



Special section:
Malden Fire stories
INSIDE



Perkins House
Vintage show
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WHITMAN COUNTY GAZETTE

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Tree on power line credited for fire



Top: A bulldozer is seen through the heat at the remains of the grain elevator at Pine City. Above: Laura Lautenslager, operations coordinator for Rosalia Fire District 7 sprays down the still smoldering grain pile.

DAILY BULLETIN

MALDEN—Wind, tree, power line, spark, seem to be the order of events for the ignition of the Babb/Malden Fire Sept. 7.

According to an AP report, Avista Utilities has sighted the tree contacting a power line as the apparent start of the wildfire which destroyed most of Malden and Pine City.

The utility company

has not found evidence that any deficiencies in its equipment, maintenance or vegetation management caused recent fires, the company said in a statement Friday.

High winds on Labor Day turned fires that started that day into a firestorm, feeding the blazes plenty of oxygen and pushing them along rapidly.

What's next for the Manning Bridge

BY GARTH MEYER
GAZETTE REPORTER

COLFAX—With the burnt remnants of the private, 1918 Manning-Rye covered bridge fallen into the Palouse River, plans are underway for removal of debris and replacement of the bridge; perhaps with a deconstructed span from elsewhere of the same era.

Downstream from the site northwest of Colfax—where a family also lost their new house—are four county-owned bridges, starting five miles away on Shields Road.

“If left unmitigated though the winter, (the remains) will mobilize and probably smack up against our bridges,” said Mark Storey, Whitman County Public Works director. “The window of opportunity to get it out

the state of Washington; the Grays River bridge in Wahkiakum County.

“When it’s an inanimate object that is lost, you put things in perspective,” said Phil Gruen, Associate Professor in WSU’s School of Design and Construction, who has studied and written about the Manning bridge. “As a historian, a resident of Whitman County, I feel an attachment to places and sights and objects here; that’s quite a loss, and irreplaceable.”

The Manning Bridge had no roof, said to be left open to accommodate locomotive and overhead electric lines. The span was later owned by the Great Northern Railroad before being sold to private landowners in 1969.

Questions have come about a temporary cross-



From left, Peter, Todd and Silas Krause stand in front of what remains of the Manning-Rye covered bridge.

of there is when the river is low.”

A Zoom meeting was set for Tuesday, with representatives from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Army Corps of Engineers and county Public Works.

“It’s not exactly in our area of expertise, but we’re probably more experienced in removing debris than anyone else,” said Storey, who indicated the county, if called upon, may hire a contractor for the job, perhaps using cranes and workers in the water to hook cables onto pieces to pull them out.

The WDFW is the sole entity that permits work on water.

The historic bridge off Manning Road was built by the Spokane and Inland Empire Railroad. With it gone, one covered bridge remains in

ing. Public Works, which does have a temporary bridge it uses for construction, has none this long.

The bridge was not insured.

“I asked about it and nobody would insure it, and I can understand why,” said Todd Krause, current landowner, whose almost-complete new house burned in the fire too. “It was not considered insurable.”

Onecho Bible Church has started a fund to help the family with the bridge replacement.

PINS

Krause already has a line on a 1901 steel-truss bridge in storage in Siskiyou County, Calif., available for use.

He found it on Bridgehunter.com.

Krause has contacted the owner, who subsequently has already

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Ground breaking on Ice Age Flood Museum

BY JANAMATHIA
GAZETTE EDITOR

LaCROSSE—Representatives from LaCrosse Community Pride, Port of Whitman County, Whitman County Library, Whitman County Commissioners and The McGregor Company gathered Friday morning for the ground breaking on the project to turn the basalt rock houses into a Heritage Museum and Ice Age Floods Visitor Center. The fifteen people stood in a spread out circle as Alex McGregor gave an opening address.

“The Center will provide us the opportunity to display an extensive collection of historical exhibits and images from Whitman County Library’s online County Heritage collection. It will be a remarkable show place to see and one that will build upon the growing interest we’ve helped generate in this special community,” said McGregor, a member of LaCrosse Community Pride.

One of the basalt rock bunkhouses has already been rebuilt and holds a small collection of local history and Ice Age flood information. Now,



Left to right, Lloyd Stoess, Ice Age Floods Institute; Kylie Fullmer, Whitman County Library Director; Dean Kinze, Whitman County Commissioner; Kristine Meyer, Port of Whitman County Commissioner; Alex McGregor, LaCrosse Community Pride; Tom Kammerzell, Port of Whitman County Commissioner; Peggy Bryan, LaCrosse Community Pride, and Jeff Pietila, LaCrosse Community Pride President. “Golden” shovels are used to break ground on the restoration project, Sept. 18.

work will begin on three more stone bunkhouses, with the expectation of the having the work on them done in about three months times, weather permitting.

The work will include the tear down and re-building of two bunkhouses and construction of a third, identical-looking bunkhouse which will

serve as a restroom. The original stone will be re-used in the construction of the houses with more being brought in to complete the structures.

The next phase of the project will be to convert the service station into a museum and the bunkhouses would be used for lodging, more true to their roots.

Estimated cost for work on the two bunkhouses and restroom is \$115,000. To date, the project has raised \$116,600 with contributions coming from the Port of Whitman County, Whitman County .09 grant, Friends of Whitman County Library, LaCrosse Community Pride, continued on Page 11

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Manning Bridge

promised the 30,000-pound bridge—which pins together—to a man in Eastern Oregon.

The owner is checking with him to see if he still wants it. When will Krause find out?

“I was hoping the end of last week... There’s quite a few in the mid-west,” he said, noting the spans come available when counties and cities take down old one-lane bridges to replace them with newer, two or more lane projects.

Another option may be a 1925 bridge from Puyallup, the former Meridian Street Bridge, now in storage.

LABOR DAY

Days after the fire, up a rock face from the fallen bridge, a lone black tree trunk still smoked from its roots.

Todd and Kelley Krause and their five boys now stay with friends from church, working on a more long-term arrangement since they lost their home. They have been offered a farmhouse past Dusty.

“We’ve had a ton of people offer to help,” said Krause.

The family moved to the area from Port Orchard after actively following listings in Whitman County for seven years. Todd and Kelley met as students at WSU, Todd growing up on a dairy farm outside Snohomish, supplying milk to Darigold.

On Sept. 7, Labor Day, Kelley and the younger boys went to feed animals near Step-toe, at a friends’ house, who were on vacation.

“There’s a fire up the road,” she said when she got home.

Todd and his two oldest sons then crossed the Manning bridge in his pickup to go help fight the fire on a hillside along Green Hollow Road.

“You knew it was gonna bad because the wind was blowing so much,” said Krause.

“There’s a fire up the road,” they heard from another area resident, while cutting a fire line, referring to back the way they came.

“It might be kind of near your place,” said another neighbor on foot.

Krause and the two boys soon turned for home. They came around the corner and saw the bridge gone, and through the smoke, the outline of their house – almost complete after two years of work, six years owning the property, four years since they moved to the land and lived in a mobile home – in flames. They were on foot?

“We drove the pickup. That’s why we still have a pickup,” Krause said. “I’m a risk-averse person but if I was home I probably would’ve taken too many risks, I could’ve died. You don’t want to over-spiritualize things but it’s plausible God could’ve used that to save our lives.”

Kelley and the other boys had driven to safety when they saw the fire coming over the hill.

INSPECTION

The house was within three weeks of completion.

“18 foot two-by-12s, not a single knot in the whole thing, none of them were bowed,” Krause told Evan Laubach Sept. 18, while the engineer inspected the foundation left from the house and barn, just over where the bridge lies in the river, algae trailing off its beams and cables.

Krause and his two middle sons, Peter, 12, and Silas, 9, drove out to their land in the morning to meet Laubach, from Reliant Engineering in Pullman. Laubach deemed both foundations to be in good condition to rebuild with.

The house is a priority, just as well as the bridge, Krause indicated, though a long, dirt “drive-way” goes up behind the house through the wheat hills to meet the seasonal Bob Schultz county road.

“As soon as it rains, we don’t have any access,” Krause said.

AGENCIES

The district WDFW office is now on the Manning-Rye project.

“Anytime something could affect the bed or flow of a waterway, my agency has a permit,” said Jason Kunz, WDFW habitat biologist for Region One, which includes

Whitman County.

Last week, before he went to the scene, he suggested habitat issues could go either way.

“It could be good for habitat, if it’s not toxic creosote timber. If it is, then we would all see about trying to remove them. Sometimes you can just leave it, and let it become habitat. This could be benign or it could be serious.”

He had his verdict when he drove down.

“It’s a bunch of cable, a bunch of creosote. That’s all not good stuff,” Kunz said. “I’ll be issuing an HPA (Hydraulic Project Approval) for it, an expedited permit. Everyone knows this needs to happen before high flows pick up. Everybody’s swinging into action, shaking and baking.”

River currents increase in late October, November.

The Manning Bridge’s original abutments are outside of the water.

In June, the Krause family also took possession of a Pullman railcar – formerly displayed at Pufferbelly Depot in Pullman – storing it about a half-mile from the house. It was not affected by the fire.

Incidentally, the cross that appeared on the front page of the Gazette last week was put up by the Krause family on Easter, built from creosote timber that had been removed from the Manning-Rye bridge during earlier maintenance work.

Creosote is an oil-distilled coal tar used as

a wood preservative.

LEGACY

The specific style of the Manning-Rye bridge is known as “Boxed Howe Truss,” of which one other is known to remain in North America, in Keremos, British Columbia.

The Great Northern Railroad built four such bridges between Colfax and Spring Valley.

Manning-Rye was originally known as the Harpole Bridge, after nearby landowner Ed Harpole.

“You’re dealing with a level of significance that is hard to place statistically,” said Gruen. “It’s one of those sights that everyone remembers. And when there is a shared memory... the significance becomes immeasurable.”

RAISED ON THE FARM, NOT IN THE OFFICE.

#ESSENTIAL
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Ben Lindekugel Governance Excellence Award

-Cherry Alice Van Tine
Whitman Hospital and Medical Clinics Board President

Cherry Alice Van Tine, Whitman Hospital and Medical Clinic’s Board President, is this year’s recipient of the Ben Lindekugel Governance Excellence Award given by the Washington State Hospital Association (WSHA).

WSHA states this award was named after the late Association of Washington Public Hospital District’s Executive Director Ben Lindekugel, who was especially dedicated to ensuring good governance among hospitals across Washington state.

We thank Cherry Alice for her years of dedication to WHMC and are extremely fortunate to have her part of our hospital. Congrats to you Cherry Alice—a well deserved honor!

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