

G. G. Wright (1866-1933)

and the CW&M Implement Company

For its Golden Jubilee Edition of 1934, The Post Register searched its files and quoted from 1896: "Who They Are, Business and Professional Men of Idaho Falls. C. W. & M. Co., G. G. Wright manager; Iona Mercantile, James E. Steele, manager; Anderson Brothers, oldest business house in Idaho Falls; Z.C.M.I., Joseph A. Smith, manager; the Clark and Fanning, N. H. Clark and E. Fanning, partners."

Gilbert George "G. G." Wright, the first local manager of Consolidated Wagon and Machine Co., had been born in Ogden, Utah in 1866, and had begun to work while a teenager at the Cooperative Wagon and Machine Co., founded by his uncle, George T. Odell with Heber J. Grant and other prominent men. He came to Eagle Rock to manage the Eagle Rock store in 1889, and in 1890 married Matilde Ellen Bailey. Their first home was on Capital Avenue; in 1909 they built a big home at 371 No. Ridge. After Wright became district manager and then general manager for the retail chain, he had to work in Salt Lake City, but still commuted to Idaho Falls on weekends. It was while driving home from Salt Lake City in 1933 that he was killed in an automobile accident at age 66.

His death was a loss not only for his family, but for the entire community. In a letter to the Editor, 10 September 1934, J. D. Ellis proposed a monument to Wright. He wrote:

"My proposal is that the community provide a monument, something of native stone which need not be too expensive, to be placed on Memorial Drive near the place of business which he served for so many years, the C. W. & M. company.

"If 'Gib' Wright had not helped as many as he did this country would not have gotten the start it did. I know many times he not only sold us machinery on credit but loaned us the money to put in a crop and did not stop there as he took a real interest in us, came to see us and wanted to know how we were getting along and offered help and did help. He was not nearly as much interested in getting back his money as he was in helping people and he never lost anything by treating people that way."

In that same 1934 newspaper G. W. Charlesworth, local manager, confirmed that "More than \$1,000,000 was extended the early settlers for the purchase of farm machinery, and the company is indeed glad to have helped so much in the growth and development of the entire Upper Snake River Valley.... And those early settlers made good, too, for practically every cent of that large sum was repaid."

When C. W. & M. came in 1889 there were then two implement firms in Eagle Rock: the Co-operative Wagon and Machine company managed by G. G. Wright, and The Consolidated Implement company, managed by James E. Steele. In 1902 they were brought together as Consolidated Wagon and Machine Company.

In 1905 a big new store was opened on the corner of Main (Broadway) and Capitol. It was a social event to remember. An invitation kept by Ed Winn invites "Yourself, family and friends to attend the grand free house warming of our new building, corner Main Street and Capital Avenue, Idaho Falls, Idaho, Friday evening, January sixth, 1905, 8 o'clock." It offers guests half fare on railroad from Salt Lake, Montpelier, Red Rock and St. Anthony; and 55 thousand feet of floor space to dance on.

The new two-story brick building covered one-fourth of a city block on present Broadway. In addition, an implement building and repair storehouse was operated across the river on West Broadway.

In 1934, 20 people were employed here. . . . Stock included John Deere Implements, Myers Domestic Pumps, Pomona Irrigation Pumps and Turbines, Stover Feed Grinders and Mills and many other implement lines, as well as building and household items.

Many residents of early Idaho Falls got their start in business by working at the C. W. & M. Retired real estate developer, Delbert V. Groberg, recalls:

"I worked at the Idaho Falls store during 1928. George Cope, who did the hiring, introduced me to Clinton Dinwoodey, who was also applying for work during vacation from college, and we were employed to take a general inventory of the C. W. & M. merchandise, everything from nuts and bolts to shovels and wagons and threshing machines, hoes and horse collars, harnesses, too.

"Having had a tour of duty at the C. W. & M., and now being a qualified former employee of this old established pioneer company, I felt ready to face the world. It seemed to me almost everyone had worked at the C. W. and M

"My next contact with the C. W. & M. came after I had finished at the B.Y.U. and was married and had established our home and started in the Real Estate and Appraisal business in Idaho Falls. A young successful looking man named Ensign called on me and said he had bought controlling interest in the C. W. & M. This was in 1932-33, and the depression was on. Mr. Ensign was interested in the market value of the real estate owned by the C. W. & M. Co. He said he felt the stockholders' equity was mainly in the land and buildings. Sad but true, the automobile and the airplane had passed up the old horse and buggy and most family farm needs, and the C. W. & M. was reduced to only the residual value of its real estate." By 1944, C.W.& M. was gone.