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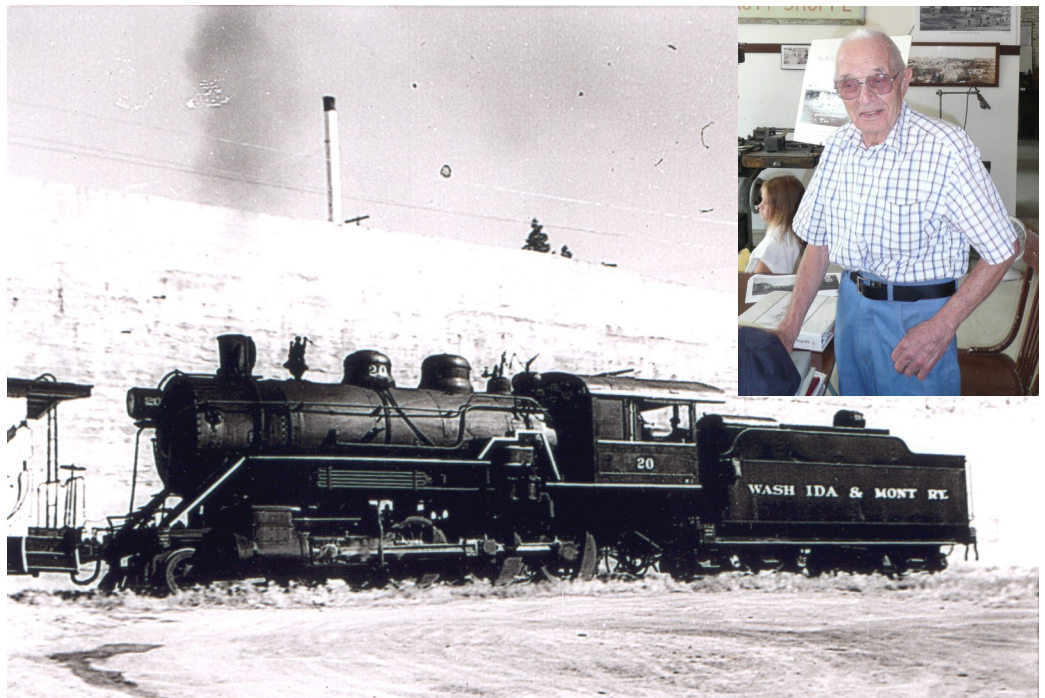
Bob West Writes the WI&M's "Autobiography": Memories of a Centenarian

BOB WEST

has been gathering and writing the history of Palouse, WA for many years now, following the footsteps of his father J.B. West. J.B. wrote a local history column for the Palouse Republic and later compiled several of his best columns into a series of self-published books. Bob, now an 85-year-old World War II veteran (inset photo), picked up where his dad left off and has written three books of his own. He still submits local history stories to the Boomerang. In 2005, he wrote this "autobiography" of the WI&M based on his research and recollections:

Hi, my name is Washington, Idaho and Montana, W. I. & M. for short. I am a railroad. I will be celebrating my 100th birthday this year. I have led a very interesting life and I thought you might enjoy reading about it.

In the early years of life I was called "The biggest little railroad in the country, not as long as some (47 miles) but just as wide as the best of them." My home is one of Mother Nature's most beautiful and productive areas in the world. My birth place was in the eastern part of the great Palouse Country, famous for its rolling hills and rich soil, where 100 bushels per acre wheat is not uncommon. At the time of my birth, my terminus, Bovill, Idaho, was sur-



Another Palouse native, Don Meinig, snapped this shot of WI&M 2-8-0 #20 shoving caboose X-2 (and its train, presumably) alongside the large retaining wall across from the Palouse depot in August, 1948. Besides the WI&M tracks themselves, this wall is one of several railroad architecture relics still standing at Palouse.

rounded by thousands of acres of some of the finest timberland in the world, including large stands of white pine, one of the most sought after timber trees.

I was conceived one afternoon in the conference room of the St. Elmo Hotel in Palouse. Potlatch Lumber Company officers arranged a meeting with Palouse businessmen and officials and proposed the building of a railroad from the city to their property in Idaho. The plan was met with enthusiasm by the city, believing it would assure the economy and growth of their community for years to come.

The non-profit WI&M Ry. History Preservation Group, Inc has been organized for railroad historians, enthusiasts, and modelers interested in gathering and sharing information on the Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway, from its origins in 1905 through it's operations of today.