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Mary Rauscher stands with the wheat harvest of 1914. The Rauscher place was in east Trent near Barker Road.

Many family histories have been carved along Trent

By Jayne Singleton
SPOKANE VALLEY HERITAGE MUSEUM

Trent, Trentwood, Steno, Irvin – all are names that have been used to describe a section of the north central Valley. By 1883, the Northern Pacific Railroad had completed tracks through the Spokane Valley. The origin of the name Trent is unclear. Trent has been called by many other names, but it generally referred to the area east of Argonne Road, west to Barker Road, south to the river and north to the rock bluffs. It may have gotten its name from the station master, but no records indicate the correct answer.

Irvin was the name of the man in charge of the Ideal/Portland Cement Plant and the area around the plant was referred to as Irvin. Trentwood is the area north of the Northern Pacific tracks where it is more wooded. Steno was named after a man who had some land in the area and was a court stenographer.

The area may have become called Post or Fredericks if Frederick Post would have stayed on and finished building the mill he was constructing along the Spokane River near where the Valley Mall is today. Post was working on setting the races for the mill when James Glover enticed him with an offer of 40 acres free if Post would build the mill near the Spokane Falls.

Around the early 1880s, settlers included Mr. Dart, who operated a small store in the area and Mr. Jacob Esch, who donated the land for the first Trent School. The Blessings, Zimpricks, Ulowetzs, Stitzs and Rauschers came in 1884. Arriving by rail, other families homesteaded in Trent. J.A. and Matilda Stegner (Stegner Road named for them) arrived in Spokane by rail in August 1889. They were greeted by the ruins left by the great fire, which destroyed 32 square blocks and any chance of gainful

This photo, also circa 1914, shows a class from Trent School, with an arrow singling out Catherine Narup. The school was on North Pines Road where the Trent Elementary School is today.



employment. Changing course, the Stegners went to Latah and set up a small store. In 1890, they moved to the Trent area and bought the store from Mr. Dart.

In 1895, J.A. Stegner, suffering from appendicitis, was taken into Spokane, operated on and did not survive. He had an insurance policy of \$2,000. Matilda bought 160 acres of land for about \$800 with the money and later made quite a profit selling the land to the Inland Empire Electric Railroad for \$16,000. She continued to operate the store, manage the farm and raise five kids until marrying J.A. Narup. The Narups built a very large home west of Pines Road and south of Trent Road. The home was quite a show place and rivaled anything in Browne's Addition at the time. The Narups continued to acquire more land along Trent Road, including the Spokane Distillery and the land around it. It was located near the bridge over the river and had produced some quality spirits. The area was platted as Louisville, after the famous Kentucky Bourbon place. Matilda Greenfield Stegner Narup was strongly against the consumption of alcohol. Buying the distillery put it out of business, and the building was used to store hay. It burned down some years after, and rumor was the fire was started by a couple of guys angry over the loss of a local source

of spirits or their jobs.

Brothers, Anton Blessing and Isadore Blessing arrived from Minnesota and farmed in the Trent area, south of the Spokane River east and west of Sullivan Road. Anton's place was close to where a bridge had been built over the river earlier. It was either built by Thomas Newlon or W. Schnebly or possibly a man name Keppler. The bridge was gone when Anton arrived, but the supporting timbers and abutments remained and were used by Anton in the building of his house. Many of Anton's and Isadore's descendants still live in the Valley. Not long ago there was the Blessing's Tavern at Pines Road, Flora Road. It was a favorite stop for workers from Kaiser Aluminum.

Pioneers of the Trent area began educating their children by building a schoolhouse in 1887. It was located near Trent and Barker. Later schools were located on Pines Road, Flora Road and one of the Trent Schools still exists on University Road north of Montgomery.

Most of the early settlers to the Trent area were Catholics and in 1892, St. Joseph's Catholic Church was built on Trent Road. Shortly after the church was completed, a cemetery was created just to the east. Pioneers to the Trent area are buried there. The

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church burned down in 1928. Many records of marriages, births and deaths were lost in the fire. The church was rebuilt and used until a new St. Joseph's was built in Otis Orchards. Trent Congregational Church was built on the east side of Pines Road around 1903. It was also used as a school for a time.

Entertainment options in the summer were swimming in the irrigation ditch, taking the bus or train to Natatorium Park. In 1946, the area's first outdoor drive-in theater, the East Trent Motor In Theatre, was built on Trent Road. The first film shown was "Doll Face."

As the landscape gradually changed from agricultural to urban and industrial, farms disappeared, replaced by housing tracts. Most of the irrigation ditch that paralleled Trent Road was torn out when the deadly curve near Barker Road was realigned. In the 1940s, employment was easily found either in building the new Naval Supply Depot (now the Spokane Industrial Park) or at Alcoa Aluminum (bought out by Henry Kaiser) or the at the Portland Cement Plant. Royal Riblet sued the cement plant because of the dust coating his property. He died before the lawsuit was settled.

In the 1960's large new schools were built to accommodate the growing population of Trent, Trentwood and East Trent. East Valley High School, Trent Middle School and Trentwood Elementary replaced the older one room or larger schools and now serve the population in the Trent area.

The only things that have not changed in the area are the Trent Road, as it was called in the pioneer days, the Northern Pacific Tracks and the Spokane River.

Jayne Singleton is director of the Spokane Valley Heritage Museum, located at 12114 E. Sprague Ave. Additional items about the history and culture of the Trentwood area – or any of the communities in the Valley of the Sun series – are available in the museum archives. For more information, call 922-4570 or visit www.valleyheritagecenter.org.