

FIRST IMMIGRANT TRAIN CAME HERE IN 1843 WITH 852

Drs. Parker and Whitman, Who
Opened Indian Mission at Van-
couver, Brought First Settlers.

[This is the fourteenth of a series of articles
on Oregon and its history, written for The
Sunday Journal by J. B. Horner, professor of
history, Oregon Agricultural college, and author
of "Oregon."]

By J. B. Horner

The year after Rev. Jason Lee established the Methodist mission in Oregon, Dr. Samuel Parker and Dr. Marcus Whitman went west to ascertain the advisability of establishing other missions. They were sent by the American board of commissioners for foreign missions. While on their journey (1835) they learned that missionaries would receive a welcome among the Indians west of the Rocky mountains. Doctor Whitman forthwith returned to the east to procure assistance, but Doctor Parker continued his journey to the Oregon country and lived at Fort Vancouver the following winter.

In the spring he visited the Walla Walla valley and reported it to be "a delightful situation for a missionary establishment." He explored the Lewis and Spokan rivers, becoming greatly interested in teaching the Indians whom he found. Later that year, he returned to Vancouver, whence he sailed to New York.

When Doctor Whitman arrived in New York with his story of the Indians and their needs the board at once placed him in charge of a mission to be organized in the new country. The following year Rev. and Mrs. H. H. Spaulding and W. H. Gray accompanied Dr. and Mrs. Whitman. They traveled with the fur traders from Missouri to the mountains. Because of Mrs. Spaulding's feeble health, she was carried in a wagon or cart to Green river, but from here she was able to travel on horseback.

BEGIN AT WALLA WALLA

Leaving the women at Fort Vancouver in September, 1836, the men retraced their journey up the river to Walla Walla, which is six miles west of the present site of Walla Walla. Here Doctor and Mrs. Whitman were to labor. Hence it was called the Whitman mission. In the Nez Perce country on the Clearwater, 13 miles from Lewiston of the present day, a mission was located and Rev. and Mrs. Spaulding were placed in charge. In 1828, Rev. Cushing Eells and wife, Rev. Elkanah Walker and wife, Rev. A. B. Smith and wife, and Cornelius Rogers occupied the Colville and Spokan missions. Adobe houses were built, land was fenced and ploughed, crops were sown and harvested, cattle were imported, portions of the Bible were translated and printed in the Nez Perce language on a little press that was sent from the Sandwich islands and an effort was made to interest the Indians in domestic life as the shortest way to civilization.

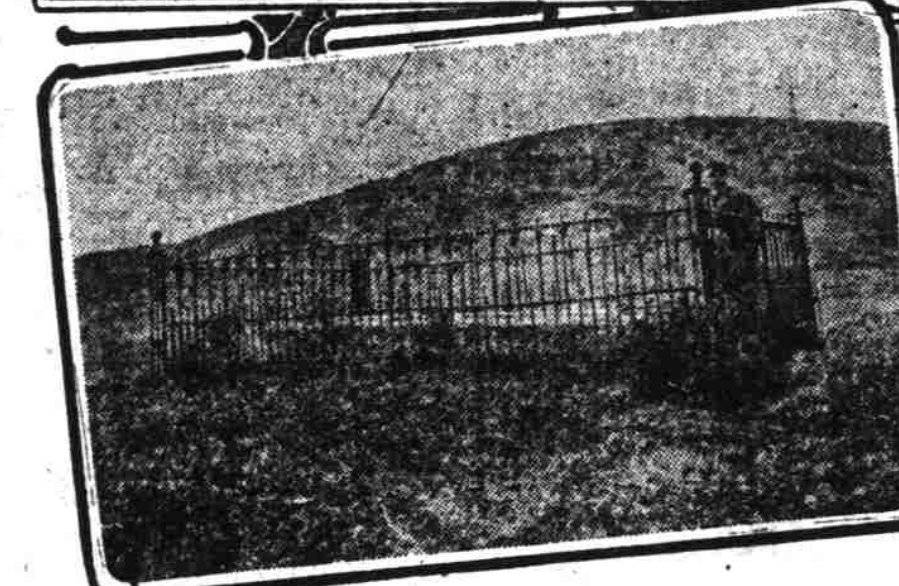
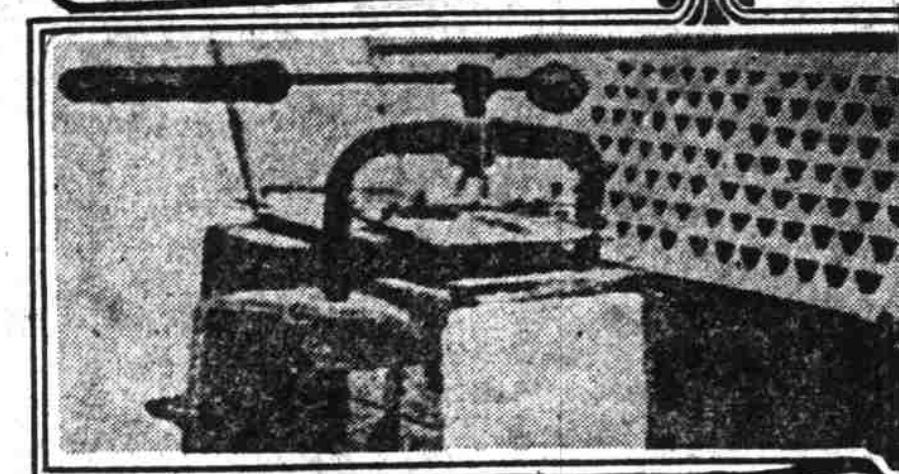
Here the Indians were taught to read the Bible, and to cultivate the soil, raise cattle, and perform other kinds of civilized labor. Here also Indian orphans and white children were given a home and educated. The doctor generously and freely gave medical care. But the habits of the Indians were so different from those of the whites that the same kind of medical care could not be given successfully to both races. When the whites and Indians were stricken with measles, the Indians who were treated by the doctor perished in regularly taking cold plunges in the Walla Walla river contrary to his advice, and necessarily this proved fatal to many of them.

INDIANS START TROUBLE

Then the Indian doctor, or medicine man, who beheld with envy Dr. Whitman's growing influence with the Indians, charged that the whites were being cured but that Dr. Whitman was exterminating the Indians by his treatment, in order that the whites might occupy the Indian possessions. It was also pointed out by Thomas Hill, an educated Shawnee, that Dr. Whitman had a few years before, made a midwinter journey across the continent to persuade the whites to come west; and that in the following summer of 1840, he piloted the emigration train of 875 or more persons to the Oregon country in order that the whites might overrun the territory and eventually drive the Indians away from their land.

Hints from friendly Indians and the sullen manner of the hostiles, convinced

MISSION WORK IN OREGON



Above, left to right—Rev. H. H. Spaulding, Rev. Samuel Parker (from Oregon Historical society). Center—Mission printing press now in possession of Oregon Historical society. Below—Grave of Whitman martyrs.

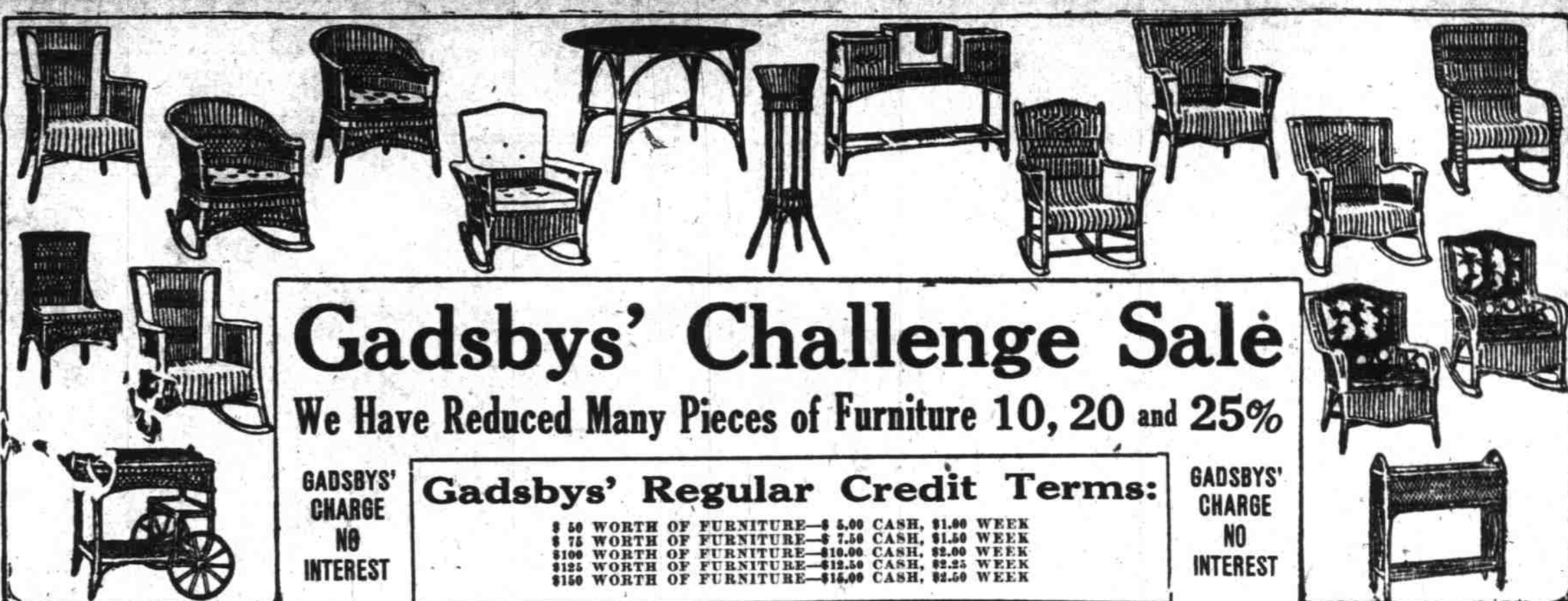
Dr. Whitman that treachery was intended. The sacrifice that Dr. and Mrs. Whitman had undergone in aiding the Indians was already so great that, taken together with hostile threats, the doctor and his wife at last realized that they had too long delayed their departure from the Walla Walla mission. On November 22-24, 1847, the Indians suddenly broke into the mission house, and barbarously and treacherously killed Dr. and Mrs. Whitman and 12 others. They also took captive about 50 women and children of the mission, and others temporarily there to be held for ransom as hostages to guarantee immunity from punishment by the whites as they claimed—though some were not intended to be released.

Following the Whitman massacre, three urgent requests were made for immediate relief and protection for the whites. The first came to Vancouver from William McBean of Fort Walla Walla, asking that a party be sent to ransom the prisoners; the second was from Alanson Hinman, asking that an armed force be provided to protect the station at The Dalles; the third was made by Governor Abernethy, who asked the legislature for enough troops to capture the murderers of the Whitman mission victims, and to subdue the warlike tribes.

News of the Whitman massacre was sent by Agent William McBean of Fort Walla Walla to James Douglas, chief factor at Fort Vancouver. The authorities at Vancouver promptly notified Governor Abernethy; and Peter Skene Ogden, head of the Hudson Bay company, immediately departed for the scene of the tragedy, his object being to rescue the women and children taken captive. On December 19 he addressed

the Cayuse chiefs at Fort Walla Walla, censuring them for permitting the murderous deed. After reminding them of the probable vengeance that would be visited upon them, Ogden told the chiefs that his whites were traders and re-traders, who wished to buy the captives and prevent further trouble and bloodshed. Ogden made liberal presents to the chiefs and upon his threats the captives were released. Nine days later they arrived at Oregon City amidst much rejoicing.

Concerning the purpose of Dr. Whitman's midwinter journey across the continent and his mission at Washington City, historians differ. But all agree that there were various causes which contributed to his fame. In 1835, he accompanied Dr. Samuel Parker to ascertain the prospect for missionary work among the Indians in the far west. When they had journeyed as far west as Green river, they were convinced that missionaries would receive a welcome among various Columbia river tribes. Having obtained the information sought, Dr. Whitman returned to the east for aid in the establishment of one or more missions west of the Rocky mountains. 2. He took the first missionary families to what is now Eastern Washington (1836), but which was then in the Oregon country. 3. He established Whitman mission (1836). 4. He rendered valuable assistance to the great emigrant train of 1843, which opened the way for wagon migration from Fort Boise to the Walla Walla valley and the Columbia river. 5. His death (1847), though a sad one, was a factor in bringing about a war with the Indians, which happily resulted in uniting the whites and in committing them to the American cause, regardless of their nationality.



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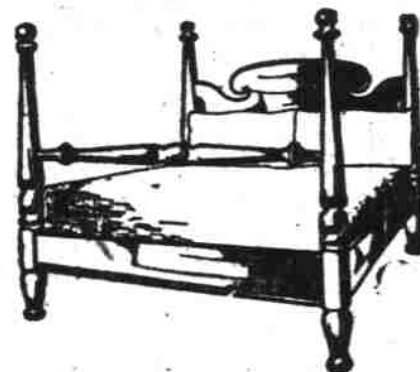
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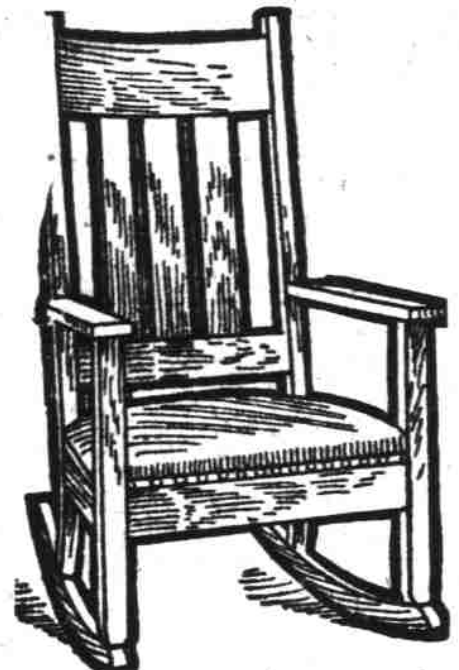
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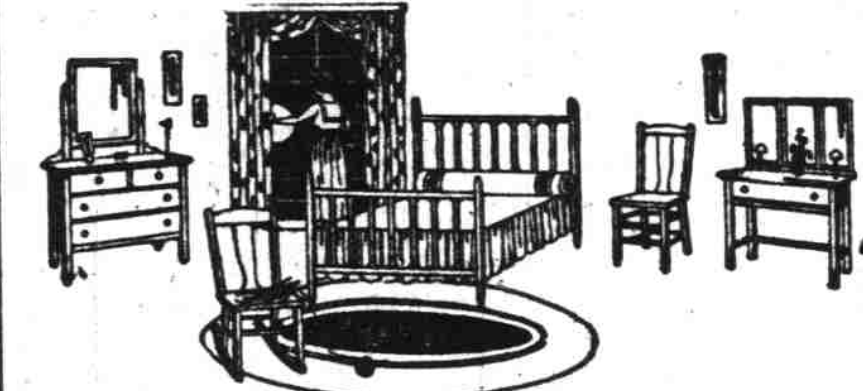
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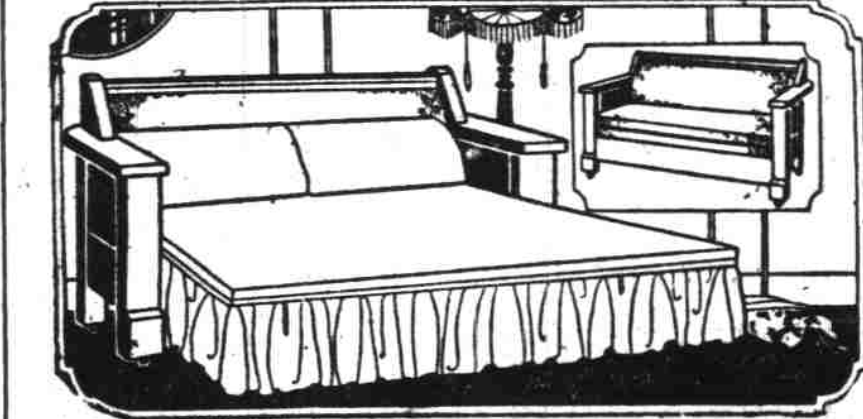
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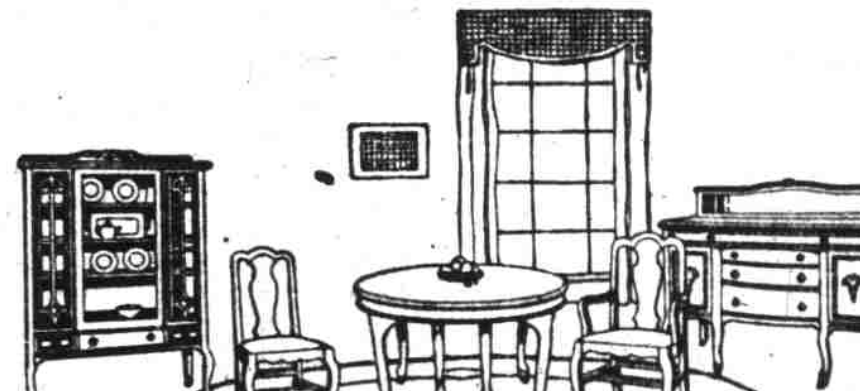
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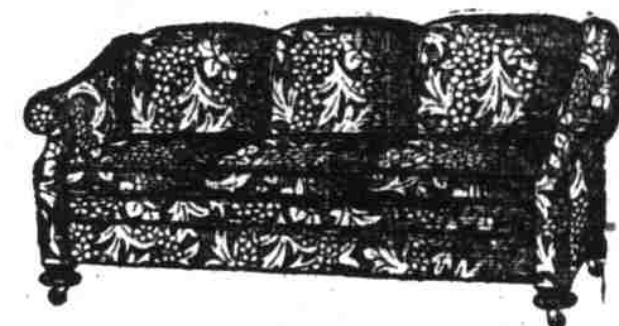
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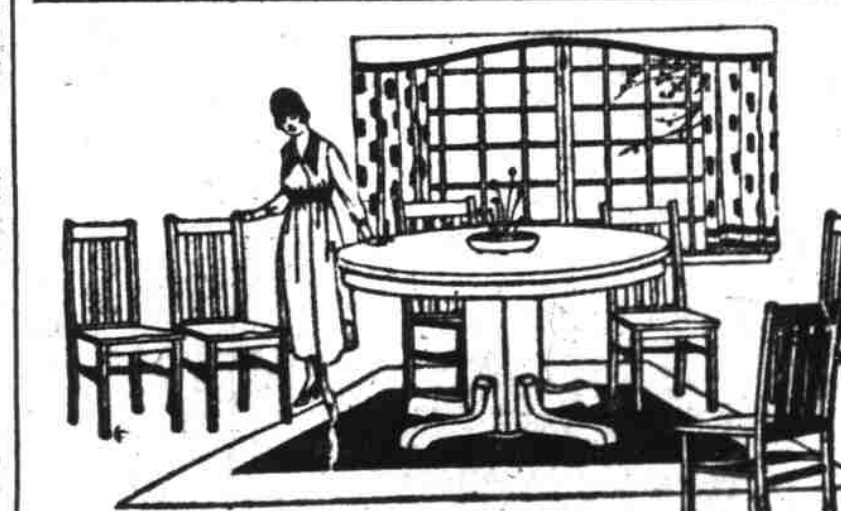
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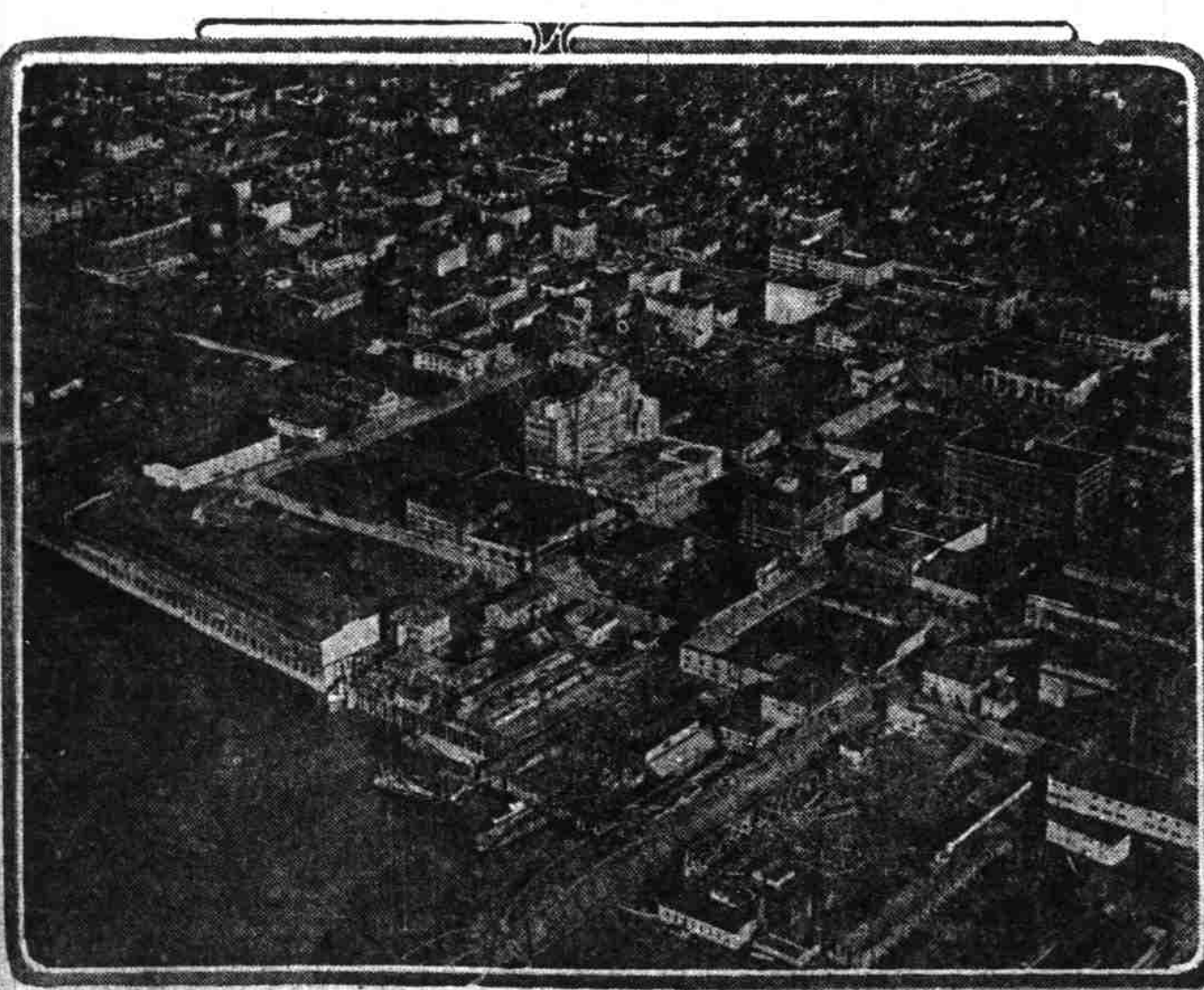


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