time, occupied one of Clayton's classic Railroad Avenue storefronts — a building assumedly dating back to the town's reconstruction after the all-consuming fire of 1908.

The brick walled, window fronted Mercantile anchored the west corner of what had long been Clayton's primary business block. At some point the building appears to have been partitioned — that assumed since, according to recollections drawn from inter-

views with longtime Clayton area residents Eddie Olson and Warren Nord, the eastern side of the building had once housed a barber shop, and later was converted to a garage for Clayton's fire truck. There was an approximately four foot wide alley separating the fire station side of the building from Matt's Tavern to the east. That gap is believed to have proved critical to the survival of the town.

According to Mr. Glasbrenner's account, among the first to notice the fire was Clayton's Postmaster, Arnold Liefeld. Another to notice, Larry Clouse, went door-to-door rousing townspeople.

Mr. Liefeld's first impulse was to rescue the town's fire truck from the smoldering fire station. Another local, Bob Kenney, noticed the smoke and telephoned the grocery store's leaseholder, Ed Jamme, who joined Kenney and Liefeld in gaining access to the truck. (An unverified anecdote occasionally heard after the fire suggested they had to break their way in, the keys to the firehouse being absent.) Once the main doors were open, Jamme "managed to leap into the smoke filled cab of the fire truck" and drive it into the street.

While the fire team was gathering, smoke began pouring from the roof and windows of the building. Things were clearly out of control.

Clayton's fire department had just swung into action when Deer Park's fire truck "screamed to the rescue." According to Mr. Glasbrenner's account, it was shortly followed by units from "Country Homes, Wild Rose Prairie, Mead, Elk, Chattaroy and Chewelah." The units began playing water over the "burning inferno," though it appears their main concern, considering the Mercantile was obviously going to be a complete loss, was keeping the flames from jumping to any of the nearby buildings by dampening their roofs and walls — especially the roof of Matt's Tavern, and the walls facing the gap between Matt's and the burning building. As for the rest of the town, it was reported that a brisk northeasterly wind was pushing the smoldering

embers away from the residential district laying to the south, much as it had during 1908's fire. Mr. Glasbrenner did note that the wind's direction "*threatened the Gladding McBean brick plant*" — its wood-framed loading sheds paralleling the tracks on the north side of Railroad Avenue. If the news of the factory's closing at the hands of its new owners had been made public by that time, which it likely had, it's problematic as to how much concern the community actually felt regarding the threat to the plant.

Word of what was happening in Clayton spread like a wildfire of its own. The *Mortarboard's* editor, a resident of Williams Valley at the time, noted the thick column of black smoke rising to the northeast. It wasn't long before a neighbor called to report "*Clayton's burning down.*" Besides the visual clue, in the relative quiet of a clear early morning the sound of sirens blaring as the bright red trucks rushed from the north, east, and south along various rural blacktops would have carried for miles. If any question remained as to what was going on, the black column rising would have marked the center of the excitement, and lifting most any party line for a little discrete eavesdropping could have accessed the latest rumors regarding such.

Toward the east edge of Clayton's business district, Carl and Don Lindh were playing water over the "*12,000 gallon gasoline tanks*" near their service station "*to keep the heat from exploding them.*" Nearer the fire, Postmaster Liefeld carried the mail and postal records out of the threatened post office just to the east of Matt's Tavern. And owners of some of the as yet unburning business further along the street tried to save what they could as "*firemen shot a stream of water against the steaming side of the buildings.*"

That concern seemed more than justified. The beginning to Clayton's 1957 fire was almost a mirror image of the beginning of 1908's fire. It's likely the community's old-timers often related tales about that infamous prior blaze. If any listeners doubted that a

whiff of smoke could, within minutes, grow into something big enough to incinerate a town — as those who were there in 1908 doubtless remembered — any such skepticism quickly dissipated on that July morning half a century later as the town fought for its survival. But this time things were different.

In 1908, when most regional roads were little more than rutted pathways through the woods, and even then, rarely if ever navigated by something not horse drawn, the act of quickly concentrating firefighting assets from surrounding communities — assuming such equipment even existed — to a given point was unfeasible. Then too, though the technology was rapidly improving, firefighting equipment at that time was still fairly primitive.

The telegraph and telephone lines running through Clayton were quickly downed in 1908, apparently without sending any details about the fire out. Though the area's residents doubtless knew something was happening, since they would have seen a much, much larger plume of smoke than 1957's rising, they had to wait for a railroad employee to carry the news downline.

The volunteer (though experienced) firefighters rushing to Clayton's defense in 1957 were alerted by a widespread web of telephones. Their trucks carried water tanks, and pumps powerful enough to throw streams of water where directed. When those tanks emptied, the trucks would be driven to nearby water sources, the tanks topped off, and the engines back on the fire line within a matter of minutes. Mr. Glasbrenner's article suggests seven such trucks worked Clayton's fire that day. Nothing close to that capability existed in 1908.

Clayton's Mercantile — it was the Clayton Mercantile Company in 1908, and the E & E Mercantile in 1957 — was lost once again, this time hollowed out to nothing more than blackened brick walls in need of toppling. But everything else in the town, other than the partitioned fire station, was saved, that being a very different outcome from 1908. Still, it could be argued that the town never really

recovered. It, like its primary industry, had been in slow decline since the Great Depression. Then too, the very same forces that allowed the town to avoid catastrophe in 1957 — improved roads, better vehicles, a vastly improved communication system — have for a number of years been working against many of the nation's small towns. It's all a matter of small town economics. Over the years it's become ever easier for people to drive to where the bargains are. And then as now, lower prices are seldom found in small community stores operating on a shoestring profit margin.

But things — both economic and social — are once again changing the basic fabric of everyday in some very significant though as of yet murky ways. No one seems quite sure what those changes will eventually lead to, so it's difficult to say what might befall Clayton next. On the other hand, if history is any guide, this little town, having hung on through everything thrown at it for just shy of a century and a quarter, might once again find its way to something better. That considered, Clayton shouldn't be counted out just yet.

— end —

Letters, Email, Bouquets & Brickbats

— or —

Bits of Chatter, Trivia, & Notices — all strung together.

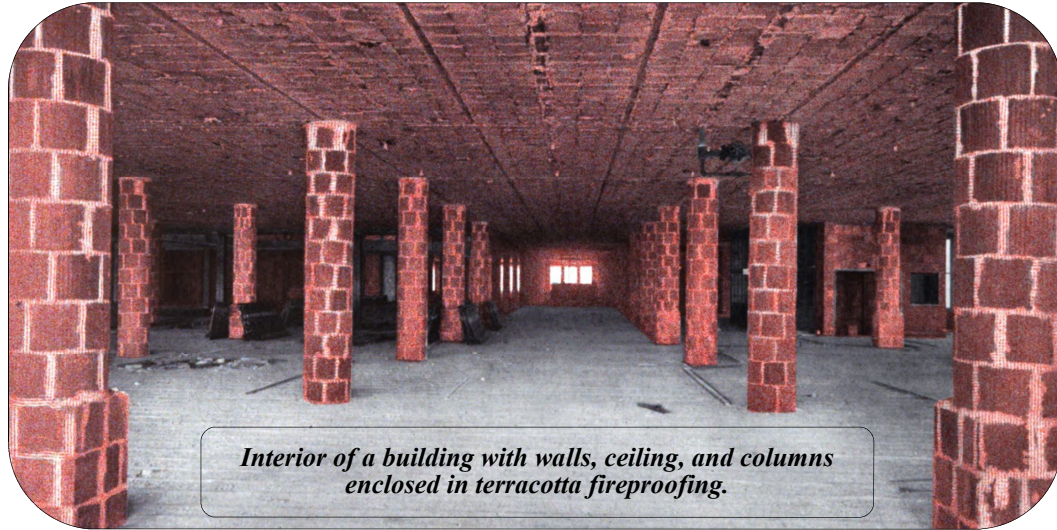
... terracotta fireproofing ...

The earliest currently-known description of Clayton's brick plant, this dated September 16, 1894, states "*In another part of their works is being manufactured the fire proofing for the courthouse.*" The mentioned courthouse is Spokane County's courthouse, the castle-like structure on Spokane's West Mallon Avenue, which was officially opened for business on November 20th, 1895. But the term "*fire proofing,*" which returns again and again in early descriptions of the Clayton factory's output, has always seemed something of a puzzle.

The puzzle began to dissolve with the uncovering of this article from the October 29th, 1905, issue of the *Spokesman-Review*. The article, headlined "*Make 135,000 Bricks Daily,*" quoted Joseph Spear — described in the newspaper as the company's "*manager,*" though he was in everything but name Washington Brick & Lime's owner — as saying the

following. "*Fire proofing, or what is known as hollow tile, is made by a secret process, and burned so loosely that nails can be driven into it without its breaking. There are spaces enough between the particles of brick, that when the nails are driven into it they force the particles of brick together without breaking the brick. This ware has hollow spaces in it. The government stipulates that it must be 40 percent void to make it light.*"

A little investigation into J. H. Spear's "*secret process*" brought us to a 1905 volume titled "*Fire Proofing Catalogue of the National Fire Proofing Company.*" A portion of the text states, "*The porosity of terracotta is produced by mixing sawdust with the raw clay. During the burning process the sawdust disappears, leaving small cavities where it had been. Porous terracotta is a better fire and water resisting material than dense or semi-porous, but it has not a great strength, therefore, dense of semi-porous material is used for arches; dense, semi-porous or porous for par-*



Interior of a building with walls, ceiling, and columns enclosed in terracotta fireproofing.

Illustration from the 1905 edition of the "Fire Proofing Catalogue of the National Fire Proofing Company."

tions and furring; semi-porous or porous for column and girder covering and for roof blocks."

As to why noncombustible metal columns and girders and the like would need some type of insulation from fire, that issue became evident shortly after tall buildings with structural steel frameworks became economically possible in the mid-1880s.

Structural steel is incredibly strong. Properly engineered, it's possible to raise self-supporting frameworks upward a significant fraction of a mile, while hanging walls and floors from that metal frame. The problem is, fires in buildings can quickly exceed a thousand degrees Fahrenheit. At those temperatures, steel will have lost close to half its strength. The metal, having been softened and expanded, will tend to bend, sag, and twist. With the building's rigidity compromised, the entire structure is in danger of collapse. Then too, a fire department's ability to engage with a fire in the higher reaches of such a building — essentially any building higher than the ladders commonly used by fire departments — was and continues to be problematic.

Those factors mean protecting the structural members of multistoried steel-framed buildings from excessive fire generat-

ed heat, and containing said fire to the area of origin until sufficient firefighting forces can be brought to bear, was and still is critical.

The early answer was to enclose all structural members of the building, including the I-beams supporting the floors, and the ceiling strung between those beams, within a barrier of the best material available at the time, terracotta fireproofing. And then, to line critical partitions within each floor of the building with the same in order to slow the fire's lateral movement within each floor. That degree of protection required the manufacture of an incredible number of shapes and sizes of unglazed terracotta blocks, most with hollow spaces inside. Once laid or hung — the latter with a minimal exposure of any metal components — the rough surfaces of the terracotta would be plastered over for appearance.

Now that we know what to look for, perhaps we'll discover some used or unused examples of Clayton's output of terracotta fireproofing. We know it was used in Spokane's County Courthouse. Doubtless, many other still standing classic structures in the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere are protected by Clayton's version of this material.

———— Wally Lee Parker ————

Minutes of the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society — June 10, 2017 —

In attendance: Bill Sebright, Pat Parker, Wally Parker, Mark Wagner, Lorraine Nord, Marilyn Reilly, Sue Rehms, Chuck Lyons, Ella Jenkins, Mike Reiter, Pete Coffin, Judy Coffin, Marie Morrill, Joel Reiter, Lynn Wells, Heather McGrath, Barry Pasicznyk, Don Ball, and Roxanne Camp

Society President Bill Sebright called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM. He reported that: 1) Jesse Klemish brought by more examples of American Fire Bricks. These are for the CDPHS to keep. 2) I have several old insulators that I would like to give away. I'm not sure they have any display value. 3) Heather McGrath sent some pages of an anecdotal deed for the Frank and Ruby Koehler farm in Williams Valley. They were passed around. Heather attended the meeting and brought not only the Koehler family anecdotal deed, but many wonderful family pictures. Pete Coffin took them all to scan. 4) Our thanks to Barry Pasicznyk for bringing in a 1949 DPHS Antler. 5) Ella Jenkins brought in a brick from her son's chimney in Spokane. It has a very strange trademark.

Society Treasurer Mark Wagner reported the main checking account ended the month at \$6,846.94. There were deposits of \$270.00. One check was written to Discount Sign Warehouse for \$620.82 for shirts for Brickyard Day. The web hosting account ended the month at \$733.75 with a withdrawal of \$10.95 for web hosting. I have also submitted our 2016 tax return. It has been accepted by the IRS.

Society Vice President Pete Coffin reported that: 1) Finished writing a manuscript titled "*Lewis Cass Gemmill, Early Wild Rose Settler*" and submitted it to Editor Parker as a possible *Mortarboard* article. 2) With much

help from Editor Parker, I have composed a manuscript titled "*The Wild Rose Orchard Company*." Material from the First State Bank of Deer Park's 1909 correspondence files was combined with the results of Editor Parker's vintage literature search to finish the manuscript. It has been submitted to Editor Parker as a co-authored paper for a possible *Mortarboard* article. 3) Took a field trip to locate and photograph the south portal of the Arcadia Orchards highline canal south of Loon Lake. From locating the highline ditch south of the railroad tracks, I think it is covered by a pile of very large boulders probably placed by the BNSF Railroad as grade erosion protection. 4) Society member Gary Ross indicated in one of his emails he would like to have more information about his family. I researched the family and provided him a descendant chart of both his mother's and father's families. His mother was a Steadman whose brother once owned the house on the northwest corner of west Crawford and US Highway 395 (Coffin Corner). The records show that the Ross family descended from Oregon Trail pioneers. 5) After borrowing and scanning a Hutchins family photo scrap book from Burton Ernst (Nona Hutchins' husband) I generated both the Hutchins and Ernst family trees.

Print editor Wally Parker reported: 1) One hundred and ten copies of the June *Mortarboard* have been printed for distribution, and the online version has been submitted for posting. This sixteen-page issue begins with Peter Coffin's discussion of early Deer Park settler Peter E. Meyers. My own submission was a breakdown of the local area's reaction to an article printed in the June 18, 1921, edition of the *Saturday Evening Post* in which both Deer Park and Loon Lake were mentioned.

Deer Park Locations Currently Carrying Print Copies of the Mortarboard:
City Library, City Hall, Gardenspot Market, Standen Insurance, & Odynski's Accounting.

The *Letters/Brickbats* segment includes evidence regarding the closure date for Clayton's terracotta factory; a presentation of images and facts related to a 1913 postcard from the Weather Bureau to a Deer Park resident; plus details regarding a massive water-diversion project proposed but apparently not realized by the Arcadia Orchards Company. 2) At member Mike Reiter's suggestion, experimentation has begun toward developing one or more tri-fold brochures advertising the historical society and its mission — the idea being to distribute these through various venues. The tri-fold, essentially a single letter-size piece of paper printed on both sides, is a common format for informative brochures and advertisements. By trial and error, it quickly becomes evident that the brochure's apparent simplicity is deceptive. Presenting a comprehensive and complete idea or set of ideas in such a compact space is extremely difficult. A "draft" of the brochure was passed around for comment and suggestions. In accord with those suggestions, a modified "draft" will be undertaken.

Webmaster Marie Morrill reported that the new *Mortarboard* has been uploaded. She also brought the statistics for web activity

for the month for review.

Mike Reiter reported that he got the time-lapse camera going on the old Ag Building. Dan Huffman had me try uploading the video to the cloud, so he could get it but it takes around ten hours to upload a week's worth of video and it hogs all the bandwidth in city hall so I'm just going to put it on a 64 gig SD card weekly. Seems pretty crazy they had to dig all that dirt out and then compact it back — guess someone is creating jobs!

The next Brickyard Day Committee meeting will be June 14, 6 PM at the Real Estate Marketplace. Ella Jenkins will be our Honored Citizen. We hope to have the t-shirts ready by the next CDPHS meeting.

Chuck Lyons suggested all members should go see the Leno Prestini paintings displayed at the Stevens County Historical Society in Colville.

Next meeting: Saturday, July 8, 2017, at 9 AM at the Clayton Drive-In.

Meeting adjourned at 9:41 AM.

The Society meeting minutes submitted by Mark Wagner, acting Secretary.

— end —

Society Contacts

We encourage anyone with observations, concerns, corrections, or divergent opinions regarding the contents of these newsletters to write the society or contact one or more of the individuals listed below. Resultant conversations can remain confidential if so desired.

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— C/DPHS —

Volunteer proofreaders for this issue: Pete Coffin, Betty Denber, Rick Hodges, Bill Sebright, Chuck Stewart, Lina Swain, and Ken Westby.

From "The Coast" magazine,
April, 1907



See Yourself in Print.

The Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society's department of Print Publications is always looking for original writings, classic photos, properly aged documents and the like that may be of interest to our readers. These materials should be rooted within, though not limited to, northern Spokane County, southeastern Stevens County, and southern Pend Oreille County. As for types of materials, family or personal remembrances are always considered. Articles of general historical interest — including pieces on natural history, archeology, geology and such — are likely to prove useful. In other words, we are always searching for things that will increase our readers' understanding and appreciation of this region's past. As for historical perspective; to us history begins whenever the past is dusty enough to have become noteworthy — which is always open to interpretation. From there it extends back as deep as we can see, can research, or even speculate upon.

Copyright considerations for any materials submitted are stated in the "Editorial and Copyright Policy" dialog box found on page 1,516 of this issue. For any clarifications regarding said policy, or any discussions of possible story ideas or the appropriateness of certain types of material and so on, please contact the editor via the email address supplied on the same page.

— the editor —

A print copy of this issue of the Mortarboard is or soon will be available in booklet format.

Ask about "Collected Newsletters: Volume Thirty-One."