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The newsletter of the non-profit WI&M Ry HPG. Organized for railroad historians, enthusiasts, and modelers interested in the Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway, from its origins in 1905 through it's ownership of today.

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Mission Statement of the Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway History Preservation Group:

"To locate, preserve, and archive all items of a historical nature relating to the history of the WI&MRy; to issue publications on this and related subjects; to encourage public interest in the history of the WI&M and the Potlatch Lumber Company; and, to acquire objects and property appropriate for a museum and/or any of the purposes listed above."

THE WHITE PINE ROUTE QUARTERLY

The Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway
History Preservation Group, Inc.



The WI&M conductor checks his paperwork after picking up a long string of empties left by the P&L Local at Lairds, near Palouse, WA. Even though both lines were operated by Burlington Northern by the time of this June 1990 photo, the interchange between the two trains functioned much the same as when the WI&M met the Northern Pacific here. (T. Hillebrant photo)

Palouse- The WI&M's Western Gateway

By Philip F. Beach and Thomas E. Burg

The Palouse region of Whitman County, Washington and Latah County, Idaho, is a land of fertile rolling hills drained by the west flowing Palouse River. The town of Palouse, or originally Palouse City, is located on the Palouse River shortly after it enters Washington from Idaho.

The Spokane and Palouse Railway, a subsidiary of the Northern Pacific Railroad, began operating through Palouse City in the summer of 1888. By that time Palouse City was an important trade center and the site of three saw mills and a flourmill. In 1890 the city had over a thousand people and the city fathers bragged about the town's 2,000,000 bushels, 20,000,000 feet of timber cut and \$100,000 in gold dust. They declared that the town offered "better opportunities for investment here than anywhere else in the state."

After its 1899 acquisition by the Northern Pacific Railway, the Spokane and Palouse became the Palouse and Lewiston Branch of the Northern Pacific. The P&L tracks entered Palouse from the north, crossing the Palouse River twice on wood truss bridges just north and west of town. This stream was then a vital logging course. On massive snow runoffs each spring it was choked with logs being driven downstream from Idaho forests to mills at Palouse and Colfax. The drives began in 1878 with the building of the Sexton and Codd Mill at Palouse.

In 1883 W. L. Powers built a new mill below the town. After several changes of ownership it was purchased in 1904 by the Potlatch Lumber Co (PLCo.). At the time Potlatch was in the process of amassing a vast acreage in Idaho of the finest white pine tim-