LaCrosse, Washington

The Palouse towns all began in a somewhat similar fashion. First came the railroad, next a few settlers, then a post office. "Settlers" meant "kids," who required schooling. The first schools were often in private homes, as were church services.

In 1888, the O.R.&N. completed their line between Riparia and LaCrosse, at which time Mr. George Dawson, the first section foreman, and his wife moved to LaCrosse and lived in a shack made of railroad ties while the section house was being built. Mr. Dawson's section extended from where Hooper now is to where Sutton had a small siding, a few miles from LaCrosse. He employed many Chinese on the section gangs. They were paid 90¢ for a ten-hour day, while the whites received $1.25.[19] A little store was put up across the track for the convenience of the workers and the Pacific Elevator Co. built a platform. In a May 1911 LaCrosse Clipper interview, John Brink said that he had hauled the first wheat into LaCrosse in the year 1889, and that he had had considerable trouble getting the agent located here to accept the same from him. Hal Forney and D. W. Pierce were next in order to deliver wheat the following year.

The most commonly held theory as to how LaCrosse and Winona received their names was that two surveying engineers had come from LaCrosse, Wisconsin and Winona, Minnesota and they christened the new towns after their home towns. But how did the Wisconsinites arrive at the name? The origin of the name "LaCrosse" has many fanciful explanations, but most of them will not bear investigation. The most probably is that the terrain was very level and admirably well suited for the ball game of lacrosse, which was very much in favor with the Indians. Zebulon Pike, in a journal entry of 1805, expressly stated that the name originated from the "French name of the game of ball played by the Indians at this place." Mr. N. Myrick, who was named first postmaster of the new Wisconsin town in 1844 writes, "Prairie de LaCrosse" was of course French and was changed by myself to LaCrosse and the post office so called at my suggestion."[21]

The town of "LaCrosse", Washington had its first post office name changed to "Dunlor," the name coming from the first three letters of "Dunphy" (an engineer on the railroad) and the last three from "Taylor", the first postmaster. This was not a popular choice with the post office patrons who thought it confusing to have different names for the station and the post office. A copy of the official petition to adopt the name of "Dunlor" is dated August 14, 1889, and signed by Mr. Taylor. "LaCrosse" is marked out and "Dunlor" is written in. The application also showed the town population as 12 and a service area of 25 families. A second official document from Washington, D.C. is dated September 9, 1896, and is addressed to the postmaster in LaCrosse, (late Dunlor) so there seems to be no question that we are entitled to a centennial celebration.

The first post office was in the O.R.&N. depot, where George Taylor was the station agent, so he was founding postmaster for Dunlor. William H. Hite, who followed Taylor as station agent, decided to separate the post office from the railroad, so he moved the post office across the tracks to a small building.

In 1899 Tom Shobe put a general stock of goods in the Hite building, thus starting the first real store in the village. Shobe later moved both store and post office to the west corner of Second and Main streets. Later William Rudolph moved the post office down the street to the south. When the big fire of 1914 almost consumed the town, Joseph McGifford moved the office into a building still farther south on the

west side of Main Street. In 1922 Frank Jones moved to the northeast corner of Main street. In 1927, he added all new equipment at the northwest corner of Third and Main. On February 18, 1959, the office hopscotched diagonally across the intersection into a new counter-type arrangement and has apparently ceased its wandersings.[21]

Mrs. Charlotte Shaver, niece of William Rudolph, came to LaCrosse with her parents in 1908. She was clerk until she became the official postmaster. Her retirement in 1947 closed well over 30 years of service.

John Walli who became postmaster in 1947, was a LaCrosse native. He farmed for a few years, then acquired a grocery store, which he operated for 15 years before he was appointed postmaster.

Vern Welter was the next postmaster, beginning in 1979. He came from Pullman where his children were in school, and he did not want to change his residence, so Gladys Bafus was officer-in-charge in his absences, and was appointed postmaster on March 19, 1982. She served until 1992, at which time Charlotte Honn of Benge became O.I.C. and one year later was appointed postmaster. Verna Stephenson has served as a clerk since 1970.

R.F.D. #1 was opened September 17, 1906, and extended as far as Penawawa. Veteran carriers on this route were Oscar Mills, Mrs. Oscar Mills, George Post, and Elton Smith. In 1960, the route was 65 miles long, serving 135 rural families. In 1990, the route served 85 families. Darlene Martin has been the carrier on this route since April 1, 1979.

LaCrosse was advanced to 3rd class on January 1, 1915, then to 2nd class July 1, 1955, and thereafter fluctuated from 3rd to 2nd and back.

There are several ways to spell our town's name — La Crosse, LaCrosse, Lacrosse and these and all possible variations are seen daily at the post office. As one can see, the location of the post office, the names of the postmasters, the class of the office and the spelling of the town name have all been subject to considerable change over the years. Below is a listing of postmaster names and dates of appointments from the time Dunlor was established to the present:

George W. Taylor	1892	Joseph McGifford	1915
William H. Hite	1895	Frank Jones	1922
Thomas H. Shobe	1899	Tormod Myklebust	1934
William C. Fudge	1903	Charlotte Shaver	1947
Christopher Holst	1906	Lawrence Barry	1958
William Rudolph	1910	Erma Rudolph	1959
John Walli	1960	Gladys Bafus	1982
Vern Welter	1979	Charlotte Honn	1993[22]

19. Smith, Joe. Bunchgrass Pioneer. Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1987
20. History of LaCrosse County, Wisconsin. Chicago, Illinois: Western Historical Company, 1881
21. Weber, Bert. Postmarked Washington. Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1987
22. Weber, Bert. Postmarked Washington. Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1987

~ From *Writ in Remembrance: 100 Years of LaCrosse Area History* by Don Dorman, Ruth Dorman, and Dorothy Smith ~