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COVER: Palouse Canyon, like the rest of the Channeled Scablands, was formed by the powerful Lake Missoula floodwaters that swept across eastern Washington during the Pleistocene era and carved through hundreds of feet of basalt in the geological blink of an eye. See related story beginning on page 13. (Courtesy Justin Martin, Fluxn Photography)
John M. McClelland Jr. (1915–2010)

Washington State Historical Society director and COLUMBIA executive editor David Nicandri delivered the following eulogy for John McClelland Jr. on December 3, 2010.

John Morris McClelland Jr. was the quintessential 20th-century American man. By that I mean he was born in one part of the country but matured and lived out his life in another, he took risks in business and for his country, he was a builder and an innovator. John’s interests, however, far transcended his own times. Among other attributes, we could cite his interest and proficiency in the historic game of golf including membership in the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews in Scotland. Assuredly, John would have been surprised that someone as bad at golf as I am would be delivering a eulogy in his honor.

Born in 1915 in Arkansas, John’s father moved the family in 1923 to Longview, Washington, a town founded by John’s great-uncle, R. A. Long. Longview was an experiment in modern urban/industrial planning, and this proto-community needed that indispensable 20th-century medium, a newspaper, which John’s father had been brought out to run. After graduating from Stanford University in 1937, where he majored in journalism, John himself served as an editor and of course publisher of the Daily News in his own right.

On the personal side, John married the charming and gracious Burdette Craig in 1939. Together they raised their children John and Genevieve and set off on a civic journey, the emblematic features of which were enlightenment and cultivation of the arts and literature. Like so many of that great generation, John served during World War II, in the navy. After he returned stateside he did much to build the progressive, modern state of Washington that we have today. Over the course of his lifetime, John parlayed his start with the Longview Daily News into a publishing chain that included the Daily News in Port Angeles and, more prominently, beginning in 1975, the Journal-American in Bellevue—the first new daily newspaper established in Washington in over half a century. In 1981 Longview Publishing won a Pulitzer Prize for the paper’s coverage of the 1980 Mount St. Helens eruption. John also founded two magazines at the apex of his career, Washington Magazine and Columbia, the journal of the Washington State Historical Society, on whose board of trustees he served for many years, including two terms as president.

As a journalist, John perhaps inevitably subscribed to the aphorism that the daily newspaper was the first draft of his story. He was an avid student and collector of history, and produced many significant volumes by his own hand, probably the most significant of which was Wobbly War, his history of the IWW and the Centralia Massacre. John’s stature as a businessman and historian was sufficient in itself to stave off the bad idea circulating in the early 1980s that the state historical society should be abolished as a state agency. He was, in a way, one of the last of his kind: the gentleman scholar, equally adept in a board room or a library.

John loved the state of Washington; and here I speak not merely because of the skin-deep aesthetic elements—blue water and snow-capped mountains. John’s appreciation of this place ran deeper, becoming what might be called state-based patriotism—a valorization of the human culture that a place and its resources makes possible. His and Burdette’s generous contributions of time and resources to many institutions—museums, history departments, hospitals, arts organizations—were testament to that symbiosis.

John was also a man of the church, and so it is fitting and proper to cite a few lines from an old Methodist hymn that serve as an anthem for how he thought of this place:

This is my home, the country where my heart is; Here are my hopes, my dreams, and my holy places.

The hopes and dreams of John Morris McClelland Jr. were true and high; and the places, institutions, and people he graced are wreathed with great memories.
UNLIKELY POSTER CHILD
Sacagawea—Pathfinder of the Past, Present, and Future

By Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs

Recently I received two dozen Sacagawea dolls from my friends at Fort Mandan in Washburn, North Dakota. I am pretty sure it was because they regard me as a Sacagawea wannabe. Nevertheless, it was a lovely and thoughtful gift, made even more so by my connection to the artist whose rendering of this particular version of Sacagawea inspired the doll. My friend Michael Haynes’s images of Sacagawea are some of the best. But that doesn’t mean they are without controversy. It seems that whenever someone tries to capture the essence of the young woman who accompanied the Lewis and Clark expedition, no matter the medium, there is someone else who takes offense, who disagrees, who thinks the image is completely and utterly wrong. She did not look anything like that, they will tell me. In reality, no likeness of Sacagawea made during her lifetime is known to exist—all we have are artist interpretations and our own cloudy constructs.

Which explains why I wrote to Ben Stiller when I heard that he and his team planned to make a third Night at the Museum movie, expressing the hope that in this next, likely final installment of the story about a night guard at the Museum of Natural History in New York and later at the Smithsonian, he would attempt to set the record straight on Sacagawea, historically speaking. In the first film, Stiller’s character—a down-on-his-luck, divorced dad named Larry—takes a museum night guard position and subsequently discovers that the exhibits come to life at night thanks to a magical Egyptian tablet. One of the many historical figures Larry interacts with is Sacagawea. Stiller was not shy when it came to exploiting the conventional wisdom on this unique American icon. As part of the promotion for his film he used the historic mispronunciation of her name in trailer footage for the second film with George Custer, intentionally mangling it several times before finally settling on “Sac-in-the-Box.”

I wrote to Mr. Stiller in the hope that in Night No. 3 he would bring the movie portrayal of Sacagawea into closer alignment with the real Sacagawea rather than pour more erroneous layers onto an already confusing portrait. Make no mistake, Stiller’s version piqued the interest of many young moviegoers who had been unaware that such a person existed. I heard from the father of one new fan that Stiller’s Sacagawea had inspired his daughter to read everything she could about the only woman to accompany Lewis and Clark.

In the first two installments Stiller and company strayed far from the actual person of Sacagawea—first by making her stunningly beautiful, and second (and much worse) by writing her into a romance with Robin Williams’s caricature of Theodore Roosevelt and involving her in a subplot with the pretty young graduate student, Rebecca, whom Stiller’s character happens to have a crush on. It appears that Rebecca is writing her dissertation on Sacagawea and has a million questions she would like to have answered. Stiller’s Larry promises Rebecca the interview opportunity of a lifetime if only she will believe his unlikely story. I admit I am a sucker for such a premise. So when I heard that a third Night at the Museum was a possibility, I thought of the many ways the filmmakers could improve on their original characterization and how there might still be time to inject some of the actual historical reality into their blockbuster films.

To begin with, I would like to acknowledge that Stiller is by no means the first to mischaracterize Sacagawea. There is plenty of literature about the ways individuals, groups, and entire social movements have sought to use her story to
further their own causes. In an earlier work on the subject I listed: empire builders; white apologists; feminists; Christians; corporations; tribes; federal, state, and local agencies—even the United States Mint—as a few of the top offenders. To that list I can now add a certain potential political candidate who hosted a TV reality show, promotions for which described her as a “modern-day Sacagawea.”

Since the advent of the bicentennial commemoration of the Lewis and Clark expedition, many more entities have latched onto Sacagawea as a promotional tool. There is certainly historical precedence. A century ago Eva Emory Dye, chairman of the Clackamas County Oregon Equal Suffrage Association, popularized Sacagawea in a fictional account and then used that popular mythology to further the cause of women’s suffrage. The suffragists looked to the young Indian woman as a fine example of feminine strength and independence. The organization sold spoons and buttons in her likeness to raise money for a bronze statue of her, which they unveiled in 1905. Susan B. Anthony herself spoke at the ceremony, which was held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs in Portland and the Oregon State Centennial.

Historian Ronald W. Taber pointed out in his essay, “Sacagawea and the Suffragettes,” published in the Pacific Northwest Quarterly in 1967, that thanks to Dye and other Sacagawea advocates, the Sacagawea myth became closely associated with women’s suffrage, “not only in Oregon but throughout the nation.” In an effort to inflate the young woman’s role, Taber points out, Dye gave Sacagawea a much more prominent status in the expedition, going so far as to claim, “She had led the way to a new time. To the hands of this girl, not yet eighteen, had been intrusted [sic] the key that unlocked the road to Asia.” Talk about hijacking history! One of the speakers at the General Federation of Women’s Clubs paid further tribute, calling Sacagawea “the eternal womanly.” Alas, women in Oregon failed in several attempts to secure the vote, finally settling for a narrow victory in 1912. As Taber states, “The important point to the student of the Lewis and Clark expedition is that it was in Oregon that the Sacagawea myth found life and flourished.”

It is a myth that endures, despite the publication of at least a dozen books concerning her actual contributions to the expedition. For example, have you ever noticed her face on the side of a U-Haul truck? She is in effect part of the U-Haul brand. At least their Web site contains accurate information on her life. As she once helped sell women’s right to vote, she now helps sell Americans’ right to move on a tight budget.

Recently I learned a new way to use her name. A decorated World War II veteran told me he uses it as an expletive. Try it the next time you stub your toe, he told me, “It really works!” A billboard in Montana for the Sacajawea Inn at Three Forks declares, “What happens in the Sac stays in the Sac.”

I was surprised to find that in addition to being a metaphorical poster child, Sacagawea’s image appears on several movie posters, including Stiller’s, where she shares equal space with Theodore Roosevelt and a tyrannosaurus rex skeleton. Before that, all the way back in 1955, RKO promoted its film, The Far Horizons, with a poster that depicts Donna Reed as a blue-eyed Sacagawea snuggled up next to Captain Clark (Charlton Heston) while Fred MacMurray, in the person of Captain Lewis, looks into that “far horizon,” perplexed. If you have not seen Donna Reed as Sacagawea or “Janey” in The Far Horizons, I am not likely to persuade you to watch it. The historical errors in that production have inspired guffaws since it was first released. To call it a B movie is to insult other titles in that genre. These days you will find it relegated to late-night cable channels or used as comic relief for gatherings of Lewis and Clark enthusiasts. Stiller seems to utilize that version of Sacagawea as the inspiration for his girl guide. Both versions of Sacagawea have somehow misplaced the baby, as no mention is made of little “Pomp” in any of the three films. In addition, her character is conveniently unattached. What happened to Toussaint Charbonneau, her husband?

One idea for increasing the historical accuracy of Stiller’s Sacagawea: include the baby. Even the United States Mint
decided he was important enough to show on their Sacagawea dollar coin, thereby breaking precedent with the idea of one person per coin face. Since Theodore Roosevelt is known as a most prolific father, Stiller would need to set the record straight—Teddy was not the father of Sacagawea's child!

Another idea for Night No. 3: Have Sacagawea giving Lewis a pep talk at Fort Clatsop. Of course, there is no record of such a conversation, but given the small roles both captains played in Night No. 1 and No. 2—mainly arguing and pointing—perhaps it would be a funny scene: Sacagawea telling Lewis to stop whining about the rain on the coast and get back to business: “Write it Down, Mr. Torch Bearer for the Enlightenment.”

And Stiller should give Sacagawea credit for her status as a peacemaker. With all the battle scenes in both previous movies, surely there would be some opportunity for her to appear in the midst of one of them, causing the men to immediately drop their weapons. For more special effects, how about a scene where Susan B. Anthony and Sacagawea have a conversation about being icons, statues, stamps, or who had the better coin!

As a loyal member of the Lewis and Clark community, I am continually trying to think of ways to bring kids and their parents out on the trail, just as Stiller is trying to get the same group into museums. The Night at the Museum movies are aimed at a general audience—mainly families—much as the focus of our Lewis and Clark Trail advocacy seeks to engage the same group. One of those ideas involves using modern gadgetry to entice folks to get out and hike a trail. GPS devices, Apps, iPods—all of the things Thomas Jefferson would probably heartily approve of—are now available to help motivate people to get off the couch.

Michelle Obama is my next target. I want her to visit a segment of the trail with her family, eat the hearty and healthy foods of a real camp-out, and become a proselytizer for the Pack-It-In/Pack-It-Out guys. If she can do it for the backyard garden, she can do it for the “Passage Through the Garden,” as geographer John Logan Allen called the Lewis and Clark Trail. Michelle Obama is known to have a fondness for plants of historic distinction; certainly we have plenty of those along the trail. Her kitchen garden contains plants grown from seeds out of Jefferson’s garden in Monticello. I hope to see her planting some Lewis and Clark varieties one day soon.

I see Sasha and Malia Obama as girls who might already know all about Sacagawea. She might be one of their heroines—a touchstone of inspiration for their young, fearless hearts. I was recently reminded of the power of Sacagawea’s legacy when I attended the dedication of a statue of her in Great Falls, Montana. The artist, Carol Grende, was a friend who did not live to see her work’s final placement. But she had witnessed its temporary placement in the main terminal of Great Falls International Airport, where it brought some homecoming soldiers to tears when they saw it. Carol named her magnificent statue Arduous Journey. I am sure many of the soldiers could relate to her long journey home. I think of it as a no-nonsense version of Sacagawea. She isn’t pointing or looking off into the horizon. She is intent on the job at hand—carrying her son across a continent and living to tell the tale.

The dedication ceremony included every aspect of what Sacagawea means to America—her descendants, her fans, her young worshippers, musicians who sang about her, and just plain folks who thought she was important enough to earn a spot on the river next to the new Missouri River Federal Courthouse.

At the beginning of this essay I spoke of being a Sacagawea wannabe. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say, with apologies to the Grateful Dead, that I am a Sacagawea Head. I have traveled many miles and attended many conferences, groundbreakings, statue dedications, ballets (including one aerial ballet), a magic show featuring a performer from Vegas who dressed like Sacagawea, operas, and powwows—all in her honor.

Another recent Sacagawea event I attended took place in Bozeman, Montana, in conjunction with the Montana State University President’s Lecture Series. I was honored to read my essay, “Why Sacagawea Deserves the Day Off,” in the shadow of the pass that should by all rights bear her name. We had a marvelous spread of exquisite desserts and a performance entitled “Sacagawea: A Woman’s Life in Words and in Music” by South African composer Ilse-Marie Lee, who used digital sound, her cello, and the accompaniment of a soprano, Elizabeth Croy, to interpret her life. Also on the program that evening was young Native American flute soloist Lisette Norman, who played a lyrical song she wrote called “Home.” I was surprised to hear her name, as it is the same one Sacagawea and Charbonneau gave to their daughter. Many in
the audience assumed we had rehearsed or gone over our parts beforehand. Actually, none of us knew what the others were going to do, but because Sacagawea is such an empty vessel, we were able to make it appear as if the whole performance was scripted.

One of my favorite quotes on Sacagawea states, “Unconstrained by fact, artists are free to interpret her as they will. Attempts at historical realism may vie with variations on the tried and true stereotypes—beautiful princess, Native Madonna, indispensable guide. But realism is bound to lose out in the end. Fact has never trumped over romance in Sacagawea imagery because the legend of Sacagawea has emotional appeal that mere fact can never equal.”

Writing further in his essay, “Sacagawea Imagery,” Brian W. Dippie describes a Sacagawea statue at the Buffalo Bill Museum in Cody, Wyoming, c. 1980, that “portrays her as an American Madonna, her blanket billowing, her hair streaming in the wind, rooted in her native soil, powerful and permanent. She is no handmaiden to white ambition—she is the Earth herself!”

To my mind her image has been the one most molded. More than any other expedition member, she is the one whose person has been hijacked in history, just as her physical person was kidnapped in real life. As we have seen from the early example of the suffragettes’ Sacagawea spoons and buttons, her image has been exploited for over a century.

Her is an image that will always be shrouded in myth. For this generation, that myth helped guide the youth of America to discover the treasures of their local and national history museums. Thanks to Stiller’s movies, attendance at the Smithsonian jumped a whopping 20 percent. No wonder they were eager to facilitate the second movie and are happy to sell Stiller’s movies and merchandise in their museum gift stores and highlight the exhibits that appear in the film. Indeed, many historical museums and interpretive centers host their own “Night at the Museum” slumber parties. Stiller himself sees the benefit: “Anything that can actually catalyze these institutions is a good thing.” During the press tour for Night No. 2, Stiller confessed to being awestruck when they were in the Air and Space Museum by themselves, after hours—an experience that is truly a kid’s dream come true and crucial to the success of the films. Ben Stiller is to be commended for getting kids off the couch and into museums. I just wish he could have taken it to the next level and injected a sense of authenticity…let Sacagawea be Sacagawea!

The premise of Stiller’s movies presents endless opportunities for museums, interpretive centers, and even cultural sites. An article in the Grand Junction Sentinel describes one such opportunity—an event to raise funds for the Museum of Western Colorado. There, organizers held a “Night of the Museum of the West,” where statues came to life. Among those statues portrayed by a local acting troupe were Annie Oakley, Genghis Kahn, Theodore Roosevelt, Sacagawea, and Juan Rivera. As the actor who portrayed Theodore Roosevelt said, “We’re hoping to instill in some kids who may have never considered even coming to the museum the feeling like, ‘Wow, this could be a really cool place to go.’” A really cool place to go…imagine that!

To take the Night of the Museum of the West one step further, what about a Night on the Trail installment?

Speaking as the president of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, what we desperately need is for the youth of America to embrace the story of the Corps of Discovery, unplug their gadgets (at least the ones without GPS capability), and rediscover the “great outdoors.” Perhaps my message to Mr. Stiller is bigger than the characterization of Sacagawea. What I really want him to do is wave his magic wand and give the trail a 20 percent increase in participation. Until that happens, it is up to us as supporters of the great cultural and historical resources of our country to continue reaching out to the next generation and teaching them that, with a little imagination, history in all its richness can come to life—and not just in darkened movie theatres.

Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs is author of Why Sacagawea Deserves the Day Off and Other Lessons from the Lewis and Clark Trail (University of Nebraska Press, 2008) and coauthor of The Lewis and Clark Companion: An Encyclopedic Guide to the Voyage of Discovery. She currently serves as board president of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. This essay is based on an address presented at the June 2010 Washington State Historical Society’s annual membership meeting in Tacoma.
The bus broke down. It wheezed, coughed, choked, and came to a halt along the highway near Salem, Oregon. They had a game that night. Zell Miles was eager to take the field, as was Mike Berry. They both hopped off the bus exasperated as the vehicle sat idle. Howard Gay clambered down; Herb Simpson, too. Their gear was on the bus—the baseball bats, balls, catcher’s masks. Paul Hardy, the manager, had to think fast as

The Harlem Globetrotters barnstormed nationwide, many players settling in Seattle to become the Steelheads.

By Jonathan Shipley
he took off his baseball cap to wipe the sweat from his brow. He looked over at Nap Gulley, Everett Marcel, Joe Spencer—all guys eager to sprint out onto the field in Seattle's Sick's Stadium for their home opener. It was to be the first Seattle game of the newly formed Seattle Steelheads, a team in the newly minted West Coast Negro Baseball League.

Hardy was in a tight spot. The San Diego Tigers were already in Seattle, ready to play, waiting it out, surveying the stadium. It was June 1, 1946, and they were scheduled for a double-header that night. No way would Hardy let the Steelheads' double-header be waylaid by a bum bus that left his players stranded hundreds of miles from their destination.

They called for taxis. The teammates piled in, one after another, for the journey north, through Portland (home of the Rosebuds, another newly formed Negro League team), across the Columbia River, and alongside the western spine of the Cascade Mountains. The taxis screamed through places like Kelso, Centralia, Olympia, and Tacoma, until they finally reached the Sick's Stadium parking lot.

The black players were allowed to play at Sick's (named for beer baron Emil Sick, owner of Seattle's Rainier Brewing Company) while its main occupants—the minor league Seattle Rainiers, were on the road. Rather than build ballparks for the new West Coast Negro League (WCNL), the league owners thought it would be best to save money by having their teams play in the preexisting minor league parks of the Pacific Coast League teams. While the Steelheads (so named in honor of the locally running salmon) played at Sick's, the Portland Rosebuds played at Vaughan Street Park, where the minor league Portland Beavers took the field and players like Satchel Paige and Ted Williams began their illustrious careers. The Oakland Larks played at Oaks Park, an aptly named stadium for the minor league team, the Oakland Oaks. And so it went for the remaining new teams—the San Diego Tigers, Los Angeles White Sox, and San Francisco Sea Lions.

Into the ballpark raced the Steelheads, half an hour late—just as the crowd and the Tigers were beginning to grow restless. There were 2,500 fans in the stands, both black and white, eager to cheer on the new local team, guys like Ulysses Redd and John Bissant. The Steelheads split the double-header—winning one and losing one. It was a rousing first home stand for the team. There was much to celebrate. For one thing, black players had a chance to play pro ball. For another, a league formed by such sports titans as Harlem Globetrotters owner Abe Saperstein and Olympic gold medal-winning sprinter Jesse Owens was bound to succeed. With the influx of African-Americans coming west after World War II for the post-war bounty of blue-collar jobs to be had up and down the coast, ticket sales would be strong.

History was also on their side. Negro League baseball had already been a success for decades. Legends had been formed within those leagues. Josh Gibson, the “Black Babe Ruth,” hit nearly 800 home runs during his career, which included play with the Homestead Grays and the Birmingham Barons. Leroy Robert “Satchel” Paige, whose professional baseball career lasted four decades, was a five-time Negro League All-Star and a champion in 1942 after winning the Negro League World Series. John Jordan “Buck” O’Neil was a legendary first baseman for the Kansas City Monarchs, batting .288 in his career, playing in four East-West All-Star Games and two Negro League World Series. Indeed, the new West Coast Negro League could not fail.

But fail it did, within just a few short months. Jackie Robinson was soon to enter Major League Baseball, playing for the Brooklyn Dodgers and forever breaking the race barrier. Ticket sales, though strong in cities like Oakland and Seattle, were less than stellar in other cities and fluctuated wildly game by game, city by city. With interest in Major League Baseball growing and more black players eager to follow in Robinson’s cleated footsteps, the league folded. But, for a few months, shrouded now in echoed cheers and murmur renditions of “Take Me Out to the Ball Game,” lost betwixt the multimillion dollar business that is professional sports today and squealing kids playing stickball No way would Paul Hardy let the Steelheads’ double-header be waylaid by a bum bus.
in suburban cul-de-sacs, the Seattle Steelheads played and played well. The players themselves are all but forgotten. Most of them have died and their stories along with them—stories of playing against the likes of the Sea Lions and the Tigers, barnstorming across the West, hitting a home run at a ballpark in Spokane, throwing a gem of a game in Bellingham.

The one loss at Sick’s to the Tigers didn’t much upset the “Steelies.” They were happy to play in the confines of Sick’s Stadium, a generous field that opened in 1938 and would later house Seattle’s first Major League Baseball team, the Pilots. After the game, after changing back into their street clothes and wiping the infield dirt off their faces, they might have gone into Seattle city proper—to hear some jazz, have some fun, get a drink, find a dance partner. Onetime baseball umpire Johnny Nenezich remembered: “They played Sunday double-headers at Sick’s Stadium,” he told the Seattle Post-Intelligencer newspaper. “Bill Anderson, a Seattle policeman, and I umpired games. We got $50 a game. That was big money in those days.” Afterwards, Nenezich said, “I would go out to the Black and Tan Club.”

The Black and Tan, on 12th and Jackson in Chinatown, was the place to be—even after long taxi rides and full baseball games. With bootleg liquor flowing, the joint would be boisterous and raucous as Count Basie took the stage, or Charlie “Bird” Parker. Down the street at the Black Elks Club, Ray Charles was tickling the ivories. At the YMCA on Madison and 23rd, young Quincy Jones was playing. Good times, it was, for the newly minted Steelheads in the roaring, cosmopolitan city of Seattle.

In reality, the Steelheads was not a new team. It was Abe Saperstein’s barnstorming Harlem Globetrotters baseball team, repackaged. Known as titans in basketball since being organized in Chicago in 1927, the Globetrotters (originally named the Savoy Big Five) were a force to be reckoned with in sport. They were not the Globetrotters we know today, with their grandiose slam dunks and dazzling dribbling skills. Both teams—basketball and baseball—were competitive. Six years before the Steelheads came into being, the Globetrotters were champions in professional basketball.

Seeking to diversify, Saperstein, a London-born Jew, had decided to create a baseball team as well. The Globetrotters baseball team began in the Puget Sound area in August 1944, playing a double-header against the House of David in Seattle. The following year the Globetrotters barnstormed throughout the country, accompanied by Jesse Owens, who had sprinted his way to four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympics while an astonished Adolph Hitler looked on. Owens would put on running exhibitions during lulls in the games, oftentimes against racehorses.

In October 1945, with baseball season over, Saperstein and Owens found themselves in Oakland wanting to put a western Negro League together. Saperstein would be president of the newly formed league. Owens would be vice president. With Oakland’s High Marine Social Club taking a leading role in the formation of the league, they decided that there would be a 110-game schedule played in Pacific Coast League ballparks. They wanted residents of the West Coast, white and black, to see, enjoy, appreciate, and cheer for Negro League baseball. They wanted to prove to these audiences that the color of a person’s skin makes little difference when it comes to hitting a triple, stealing a base, pitching a shutout, or turning a double play. Teams would be allowed to play non-league games throughout North America as well. The postwar West was starving for
baseball. Saperstein and Owens were eager to fill that void.

Each franchise was to pay a $500 fee to join (later lifted due to the financial strain it placed on team owners). Owens bought the Rosebuds. Harold “Yellowhorse” Morris bought the San Francisco Sea Lions. Carlisle Perry owned the Los Angeles White Sox, and Roy Parker, the San Diego Tigers. Claude Norris was listed as owner of the Steelheads, though Nenezich remembers Bruce Rowell and Claude Norris co-owning the club. Eddie Harris owned the Larks, took a lead role in the creation of the league, and helped build the league’s most successful team in both wins and at the gate.

The first league game took place in May 1946 between the Los Angeles White Sox and the San Francisco Sea Lions at San Francisco’s vaunted Seals Stadium. California governor Earl Warren threw out the first pitch. Meanwhile, Oakland’s first game was in Fresno, where they routed the Tigers—“Sugar” Cain had thrown a three-hitter. The Steelheads and Rosebuds opened their season in El Paso, Texas.

On June 4, 1946, the Portland Oregonian, heralded the efforts of Jesse Owens and the West Coast Negro League: “Jesse Owens himself, the famous colored athlete who has performed in Portland and is well known here…says he has a good team lined up.” The story continues, “Of course the new league, says Jesse, is starting on a modest basis…. However, he emphasized that this is the beginning of regular colored Pacific coast baseball.” Indeed, it was, though it would hardly last long enough for anyone to take notice.

The players gave it their all. Seattle Steelheads first baseman Herb Simpson, raised in New Orleans, had played ball at the playground in Gretna, a town just east of New Orleans across the Mississippi River. Drafted into World War II, Simpson was not only a member of the 2057th Quartermaster Truck Company (based in the United Kingdom), he was also the only black player on the Battle League baseball team. Before donning the Steelheads jersey, he played for the Negro League Birmingham Barons. Afterwards, he played for the Chicago American Giants, the Spokane Indians, the New Orleans Creoles, and, of course, the Harlem Globetrotters.

Seattle Steelheads outfielder Zell Miles, born in Eufaula, Alabama, played in the Negro Leagues in the mid 1940s. He also played with the Chicago club and the Globetrotters, while Steelheads second baseman Sherwood “Woody” Brewer, born in 1923, played for the Steelheads, the Globetrotters, the New York Cubans, the Indianapolis Clowns, and the Kansas City Monarchs. In 1950 he appeared in the East–West Negro League All-Star Game.

Everett “Ziggy” Marcel, the Steelheads catcher, was a utility player. He utilized his athletic talents as a member of the Monarchs, the Satchel Paige All-Stars, the Homestead Grays, the New York Black Yankees, the Chicago American Giants, the Baltimore Elite Giants, and the Newark Eagles. He even played some ball in Canada later in his career.

These men traveled almost everywhere to play the game they loved, no matter the team, no matter the league, no matter the pay, no matter the park. Simpson once recalled that “traveling, seeing the world… as a youngster, I seen something.” The Harlem Globetrotters—in
realty, the Steelheads—were aptly named. They played from Mexico to California, Hawaii to Texas to Seattle.

The Bellingham Herald announced on July 2, 1946, “The first professional Negro baseball game in Bellingham’s history will be served up at Battersby field Wednesday night when the San Diego Tigers and the Seattle Steelheads, of the newly organized and flourishing Pacific Coast Negro Baseball League, collide here in a regular league contest.” In Tacoma, they probably took the field at Tiger Park, at the corner of 38th and Lawrence, home of the Western International League’s Tacoma Tigers. In Spokane they undoubtedly played at Ferris Field, built in 1936 with the help of the Works Progress Administration and Spokane City Attorney George Ferris.

Spokane wanted, even needed baseball, come July 1946. On the 24th of June the Spokane Indians baseball team was involved in the worst traffic accident in the history of American professional sport. On the way across the state to play the Bremerton Bluejackets in Bremerton, their bus veered to avoid an oncoming car on Snoqualmie Pass. It was dark and the road was rain-slicked. The bus suddenly tumbled down an embankment and burst into flames. Nine men died—eight of them instantly. Six more were injured. “The big bus sheared off heavy concrete guardrail posts,” the Seattle Times reported, “strung with heavy cable for a distance of more than 100 feet before it rolled over the hill…. Dawn was breaking and a cold rain was falling fast as the first body was hauled up the trolley way.” Survivor Levi McCormack, an Indians outfielder, said, “We went through. We went down. I’ve never heard such hell.”

With the newly established league making little to no money (the only profitable teams were the Steelheads and the Larks) the teams began to disband, unravel, and move on. In Portland, Jesse Owens stopped racing around Vaughn Park. The manager, Wes Barrow, formerly of the New Orleans Black Pelicans, no longer filled out lineup cards, and the Oregonian failed to take note of the team’s demise.

In Oakland, the Larks continued to play as a barnstorming team and did so successfully. At one point they won 29 consecutive games before falling to a local club in Lincoln, Nebraska. The San Francisco Sea Lions, coached by Cleo Benson, disbanded. Art “Smokey” Demery and Al “Lefty” Brown had to pitch elsewhere. The Los Angeles team vanished and manager Wayne Garr, former pitcher of the Hilldale Daisies, found other avenues of employment. The San Diego Tigers, abysmal in the league (they lost their season opener 16–1 and once lost 15–3 to the White Sox after committing nine errors), disappeared.

T he Seattle team lasted as the Steelheads through September 1946 before reverting back to the Globetrotters moniker, taking to the road again, and leaving Seattle for long stretches. In the fall Saperstein put together “Abe Saperstein’s Negro All-Stars” to barnstorm, touring Hawaii and other locales with many Steelheads players on the roster. They traveled across the country, playing against the likes of the Havana La Palomas, a farm team for the Indianapolis Clowns that included up-and-coming Cuban players.

Saperstein then reconvened the Globetrotters team again, filled with Steelheads veterans. They played in New Orleans and other cities, competing against other slapped-together teams, while Major League Baseball teams began fielding black players—first Jackie Robinson, then Larry Doby, Hank Thompson, and Roy Campanella—and the racial barrier crumbled like infield dirt. The Globetrotters played here and there through 1950 and took one last circuit in 1954, always barnstorming.

Fast forward a half century. On September 9, 1995, the American League Seattle Mariners paid tribute to the Steelheads of old, wearing replicas of their jerseys during the game, giving away free Negro League baseball hats to the fans, and applauding those long forgotten Steelheads players. Forgotten they nearly are—a footnote, almost lost in sports history. Everett “Ziggy” Marcel is gone; Rogers “Shape” Pierre, Joe Spencer, Sherwood Brewer, John Bis, and Nap Gulley—all gone.

What’s left are faded memories of black men who, before they were allowed to play Major League Baseball, played baseball anyway, simply for their love of the game. Night or day, in a grandly lit stadium or a darkened backyard lot, inside the buzz of Los Angeles or the quiet of Bellingham, they’d put on their gloves, tie up their spikes, feel the heft of the bat in their hands, hurl balls, steal second, do a suicide squeeze, turn a double play...just as long as the bus didn’t break down.

Jonathan Shipley, a Seattle-based freelance writer, is associate editor of City Arts Magazine and a lifelong baseball fan.
Whither Witter?

ALFRED S. WITTER (1876–1956) worked as a photographer in Washington for 64 years, from 1892 until his death in 1956. He established his own photography business in Seattle in 1897, later opening branches in Bridgeport and Waterville in central Washington. Witter left an extensive body of work documenting life in Douglas County between 1908 and 1915. His sharp, well-composed images depict the first automobile in Bridgeport, fires, commercial buildings and individual businesses, visits from the governor, boat traffic on the Columbia, ranches, wheat harvests, and much more. Sadly, all of his negatives seem to have been lost, and with them a rich history of the Big Bend country. Too often historically important collections of photographs and negatives are simply discarded when the creator dies. At the Washington State History Research Center we try to save as much as we can of our state’s photographic legacy. Many of Witter’s images can be viewed and ordered on our website: WashingtonHistory.org.
THOUGH HE NEVER LIVED in eastern Washington, colorful University of Chicago geologist J Harlen Bretz was a familiar figure there each summer during the 1920s and early 1930s as he trekked on foot through the region of ragged, basalt-lined coulees, potholes, and dry channels that he dubbed the “channeled scablands.”

His theory—that a massive flood had long ago swept through the area and carved this fantastic landscape in a matter of days or weeks—was met with condemnation by the bulk of the geologic community, primarily because his hypothesis violated the cardinal rule of uniformitarianism. Under this basic tenet of the science, geological features on earth take thousands, even millions of years to form. Suggesting so dramatic and expedient a cause as that espoused by Bretz was tantamount to geological heresy, and the outspoken professor found himself defending his “outrageous theory” for more than four decades before it began to be accepted.

This excerpt from Bretz’s Flood: The Remarkable Story of a Rebel Geologist and the World’s Greatest Flood (Sasquatch Books, 2009), looks at the first visit J Harlen Bretz paid to the eastern Washington scablands. His flood theory had yet to be developed, and he was inclined to seek out an explanation more consistent with the doctrine of uniformitarianism.
In 1921, W. C. Alden, head of Pleistocene geology at the U.S. Geological Survey, sent J. T. Pardee, a junior survey geologist, to visit a region of scabland terrain south of Spokane. Most of Pardee’s earliest geological work had involved the field study of glacial features in Montana. For the most part, he was unfamiliar with the topography in and around Spokane. For six weeks, Pardee piloted his Model T along dusty country roads that skirted the edges of the Palouse hills, dropped into and climbed out of scabland channels, and often ran right across the rocky tracts of exposed basalt within the region. Whenever he reached interesting spots, he would stop and set out on foot, hiking across these strips of scabland while taking note of the unique geological features to be found there.

Upon completion of his field study, Pardee wrote a brief article for the publication *Science*, which concluded that the Cheney-Palouse scabland tract was created by glaciation “of rather unusual character.” One possible explanation Pardee offered for the region’s unique topography was that this area of rough and pockmarked basalt beginning just south of Spokane and extending as far south as the Pasco area had been formed by subglacial water erosion. In other words, Pardee felt that ice had covered the land as far south from Spokane as 100 miles or more, and that the movement of water beneath this sheet of ice had formed the scabland terrain.

The following summer found J Harlen Bretz unloading his bags at Spokane’s Northern Pacific train station, accompanied by a handful of advanced geology students from the University of Chicago. Dressed in khaki pants and matching shirt, Bretz also sported a fedora in those days and cut a striking, almost Indiana Jones-like figure as he stood on the platform and looked at the bustling scene.

Spokane was truly a thriving center of commerce and transportation at the time of Bretz’s visit. Virtually all cross-country travel in the northern half of the United States involved a stop here. Then as now, it was the second-largest city in Washington and the commercial hub for an interstate region dubbed the Inland Empire. It was also the regional center for mining, agriculture, timber, and transportation. With the advent of the automobile and paved streets, the city had begun living up to its promotional slogan: “All roads lead to Spokane.”

But J Harlen Bretz had not come to Spokane to wander through the formal gardens at Manito Park, enjoy the “haute cuisine” at the Silver Grill, or spend a night at the city’s elegant Davenport Hotel. His plan was to provide a season of field geology for his students in the Cascade Mountains, and Spokane was merely a jumping-off point for the group. His friend Thomas Large, a Spokane teacher with a keen mind and an interest in regional geology, provided him with a Model T. Bretz planned to travel west to the north Cascade Range and explore the “live glaciers” found there among its highest peaks.

For a variety of reasons, Bretz and his students failed in this objective; they returned to Spokane with just a few weeks remaining before they needed to depart again for Chicago. It’s not clear whether it was Bretz himself or Large who came up with the idea to use the remaining time in a study of the scablands, but that’s exactly what Bretz did in the waning days of summer 1922.

Given the brief amount of time remaining, Bretz decided to limit his exploration to the northern part of the scablands. Making the most of each long day, Bretz began by touring the region just south of Spokane, including scabland tracts near the towns of Cheney, Spangle, Lamont, and Sprague. He and his students poked around area lakes such as Williams, Badger, Fish, and Rock. One of the first things he observed was that all of these were narrow, elongated bodies of water flanked by sheer walls of rough basalt, in some cases as much as several hundred feet high.
Their drives expanded to the south and west, where they briefly examined some of the largest coulees in eastern Washington, deep gashes in the earth with names like Washtucna, Moses, and Grand. These proved to be much more massive gouges in the ground than Bretz could ever have guessed, even after having reviewed topographic maps of the region. Most spectacular of all was the Grand Coulee, with its coarse basalt walls towering to 1,000 feet and its width reaching as much as three miles in places. Bretz and his students even managed to pay a quick visit to the Quincy Basin, site of the mysterious Potholes Coulee, which—in the form of a topographic map—had intrigued him 12 years earlier. To view this spectacular set of dry falls out here at the edge of the sun-baked, gravelly basin he had previously seen only in maps must have given Bretz a moment of sheer delight. For him it was just as critical to journey to geologically significant sites as it is for a detective to visit the scene of a crime.

When Bretz took his first steps into the northeasternmost section of the scablands, he did so with a foundation of knowledge about the underlying geology of the region, an ancient scenario that most geologists accepted as fact. The area in which the scabland topography dominates was fairly well known even at the turn of the 20th century as a region where ancient lava flows had oozed forth from fissures in the ground many millions of years ago. These flows spread lava out over thousands of square miles of land that would one day make up parts of Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. As the lava cooled, it became a form of dense, dark volcanic rock called basalt. This basalt—thousands of feet deep in some places—was so heavy that it actually compressed the crust of the earth beneath it and created a shallow but expansive hollow or dip in the region, now called the Columbia River Plateau.

Basalt and Walla Walla Valley. As the winds continued to swirl around this region for thousands of years, they transported this material as far east as the present-day border of Washington and Idaho. The silt then became the parent material for the rich soil that eventually changed the scene from one of black basalt desert to rolling hills covered with grass and small trees.

At the same time that some of these geologic changes were occurring—about 2 million years ago—ice ages in North America caused the continental ice sheet to advance south and then retreat again multiple times. American geologists call the most recent advance of ice the Wisconsin Glaciation. According to Vic Baker, professor of geosciences at the University of Arizona, “The Wisconsin glaciation is a complex of about two or three smaller advances and retreats, extending from as old as about 110,000 years ago, but reaching its maximum extent, in most areas, about 20,000 years ago. The Wisconsin is generally thought to extend to about 10,000 years ago, the time that marks the beginning of the Holocene, our present interglacial period.”

The Wisconsin event moved ice as far south as the 47th—48th latitudes, a short distance south of the Canadian border with Washington. Bretz and other contemporary geologists knew this, and they even had a name for the ice sheet—the Cordilleran—but the precise southern limits of the ice were not always clear. The specific path and extent of the ice sheet constituted much of the geological research being conducted in the early decades of the 20th century.

The first thing Bretz did on his whirlwind 1922 visit to the region was to get a feel for the scabland environment. Probably one of the first things he noticed was that the temperature was pretty high there in the summertime. Moreover, the farther south and west from Spokane he and his boys traveled, the hotter it got. The elevation dropped, too, as he headed south and west. In and around Spokane, pine trees grew in abundance. To the southeast of Spokane was the region called the Palouse, named after a Native American tribe related linguistically and culturally to the Nez Perce tribe. Here, family farms of both early white settlers and newly arrived immigrant farmers grew wheat, lentils, and other crops. The Palouse area...
of gently rolling hills followed the Idaho–Washington border from Spokane all the way to the towering bluffs above Lewiston and the Snake River Valley.

It was the region immediately south of Spokane that attracted Bretz’s attention, for here was a vast area of land where the rich hills of loess were increasingly interrupted by ragged tracts of exposed basalt, as though the soil that composed the Palouse area had not accumulated here, or had piled up but then somehow been removed. It should be noted that basalt is a black/brown volcanic rock that characteristically cools into multisided columns. In many cases, Bretz observed that these columns formed cliffs on either side of deep channels, or coulees, some containing lakes, others dry as a bone. Then the Palouse hills would continue for a time before again being interrupted by more stretches of basalt, or scabland, as the locals called it.

Bretz drew this map to accompany his second paper on eastern Washington’s channeled scablands. The accuracy with which he depicted the myriad flood-carved channels—without the aid of an aerial view—is considered by geologists to be an incredible feat.

The area south of Spokane has long been known for its numerous small- to medium-size fishing lakes. One of the first things Bretz noticed was that nearly all of these lakes were elongated in shape, and their lengths always ran in a northeast to southwest fashion across the landscape. In some cases there were curious strings of lakes laid out in the same northeast to southwest line, with abrupt cliffs or low channels separating one lake from another; generally these channels were streamless. Nearly all of the lakes appeared to be gashes cut into the surrounding basalt rock and filled with water—in some cases, fairly deep water. Bretz observed that virtually all the lakes on the Columbia Plateau were located in areas of scabland, while there were no lakes at all in the Palouse area.
In the extreme northeast part of the region, where elevations are generally 2,000 feet or above, these lakes are fringed with pines, seem to love the native soil in the northern scablands. This is a dry upland soil averaging just 16 inches deep, underlain by coarse gravel and stones to a depth of another 40 to 60 inches. Beneath this lies the basalt bedrock. Because the pines like this well-drained, fairly dry soil, the northern scablands are covered by forests of the evergreens. They cluster in the channels and line the ridges of basalt cliffs. Ferns and other native greenery grow in profusion in the bottomlands near the water, while grassy clearings beside the lakes create comfortable spots for tent camping or small fishing cabins.

The farther south and west from Spokane Bretz traveled, however, the drier the terrain became, even around the lakes. He noted that the elevation dropped and the landscape was almost desert-like in appearance. It was also much hotter there in summer; temperatures in the triple digits were not uncommon in late July and early August.

With such a huge area to study and just a few weeks to do it, Bretz began by making basic visual observations, taking soil samples, and looking for landscape features common to different areas. Perhaps the first thing he discovered when trying to assess the cause of the region’s geological features was that he might have to abandon some of the basic tenets of geological study he had learned at the University of Chicago.

One of the initial observations Bretz made, for example, was that the many channels, or coulees, in the region were anastomosed—or braided—unlike a typical branching drainage pattern of small streams flowing into larger streams, which in turn enter still larger streams and rivers, and so forth.

Bretz’s continued use of the word “channels” in his field notes also showed that he recognized these as something other than typical river valleys. Even the cross-sectional form of individual channels was unlike the usual V-shaped river valley. Typically, as a river flowing over thousands of years slowly cuts into and deepens its own bed, forces such as wind and rain erode the edges of the river channel, and gravity sends the eroded portions tumbling down to the river’s edge. In this manner, over thousands of years, traditional V-shaped river valleys form. But the dry channels Bretz saw in the scablands were U-shaped, with little apparent erosion of their banks other than the piles of broken rock fragments at the base of the basalt cliffs. Geologists call these mounds of broken basalt talus slopes, and they know that the piles of broken material increase over time as weathering sends more pieces of rock tumbling over the edges of the cliffs above. Because of the way continual weathering increases the height of talus slopes, Bretz believed he might later be able to compare the relative age of the various channels and coulees he visited. If the talus slopes in two distinct channels were each about half the height of the two channels’ cliff faces, for example, Bretz felt safe in concluding that the channels had likely been formed at about the same time.

Bretz observed several instances where huge erratic rocks of granite were scattered here and there around the predominantly basalt landscape. Erratics are simply rocks or boulders that don’t naturally belong where you find them. If you transport a granite boulder from Montana in the trunk of your car and take it to your backyard rock garden in Los Angeles, it could be considered an erratic boulder because it now lies somewhere far from where it originally formed. When erratics appeared in nature, however, without the aid of tourist transport, geologists of Bretz’s time generally assumed that glaciers had carried them to their present position during one of the ice ages. When the ice receded, the erratic rocks would be left behind, some as large as small houses and now resting far from their original locations.

In the case of the scablands, Bretz found erratics in locations far south of the presumed southern limits of the last—Wisconsin—glacial advance. How could this be explained? The easy solution would be to alter his ideas about how far south the ice had advanced. Doing so might have partially legitimized Pardee’s notion that glacial ice could have covered the landscape nearly as far south as the Oregon border. But Bretz was more inclined to come up with other reasons for the erratics.

What intrigued Bretz most was the location of some of these large granite boulders. One might expect them to be found in low spots along the course of glacier-born streams or in glacier-carved valleys where the ice had traveled. But near the town of Spangle, for example—about 15 miles south of Spokane—Bretz found erratic rocks “as high as 2,500 feet above tide [sea level] on the slopes which face the scabland, and within 100 feet of the hill tops.” In his mind, glacial ice had not traveled this far south, nor climbed this high, so how had the erratics arrived at these places?

MOVING HIS FIELD STUDIES farther west, Bretz examined the vast channels known as the Grand and Moses coulees. In the Grand Coulee, where the walls are as much as 1,000 feet high in places, Bretz was intrigued by the volume of water that would have been necessary to carve such a deep channel. The Grand Coulee was as much as three miles wide in some places. In the middle of the coulee—separating its upper and lower sections—was a set of dry cataracts more than 400 feet high and nearly three miles wide, dwarfing Niagara Falls many times over.
located where they were, at the western edge of the scablands and just 15 miles apart? Were they related to the other scabland tracts much farther east? And if so, what overwhelming force could have affected the landscape here as well as some 100 miles to the east?

The final region of scabland Bretz visited was the Quincy Basin, south of the southern end of the Grand Coulee. This shallow, bowl-like depression in the earth covered some 600 square miles of terrain. Bretz found that the region was filled with small particles of basalt debris to a depth that was later determined to be 400 feet. Where had all this debris come from and when? At three specific points on the western and southern edges of this structural depression, which Bretz began referring to as a “catch basin,” were geological features that appeared to be outlets from the Quincy Basin. Bretz immediately saw these as places where water that had been held in the catch basin broke through the ridges that enclosed it and spilled out toward the Columbia River. But how much water? And when had this event occurred?

Bretz chose to call the southernmost outlet from the Quincy Basin the Drumheller Channels, after the Drumheller family ranch located nearby. Bretz was clearly impressed by the complex maze of channels occupying this low-lying terrain east of the Frenchman Hills. The group of channels began as three canyons of about the same size but was “scored and gasped,” wrote Bretz, “by hundreds of similar smaller channels.”

Two additional features on the western edge of the Quincy Basin indicated other places where water had at some time exited the region. One was a set of abandoned cataracts at the Frenchman Spring, and the second was that initial object of curiosity for Bretz: the Potholes, or the Potholes Coulee, as the locals called it. When he was at last able to visit this remarkable site where huge “notches” had been slashed through the western edge of the Quincy Basin, Bretz was again flabbergasted by the apparent force and volume of water that would have been necessary to carve this topographical feature. Two cataracts began as channeled scabland, ran for 2 miles toward the Columbia River—deepening as they neared the river—then split into two major falls that plummeted 200 feet to a ridge below. A continuation, or second tier, of these falls then dropped another 125 feet to the “bench” of basalt, forming the eastern bank of the Columbia River at this point in its circuitous route through eastern Washington.

When he visited Potholes Coulee, Bretz was flabbergasted by the apparent force and volume of water that would have been necessary to carve this topographical feature.

Bretz then spent the rest of the fall reviewing his notes, compiling his maps, and honing his descriptions of the geologic wonders he had seen during those two short weeks in the scablands. As he worked with his field notes, he continually found himself making references to the large quantities of water that had to be involved. Indeed, he had only reached the third sentence of the introduction to his first scabland paper before he made this point: “Besides contributing to the geological history of the region, this article endeavors to show that glacier-born streams, under proper conditions, are erosive agents of great vigor over large tracts far from the front of the melting ice.”

Although this first paper was chiefly a detailed description of the region in question, Bretz did come to a number of conclusions even at this early stage. In a general statement about the section of the Cordilleran sheet that he called the Spokane glaciation, Bretz first stressed his belief that the glacial ice had not extended very far south of Spokane and then in fact dismissed the ice sheet as having been a factor at all in the transport of the area’s erratics.

Instead, he wrote, he believed these large boulders were one of the following: knobs of granite that had been trapped in thebasalt flows and later exposed, large boulders that had been transported by icebergs during widespread ponding, or large boulders that had been transported by glaciers or icebergs in a much earlier ice age.

For the first time, Bretz used the word “channel” in his paper, to describe a drainage area south of Spokane where he claimed that “a glacial stream [had] filled it from side to side for a depth of tens of feet.” And although he was describing a channel formed during the last ice age, Bretz noted that there were “no well-defined depositional forms.” In stating this, he was conjecturing that the vigorous flow of water from glacial streams had happened over a fairly short period and did not have enough time to create the typical sort of river valley deposits built up over centuries.

Bretz next described the relationship between the scablands and the Palouse region to the east, referring to the “isolated groups of Palouse hills” near Cheney and other places west of the Palouse wheat country. “In topography and soil,” he wrote, “these tracts are identical with the Palouse wheat country to the east and southeast; but the gentle concave lower slopes of maturity, so characteristic of these hills, is absent on the outskirts of the isolated groups. Instead, these outer slopes are much steeper and are generally convex. They meet the roughened plain of the scabland with a definite angle.”

The Palouse hills, in other words, were typically composed of gently sloping angles on all sides of any individual hill, whereas those hills bordering scabland featured gentle slopes on the sides facing away from the scabland and much more sharply angled slopes where they confronted the scabland terrain. Therefore, Bretz concluded that whatever force had

As the summer of 1922 passed all too quickly into fall, Bretz and his students were obliged to leave Spokane and take the train back to Chicago. Upon his arrival, Bretz scarcely had time to organize his field notes before heading off to Wisconsin with his family to teach a month-long course prior to the start of fall classes at the University of Chicago.
created the scabland tracts must also have affected the shape of the Palouse-type hills bordering them. He also noted that the isolated tracts of Palouse hills in the midst of the scablands “are elongated northeast–southwest, in harmony with the elongation of the channels on the basalt surface and with the scabland tract as a whole.”

There was clearly some undeniable connection between these two vastly disparate types of terrain, and Bretz described the overall relationship almost lyrically when he wrote that tracts of scabland and those of Palouse hills throughout the region were “interfingered and interlocked.”

As Bretz continued to review his notes describing features such as deep channels, sheer cliffs, and “gashed basalt,” he found it impossible to avoid using phrases in his paper such as “torrential water,” “large volume abruptly introduced,” and “invading but short-lived floods.” This is not to say that he had completely abandoned the notion that some of the northern scabland features could have been formed at least partially by ice from “glaciations earlier and more extensive than the Wisconsin.” Accepted geological principles demanded that the sculpting power of glaciers had been the chief culprit, since these scabland tracts bordered the approximate southern limit of the glacial ice. Yet the impact of glacial runoff seemed indisputable too.

Glacial stream runoff, as typically envisioned by geologists, is the by-product of gradually melting glaciers in retreat at the close of an ice age. Slow melting over a long period of time creates a glacial stream that flows across the land as would any well-established stream or river. Because glacial streams can become part of a landscape for hundreds of years or more, the total volume of these streams can be quite great over the length of their existence. But Bretz’s language in his first scabland paper was clearly on the borderline between describing glacial runoff and something else quite different. In his paper, Bretz summarized the relationship between scabland tracts and areas of the Palouse hills by concluding,

The hills which have disappeared averaged 200 feet in height and in some places the glacial torrents eroded 100 to 200 feet into the basalt. The flood originated at several places along the ice-front. Great river channels exist among the remaining hills in the flood-swept region. The area overridden by the ice itself has lost every trace of Palouse hills.

Bretz dubbed the scabland region west of Spokane the Crab Creek drainage. Here, he wrote, drainage from sections of the ice sheet in north-central Washington had created a separate series of tributaries forming “youthful canyons in basalt.” Again, Bretz noted that these canyons, some of them quite deep, “are but the deepened channels of ice-born rivers, and not true valleys. Like the scablands of the Palouse region, invading but short-lived floods traversed the area.”

Bretz and his students had next moved to the dramatic features of the Grand and Moses coulees. He described these in his paper briefly, then expressed his belief that glacial streams from an earlier ice age had likely formed the basic shape of these large coulees, or perhaps the Columbia River itself had been blocked by glacial ice and was redirected through one or both of these routes at some point in the distant past. Then the waters from the Spokane drainage had found the already-formed coulees at a later time and followed the course as the path of least resistance.

Bretz described the Quincy Basin as an outlet basin for waters that had ponded as a result of glacial flooding and that eventually found exit points via the Drumheller Channels, Frenchman Springs, and Potholes Coulee. He closed his report with a discussion of the Wisconsin Glaciation and his thoughts as to the distance south it had traveled. As for the erratics found at elevations surprisingly higher than one might expect, Bretz concluded that they had been carried to their current positions by floating ice, and he cited two possibilities for why they were
Glaciations is perfectly clear.”

Bretz’s conclusion, though fitting, was nothing one could consider dramatic in its assumptions. Bretz wrote that “a brief episode in the latter half of the Pleistocene (the maximum extent of the Spokane glaci...than has been post-Wisconsin upwarping.”

Bretz’s conclusion, though fitting, was nothing one could consider dramatic in its assumptions. Bretz wrote that “a brief episode in the latter half of the Pleistocene (the maximum extent of the Spokane glaciation) introduced conditions under which the scablands, much more than a thousand square miles of the plateau, and more than a tenth of the total area of the plateau (as the term is used in this paper) have been denuded of overlying sedimentary deposits by running water.”

Bretz wrote his paper late in the fall of 1922 and presented it orally at a Geological Society of America meeting in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on a snowy Saturday morning in late December. He submitted it for publication a few weeks later, on January 10, 1923, but the Society—for reasons likely editorial—did not print Bretz’s paper until its September 30, 1923, Bulletin issue. For this reason, the first scabland paper by Bretz has become known as “Bretz 1923-A,” though it was based on a 1922 field trip and was actually written and first presented in 1922.

And how did those in attendance at the Ann Arbor meeting receive Bretz’s oral presentation? Quite appreciatively, if one can judge by the comments after the meeting, some of which made it into the Bulletin, with the printed text of his presentation nine months later.

“The speaker is to be congratulated on the character of the work he has done in Eastern Washington,” wrote Morris Leighton, later to become chief of the Illinois State Geological Survey. “A few years ago I had the opportunity to see some of the features which he describes, and the case for at least two glaciations is perfectly clear.”

Geologist Oscar E. Meinzer, who had briefly visited the scablands in 1918 and wrote his own brief paper on the groundwater of the Quincy Basin, had also been a student at the University of Chicago and had been examined by Bretz himself for his Ph.D. exams. Apparently pleased with the work of the man who may in some ways have been a mentor, Meinzer said, “I was especially interested in this excellent paper, because of my own brief fieldwork a few years ago in this region. The glacial features of the region are on a grand scale and very striking.”

Other comments were equally complimentary. And so, as Bretz returned to Chicago by train from Ann Arbor to greet the new year, he seemingly had every reason to be satisfied with the knowledge that his first paper on the scablands region had been well-received and accepted by the geological profession as a scholarly assessment of a complex topography.

Still, with Bretz’s inquiring mind and willful disposition as known commodities, he was not entirely satisfied with his first eastern Washington field experience and the paper he had presented. Like the scabland channels themselves, his research and field report seemed incomplete, unfinished, and he was bothered by his own unanswered questions, his own unresolved conclusions about the region he had been able to explore only briefly. As he stared out the windows of the train and watched the snowy winter landscape pass by, Bretz was already planning a return trip to the scablands.

Bretz’s favor with the geologic community was short-lived. Just a few months after his first paper appeared in the Bulletin of the Geological Society of America, his second was published in the University of Chicago’s Journal of Geology. In this paper he would unveil for the first time the radical flood theory that James Gilluly, among others, would call “preposterous, incompetent, and wholly inadequate.” Bretz had waded into the controversy with eyes wide open. Moreover, he was not going to abandon a conclusion he had reached only after extensive field research and having tested and rejected a variety of other hypotheses attempting to explain the combination of unique features found in the scabland region. Little did he know that it would be more than four decades before his glacial flood theory was largely accepted by his peers and his reputation as a radical, misguided geological outcast would at last be rescinded. Fortunately, Bretz lived long enough to see himself finally vindicated.

John Soennichsen has written over 250 articles, essays, and interviews for various publications over the past 30 years. His latest book, The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, was published by Greenwood Press in February 2011, and a guide to the Channeled Scablands will be out in 2012 under The Mountaineers’ imprint. This essay, based on an excerpt from Bretz’s Flood, is printed with the permission of Sasquatch Books.

COLUMBIA 20   SPRING 2011
This painted tile wall piece of a whale hunt was created in 1974 by Tacoma artist Oliver Tiedeman. He was an original member of the Klee Wyk artists cooperative, led by Del McBride (Cowlitz/Quinault). The group disbanded in 1961, but Tiedeman continued using Klee Wyk patterns and sometimes even signed pieces with the Klee Wyk name. Tiedeman's work is on exhibit in Klee Wyk: Artists on the Nisqually Flats, at the Washington State History Museum through January 2012. For additional examples of artworks from our online image collections, please see: http://Collections.WashingtonHistory.org/ and search on the keyword “art.” Visit the Featured Collections art gallery at: http://Research.WashingtonHistory.org/Collections/Art.aspx.
George Pickett’s home on Peabody Hill has changed little in its 150 years. A narrow spiral staircase and small lean-to kitchen mark the only structural alterations since the future Confederate general and his Indian wife gazed through its gabled windows onto Bellingham Bay below. Perfectly at ease among the rustic Victorian architecture of this old harbor town on Puget Sound, it might escape the notice of passersby who would never imagine that this modest two-story frame house was the focal point for one of the most romantic myths of the Pacific Northwest.

George Pickett was a United States Army captain when he stepped onto the shores of Bellingham Bay in August 1856, seven years before the ill-fated charge at Gettysburg that would bear his name. The frontier harbor before him was dotted with four tiny pioneer villages—Whatcom, Sehome, Bellingham, and Fairhaven. Only four years earlier Edward Eldridge had raised the bay’s first log cabin, and now some 100 white residents crowded the shoreline, their livelihoods tethered to the region’s abundant and heretofore unexploited natural resources. With its residents nearly paralyzed by fear, growth in the bay had stalled, despite its two budding economic engines—a lumber mill in Whatcom and a coal mine near Sehome.

As the number of whites in the Puget Sound had grown, so had the number of potential targets for Native raiding cultures from north of the 49th Parallel. Powerful war parties from today’s British Columbia and southern Alaska set out in massive war canoes, transporting up to 100 warriors each, to threaten settlements across the region. Each successful raid, murdered frontiersman, or close call with a war party sent shock waves through the small settler communities, isolated as they were. In an article in the June 14, 1908, American Revelle, Theresa Eldridge, wife of Edward Eldridge and one of the area’s first settler brides, described escaping a raiding party’s fusillade of “twenty shots from two canoes close to shore, who were sneaking up to surprise us and murder us all.” Thereafter, she declared, she lived “in great dread” of the Northern Indians.

In the winter of 1855 settlers around the bay pooled their meager resources and organized a militia. They built a small blockhouse on the high ground west of Whatcom Creek and began retreating by night into the stockade. Recognizing their untenable position, the settlers petitioned the recently established Washington Territorial Legislature for military aid. Resident R. V. Peabody wrote Governor Isaac Stevens about the Indian intention to “exterminate all the whites... they are coming to take what they want, kill where they can.”

When the 68 soldiers of Company D, Ninth Infantry, finally landed on August 26, 1856, they were greeted by a pitiful citizen’s militia and a white populace that huddled by night in a makeshift fort. To the frightened settlers barely hanging on in a wild land, the army men, led by the striking Virginia war veteran, must have seemed like heroes.

George Pickett was just 31 years old, an obscure junior commander assigned to protect settlers in a howling wilderness. The slender and immaculately groomed Pickett, more distinguished for his Southern-aristocrat style than his accomplishments on the battlefield, was invariably described as “dapper” or “dashing”; one admirer spoke of his “marvelous pulchritude.” His spurs and coat-buttons shone golden in the sun. He held a black riding crop whether he was riding or not, and his black boots never lacked for polish. He wore a mustache that curled upward at the ends and his hair formed “long ringlets flowing loosely over his shoulders, trimmed and highly perfumed,” writes historian Larry Tagg in The Generals of Gettysburg. Even Robert E. Lee, marching toward Gettysburg, found time to poke fun at George Pickett’s illustrious locks.

Though a highly popular cadet, Pickett graduated last in his class at West Point in 1846—“a jolly good fellow with fine natural gifts sadly neglected,” noted General William Montgomery Gardner in his memoirs. Quickly plunged into the Mexican-American War upon graduation, Pickett was lauded when at the storming of the Chapultapec fortress he climbed the enemy parapet and unfurled the regimental colors—an exploit not missed by newspapers back home.

Tragedy marked Pickett’s life shortly after his return from the war. In 1850 he resigned his army commission to come home and marry the woman he adored, Sally Harrison Minge, daughter of a Richmond doctor. The couple settled down on a Virginia farm and Sally soon became pregnant, but their domestic bliss was short-lived. Sally suffered a difficult childbirth and after less than a year of marriage Pickett lost both wife and child. He mourned for six months, and then the grief-addled former lieutenant rejoined the army and requested a post on the frontier.
Pickett immediately set his men to building a proper army post. They erected Fort Bellingham in short order on a bluff five miles west of Whatcom Creek, looming 80 feet above the sea with a 215-foot palisade guarded by dual blockhouses. The fort's military value dwarfed that of any other structure in the isolated region. The nearest army base was Fort Steilacoom—over 100 miles away.

In addition to troops, the territorial legislature begged Congress for funds to construct a military road connecting Bellingham Bay to Fort Steilacoom, easing the movement of troops and supplies in the event of more Indian attacks. Having established the fort and a $10,000 federal appropriation, Pickett turned to road building. Carving out a respectable road from the thick inland forest was difficult, taxing work. The “military road” never reached beyond the bay, but even so, Pickett succeeded in laying out the most elaborate and reliable road in the Northwest, bridging two heavy creeks in the process and connecting the communities of Sehome and Whatcom in addition to the bay’s economic powerhouses, the lumber mill and coal mine.

According to Kent Holsather and Wes Gannaway in Bellingham Then and Now, the military road and bridges “resulted in the development of Whatcom as an outpost supply center, reversing the decline of the small village.” Although citizens continued to rely upon shoreline trails for daily use, “Bellingham Bay communities profited by, and achieved no little prestige through, the possession of the only passable wagon road in the northwest,” writes Lelah Edson in The Fourth Corner: Highlights from the Early Northwest.

A memorable sight it would have been, watching the haughty, perfumed Virginian striding about among rough-hewn pioneers and the Irish immigrants who made up the ranks of enlisted soldiers. Bay residents had ample cause to cheer Pickett’s presence—even adore the man. The fort and its soldiers profited the bay community in a number of ways, providing protection, improved travel, and economic stimulus.

It is easy to understand, then, the adoration recalled by Captain James M. Hunt of the SS Constitution, in the November 6, 1857, issue of the Olympia Pioneer and Democrat, a year after Pickett’s arrival:

The first object that attracts our attention is Fort Bellingham, located on a beautiful sloping prairie, looming up in a white dress and relieving the eye of the wild solitude…[the fort] is a strong place and ably commanded by Capt. Pickett…the people of the Bay have every confidence in Capt. Pickett, and fully appreciate his efficiency for the admirable defenses he has caused to be erected for the protection of that isolated settlement. We have been given to understand that Capt. P. has, by his gentlemanly demeanor and numerous acts of gratuitous kindness, endeared himself to the residents of the Bay in a manner not soon to be forgotten.

Were it just for Pickett’s accomplishments as a frontier officer, he would be duly remembered here by Northwest historical societies, perhaps commemorated on some plaques and monuments in the frontier land he helped nurture into a city. His memory would surely not attract the stream of residents and tourists who visit his Bellingham home each year. Historical preservationists would likely not doze over every surviving scrap of his local legacy.

It is Pickett’s private life in Bellingham that captures the public imagination and has accounted for the flowering of his Northwest legend. Along with the construction of Fort Bellingham, Pickett immediately ordered land cleared for his own private residence. On what afterward became Bancroft Street on Peabody Hill, the captain built the modest two-story structure known today as the Pickett House. It is here, peering into his home, that one stands on the precipice of myth.

The controversy begins at the doorstep of the house itself. In her history of Bellingham, Edith Carhart throws cold water on the romantic aura the house has acquired, noting “Pickett never lived here officially, nor was it ever a military headquarters, since while he lived on the Bay he necessarily lived at the fort.” Most other sources maintain that Pickett used the main floor to conduct official business, reserving the second floor for his private residence. Regardless, the house itself is undeniably a precious historical object; the Historic American Buildings Survey documented the Pickett House as the oldest standing structure in Bellingham.

The most fascinating subject of debate, and certainly the greatest source of disputed lore, concerns Pickett’s Indian bride. How George Pickett—still mourning the loss of his first wife—came to meet, romance, and marry a Native woman remains one of the great Northwest fables. History knows her as
Morning Mist, though her name cannot be authenticated. Some histories simply refer to “Mrs. Pickett” or Pickett’s “Indian Princess.” We do not even know with certainty her tribe of origin; she may have been from among the Kaigani Haida or perhaps the Stikine Tlingit tribe in “Russian America.”

The most common tale has Pickett first spying Morning Mist near Semiahmoo, north of Bellingham Bay, on what may have been a punitive expedition against restless Indians, or merely a survey trip. In his work of historical fiction, The Laurels Are Cut Down, Archie Binns describes a classic portrayal of this fabled meeting:

He saw her first on the morning of his attack on the Bellingham Indians. He had rushed the village with his full force and taken them by surprise…. Morning Mist was coming from the spring with water, not knowing the village had been invaded…. When she was opposite Pickett, he asked her, in Chinook, to wait. Morning Mist turned and looked at him with wide, surprised eyes, as if she suddenly realized there was someone near her. He sheathed his sword and bowed to her. Their fingers touched as he took the water jar.

Binns’s account may not have solid historical basis, but it well illustrates the cherished, mythical nature of the relationship. That additional details of their courtship are lost to history has only fueled people’s imaginations.

Taking an Indian wife was not uncommon among frontiersmen, even gentlemen. Robert Davis, Pickett’s lieutenant at Fort Bellingham, and local Indian agent Edmund Fitzhugh—both fellow Virginians—wed Northwest Indian women and begat children. In many cases, though, the woman’s status was closer to that of concubine than wife. Many marriages turned out to be sham, the lonely white settler or soldier abandoning his Indian “bride” after consummating the union.

Pickett and Morning Mist stand out in the oft-repeated romantic details of their affair. By all popular accounts, theirs was a reciprocal, even passionate relationship, and they fulfilled the marriage customs of both of their respective cultures—one ceremony in the Indian tradition and another in the white, or “Boston,” manner. One aspect of the tribal marriage ceremony involved “the gloved right hand of the bride clasped in the gloved right hand of the bridegroom.”

Though their meaning remains unclear, the marital gloves survive to this day, preserved in a red camphorwood chest that once belonged to Pickett’s young bride.

The life Pickett and Morning Mist briefly shared enchants and frustrates in equal measure, for it is impossible to separate their lives from history’s subsequent idealization. The archetypal Western romance of the white army officer and the beautiful “Indian princess” has provided fodder for countless romance novels and pulp fiction. Pickett’s story, in particular, has directly inspired or been featured in numerous fictional treatments. The stories of their romance, even those repeated as truth, may in fact be apocryphal or distorted by the biases of their time and ours.

It is not even clear how the married couple would have spoken to each other—she would not have known English, and Pickett certainly did not speak her native tongue. They would likely have communicated in Chinook jargon, a trade language consisting of about 500 words—not exactly suited for marital pillow talk. From the words and actions history has preserved, it seems clear that Pickett was in fact deeply devoted to his Indian wife; that no word or deed of hers survives—even
her name is lost to history—makes their fabled romance more problematic.

The only incontrovertible proof of their relationship came in December 1857—a son, born James Tilton Pickett. But joy in Pickett’s house was again not to last. As with his first wife, Sally, Morning Mist experienced a difficult pregnancy. Though this time the child survived, his mother remained prostrate and weak; some weeks later she died.

It is impossible to say what Pickett felt, but from his actions he seems to have been plunged into a deep, despairing grief. His son was quickly sent away, and Pickett himself left the Northwest on an extended furlough, back to Virginia. Young “Jimmie” Pickett was placed under the guardianship of his namesake, Lieutenant Colonel James Tilton, state adjutant and survey general. The colonel proved a conscientious guardian for the boy, checking in on him and making sure of his welfare; Pickett arranged for the child to be raised on a Mason County farm by a Mrs. Catherine Collins, whom he had known while stationed at Fort Steilacoom.

Upon returning from furlough some months later, Pickett was reassigned to San Juan Island as part of the brewing “Pig War,” an abortive conflict with Great Britain over border rights. Fort Bellingham itself was evacuated and abandoned not long after, on April 28, 1860. Pickett never again lived in his Bellingham home.

Our knowledge of Pickett’s later life is much more detailed, though it too has been deeply mythologized into virtual caricature. His long-awaited moment of glory, the eponymous charge that was the climax of the Battle of Gettysburg, proved a bloody disaster that ended the battle and nearly the war. Ironically, Pickett himself did little to affect the outcome.

Pickett’s Charge was conceived and ordered by General Robert E. Lee, who designated Pickett as point for the attack chiefly because he and his fresh division had just arrived at the battle and the two accompanying divisions were exhausted from two days of hard fighting. Though half of Pickett’s men fell within an hour, nearly all the officers dead or wounded, Pickett returned from the charge unscathed—perhaps because he rode far to the rear of the main assault.

The great doomed charge might as easily have been named for General James Longstreet, overall commander of the attack, or Lee himself, who ordered the action against the advice of his most senior commanders. Pickett is remembered at Gettysburg not for gallantry on the field, but for his words before and after the slaughter. As he rallied his troops to the attack, Pickett rode the line and shouted, “Up men, and to your posts! And don’t forget today that you are from old Virginia!” And as the remnants of his battered division struggled back from Union lines, leaving behind thousands of corpses, Lee ordered Pickett to position his division for a defense. Pickett, wrought with emotion, is said to have snapped, “General, I have no division now.”

After Gettysburg, Pickett saw no significant action until April 1, 1865, when units under his command were routed at the Battle of Five Forks. The general was miles away, enjoying a “shad bake” with fellow officers. By the time he returned to his troops, their position was shattered. Pickett was likely relieved of his command after this blunder, but Lee surrendered at Appomattox a week later, rendering the question moot and saving Pickett from a final humiliation.

The enduring myth of Pickett was born 25 years after his death. Only then was he recast as the consummate soldier and Southern gentleman in the pages of his third wife’s memoirs. He had married LaSalle “Sallie” Corbell while on campaign in 1863, when he was 38 and she just 16. From the start, Sallie idolized the man she called “my Soldier,” and her zeal knew no bounds in the full 56 years she lived after his death in 1875.

In 1899 Sallie published her first book, *Pickett and His Men*. She would go on to write several more, including several plagiarized works published posthumously under Pickett’s name. Sallie’s stories appeared in popular magazines like McClure’s and *Cosmopolitan*; she crisscrossed the nation on speaking tours. Like another war widow, Mrs. George Armstrong Custer, Sallie James Tilton Pickett at age 3 and around age 20. Although he grew up in a foster family, his father made sure the boy received an education. He attended art school in California and worked as a staff artist for two major newspapers.
became a virtual celebrity whose favorite subject was always "my Soldier."

In Sallie’s battery of works the widely derided Pickett transformed into an iron-willed leader in battle and a perfect gentleman in the salon, an impossibly idealized portrait that was nonetheless broadly accepted by a battered South and reconciling North. Today Sallie’s writings are marked from “unreliable” to “fictionalized,” but the sheen of glory Pickett could not achieve in life would shine brightly upon his Richmond tombstone.

Sallie Corbell never mentions young Jimmie Pickett in her otherwise expansive writings, except to suggest that he was a “gift” to Captain Pickett from a friendly Indian chief. It is unclear how much personal contact Pickett ever had with his first son. Certainly, he made sure the boy was looked after. In one letter Pickett thanked John Collins for having been “kind enough to look after the welfare of my little boy,” and continuing to take care of him in his father’s absence. However, as Pickett left the Northwest for the last time at the outbreak of the Civil War, he did not hazard a final visit, as noted by Colonel Tilton in an August 8, 1861, letter to Mrs. Collins:

Captain Pickett passed through here a few days since on his way to Virginia, he having resigned his commission in the army. He bid me say good-bye to Mr. Collins, yourself, and the boy. He regrets much that he could not take time to come down…he sent his Bible, his commission, and his leave of absence for the boy that the youngster might know who his father was….

Parsing the legend of Jimmie Pickett is as difficult as pinpointing the character of his father or sifting the facts about his mother. Like them, knowledge of the youth is piecemeal and refracted through the biases of his contemporaries and those of subsequent historians. However, unlike his father, whose life was bleached by Sallie Corbell, and his mother, who remains silent to history, Jimmie Pickett left us works of his own, creations wholly and indelibly his.

William Walter, Catherine Collins’ second husband, described the boy’s childhood to historian Lelah Edson:

Very early Jimmie showed signs of being an artist. He wanted to draw nearly all the time. In those days there were few pencils and very little paper. So the boy used chunks of charcoal from the burned logs and drew on the side of the barn… when he wished to color a picture he used the juices from berries and leaves. He had inherited this gift from both his father and mother.

Stories portray the boy as painfully shy, absorbed in his art, holed up in his room when his foster parents entertained guests. He had few friends, aided little by the strange mixture of English and pidgin Chinook he spoke in his formative years. Unlike his plantation-raised father, Jimmie grew up amidst the wooded wilds of the Northwest, far from society and politics, and he clearly cherished the solitude he found there. One story has him perched for hours on a partially submerged rock at Tumwater Falls, dreamily sketching, unaware of the steadily rising tide until he was nearly cut off from the shore.

At 19 the budding young artist entered the Union Academy in Olympia, where his talent for depicting mountains and seascapes of the Northwest flourished. After attending art school in California, James took a position as staff artist at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer and later the Portland Oregonian, the region’s most prominent newspapers at a time when the Northwest was growing up beyond its pioneer roots. Young Pickett became known for his detailed, vivid depictions of Northwest landscapes, often delicately sketched from lonely vistas. One painting was granted a prominent place in the old Portland Art Gallery; others found their way into advertising copy.

Though his professional success did not appear inhibited, Jimmie’s mixed heritage is said to have weighed heavily upon him. As he matured, his Indian features became more prominent, and he seemed resigned to an artistic and emotional solitude. Regarding the prospect of marriage and perhaps children, James is reputed to have said, according to Archie Binns, “These crosses [of races] don’t belong. We won’t have any more of them.” His paintings, he felt, were his “children.”

Never strong in health, and prone to melancholy, Jimmie rapidly deteriorated in 1889, weakened by a combination of typhoid fever and tuberculosis. Rejecting an offer from his father’s widow for medical help in the East, Jimmie instead worked feverishly that summer on a final

Detail from an 1859 drawing of the village of Sehome on Bellingham Bay, attributed to George Pickett.
painting. Survivors of the SS Alaskan, wrecked en route to San Francisco, were lodged in a dingy Portland boarding-house run by a Mrs. Jones on the corner of Eighth and Salmon Streets. It was the same building in which the artist roomed. By convincing the recovering sailors to sit with him and describe the awful event, Jimmie produced a vivid painting, rich with the fear and pain of men facing death before their time.

Fellow boarder Ed McReavy described in a letter how “some people would go away crying after viewing the picture…the seamen who worked with him would break down, and I have seen them both crying while Jimmie strove to reproduce some detail.” He goes on to add, “During the time he was working on the picture, Jimmie was so depressed he could hardly sleep or eat, and I am sure this hastened his end.”

Exhausted and weak, Jimmie finished his work and promptly collapsed. Friends and boarders gathered in his shabby room for a bedside vigil. In these hours, his absent father’s shadow loomed large; McReavy recalled when sitting with Jimmie, “He asked me to read him a couple of letters from his father, General Pickett, and some others from his stepmother, describing the death of the General and announcing that he was to have his father’s saber, worn in the battle of Gettysburg.”

As the end neared, Jimmie asked Mrs. Jones to bring the painting to his bedside, along with his father’s cavalry sword. These were his last requests. He died there, at the age of 31, with the shipwreck and the sword, on August 28, 1889.

Jimmie Tilton Pickett received a nearly page-long eulogy from his colleagues at the Oregonian. In the somewhat stilted prose of the day, his short life was honored “as a picture of magnificent conception laid away half finished, as a beautiful poem half written, or a sweet sad song whose melody is shattered just as we begin to be enchanted by its music.” Whether Jimmie would have laughed or cried at such sentiments, he doubtless would have been flattered at the sanguine thought that “James Pickett will ever live in the memory of those who knew him best as one of the…rarest geniuses this Northwest has ever produced.”

His final painting was sold for $600, an astonishing sum for an oil painting by an unknown artist. The proceeds paid the funeral expenses and his bill with Mrs. Jones. Young Pickett was buried in the Portland Heights, the place from which he sketched Mount Hood, Mount St. Helens, and sunsets over the Willamette and Columbia rivers.

A year before he died, Jimmie returned to Bellingham to claim the house that bore his name. He sketched in vivid detail the prospering harbor town, no longer the wilderness in which his father commanded a fort and built a home. In 1890, a year after Jimmie’s death, the four villages nestled in Bellingham Bay began consolidating. The charter of a united city of Bellingham was signed in 1903.

Had he survived, Jimmie might have returned to the Pickett House, finally deeded to him from Sallie Corbell. He certainly would have continued painting. Perhaps he could have found some peace there, where his father and mother shared just a sketch of a life.

Though it has stood overlooking the bay for 150 years, the Pickett House actually housed a Pickett for less than a handful of years. It remains the Pickett House precisely for that lack; the shadow of its long-absent namesake defines the home’s identity. In return, it endures as a repository for his legend. The legend of George Pickett in the Northwest endures as just that—a great story and one that deserves to be told, albeit with the full knowledge of its imperfections. Perhaps the spirit of this fable lies with Pickett’s son Jimmie, who could lose himself in the great expanses of the Northwest and feel his pain and grief recede into the sketches and paintings he created of the wild land around him.

Matthew Ryan is a native of Bellingham and a graduate of the University of Washington. He unknowingly spent many summer afternoons under the shaded grove in southwest Portland where James Tilton Pickett was laid to rest.
In 1935, with her book *Bright Ambush*, Seattle native Audrey Wurdemann became the youngest person ever to win the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. She was 24 years old and, according to family records, a descendent of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Brought up in Seattle's affluent Highlands neighborhood, Wurdemann (1911–1960) began writing poetry at age seven. She attended St. Nicholas School for Girls on Capitol Hill, which later merged with Lakeside School, and graduated from the University of Washington at age 20. When she was only 15 she traveled with her parents to San Francisco to meet George Sterling, lauded at the time as California's greatest poet.

In *Tales of San Francisco*, Samuel Dickson recounts the meeting between the two: "Sterling did not have much patience with adolescent geniuses. But this child had something…. He looked at Audrey and said, 'Now, what do you want to do?' 'I want to learn to write great poetry,' she said. 'Someday I want to be able to describe all nature—the sky, the earth, the sunrise, and the sunset—everything!'"

Sterling was so impressed by this "adolescent genius" that one year later he wrote the foreword for Wurdemann's first book of poems, *The House of Silk* (1926), remarking, "Such a greatly promising poet is, indeed, a rara avis. I am grateful to the alleged Fates for such talent as this. Here is poetry, alluring and individual." Unfortunately, Sterling died before *House of Silk* appeared, but not before Wurdemann was able to insert a short elegy to Sterling that, in part, fulfills her earlier stated desire to "describe all nature":

Why is the sea bird calling  
Out on the billowed crest?  
Why is the wind-chant falling  
To a dirge for a soul at rest?  
Oh you, whose smile was sorrow,  
For you there's no more pain.  
Let the glad sun shine tomorrow.  
Theo it shine through rain.

Following publication of *House of Silk*, Wurdemann was admitted to the National League of American Pen Women and invited to attend the organization's convention in New York. At the convention she met Robert Frost, who had won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1924 (and would win it again in 1931). Frost's influence—his acuity of poetic form, thematic emphasis on nature, and metaphysical undercurrents—seems apparent throughout Wurdemann's poetry, including her poem "The Loneliness of Autumn":

I exorcise myself of this September,  
Of frost and falling leaves and harvest done;  
I will not keep their annals, not remember  
The loneliness of autumn in the sun."

Yet, where Frost is decidedly Modernist in his understanding of poetic form as "a momentary stay against confusion," for Wurdemann form is a means of honoring tradition, achieving transcendent beauty, and expressing one's deepest feelings—an orientation that places her more in the lineage of pre-Raphaelite poet Christina Rossetti than Robert Frost.

In fact, most of Northwest poetry in the early 20th century was, to quote Matthew Arnold, "wandering between two worlds, one dead,/ the other powerless to be born." As critics Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain note, late Victorian prosody, which "neither belongs to the Romantic modes nor meets the premises of modernism," remained particularly strong among early 20th-century women poets such as Audrey Wurdemann. Northwest women's poetry in this period was permeated by what Armstrong and Blain call "a politics of affect," which enabled women to be assertive through the ethereal yet powerful expression of feeling. One reviewer, commenting on Wurdemann's work, remarked on her "urge to walk eternally among rose gardens…[with] thoughts that soar on splendid wings." For Northwest women poets, this affect, with its emphasis on natural splendor, also enabled them to establish for themselves a necessary sense of regional purpose and identity. Indeed, with their exquisite attention to such iconic Northwest elements as rain, fir trees, and moss, Wurdemann's first two volumes of poetry, both of which were written in Seattle, have a clear Northwest inflection.

In 1932 Wurdemann married Lieutenant Lee Woods Parks, of Seattle, but less than a year later they divorced. Then, at age 22, she married Joseph Auslander, a poet from New York City whom she had met five years earlier. Auslander was already a well-established poet, and...
in 1937 he was appointed to the “chair of poetry” by the Library of Congress and served for the next four years as America’s poet laureate. Though residing in New York City, Wurdemann and Auslander returned to Seattle every summer for extended visits with her parents. The Seattle Times society page kept close tabs on these visits, at one point describing Wurdemann as “the talented young poetess of the deep-blue eyes, blue-black hair and luminous white skin,” and Auslander as “every bit the typical New Yorker in trim gray suit and orchid shirt.” Auslander, who was struck by Seattle’s “beauty, isolation, and originality,” shared Wurdemann’s disinclination toward Modernist literary trends. In the late 1930s, when the two coauthored a novel titled My Uncle Jan, about a Czech sculptor, Auslander said their intention was to buck “the current literary trend of neurotics and Freudian fantasies.”

While Audrey Wurdemann is not a Northwest poet who would be intimately identified with the region in the way that, for instance, Richard Hugo is, her early work—for which she received the most acclaim—is the distinct product of a period of cultural transition from the Victorian to the Modernist in the Northwest. In the three volumes that followed The House of Silk and Bright Ambush, the Northwest influence in Wurdemann’s poetry faded, which is understandable given that she had left Seattle when she married Auslander, moved to New York and then Florida, and never resided in the Northwest again. By mid century, her descent into literary obscurity had begun, and it was not until her death in 1960, at age 49, that local newspapers once more remembered her as one of Seattle’s favorite daughters—the ingénue poet who in the 1930s brought national literary acclaim to her hometown in the hinterlands.

Pete Donahue’s new novel, Clara and Merritt (Wordcraft of Oregon, LLC, 2010), is about longshoremen and Teamsters in Seattle in the 1930s and 1940s.
In 2000, the United States fell into political uncertainty over disputed presidential election results in the contest between George W. Bush and Al Gore. In 2004, history repeated itself in the ultra-close gubernatorial race in Washington state between Republican former state senator Dino Rossi and Democratic state attorney general Christine Gregoire.

Washington allows voting by mail as long as ballots are postmarked no later than election day, leading to a lag in the tabulation of votes. The 2004 Rossi–Gregoire race was so close that the lead see-sawed back and forth several times. The book under review is an account of the vote counting process in that election as well as the legal challenges and court decisions that followed, all of which did not conclude until seven months after the election. The author, a former communications director for the secretary of state’s office, tells the tale from the perspective of the office of Secretary of State Sam Reed, the one statewide official responsible for state and local elections.

After the second machine recount, Dino Rossi led by 42 votes, clearly a margin so thin that it essentially commanded Gregoire to demand a hand recount. There were two risks with that approach: first, she or the Democratic Party would have to pay the $740,000 cost; and second, her political future could be sacrificed if she did not prevail. Nonetheless, she chose to proceed and emerged with a 129-vote lead. It was not a clean lead, though, because as the recount rolled forward it revealed deficiencies in the process, including the discovery of caches of previously uncounted ballots in King County, a Gregoire stronghold. In addition, there were more than 1,400 illegal votes by felons, inconsistencies in the way disenfranchised voters were treated, provisional ballots that were counted before verification, and lack of reconciliation between the number of people credited with voting and the number of ballots actually cast. After the final recount, Gregoire was certified as the victor, on December 10, by just 129 votes, which amounted to .0046 of 1 percent of the total vote—the closest governor’s race in American history. Although Secretary Reed certified the election for Gregoire and she was duly sworn in as governor, Rossi challenged the result in court. Of course, public confidence in the process declined.

In May 2005, after a trial in Chelan County Superior Court, Judge John Bridges ruled against Rossi. Citing the statutes that govern elections in Washington, Judge Bridges found that the court was prohibited from setting aside election results due to illegal votes unless it could be shown that those votes changed the outcome—it was not enough that the number of illegal votes exceeded the margin of victory. In the end, Rossi lost because his lawyers could not prove that the illegal votes changed the result because they could not show how those voters voted.

This slim volume is dispassionate, carefully written, and as objective as possible. It is well-organized and relates legal arguments in an accessible manner. Many insets explain side issues and processes without disrupting the narrative. Appendices offer raw data and biographies, and footnotes give interested readers further information.

So, who really won the 2004 governor’s race in Washington? As Christopher Adolph, a professor and expert on statistics at the University of Washington, testified before Judge Bridges, it is impossible to determine conclusively from the “aggregate data” available. Or, as Florida State University professor Jeffrey Mondak put it, “It’s closer than technology and our capacity as humans [can] decipher…. [You] would do as well to flip a coin as to try to determine who actually won.”

W. Clinton Sterling is senior reference librarian and assistant professor of law at the Gonzaga University School of Law in Spokane.

The small communal group that took up residence on Queen Ann Hill in Seattle in late October 1968 became the Love Israel Family, “the largest and best known hippie-era commune in the Pacific Northwest.” Led by the charismatic Paul Erdmann (Love Israel), the group grew to over 300 members at its largest, dwindling to around 100 after major conflict led to mass defections in 1983. That year saw the removal of the remaining faithful to the Family’s ranch near Arlington, Washington. There the group remained until bankruptcy forced its sale and members relocated, some to China Bend in northeastern Washington in 2004. At the time LeWarne completed his research in 2008, Love and some followers continued to live near Bothell.

LeWarne based his account of “The Church of Jesus Christ at Armageddon” across its 40-plus-year history on extensive interviews with current and former members, newspapers, court records, and the few other scholarly sources that exist. The volume explains the group’s longevity and its adaptability, primarily through an examination of its internal structure and external circumstances.
LeWarne narrates the origin of the Love Israel Family and its relationship to other communal movements in the history of the United States as well as the abundant social experimentation of the 1960s. He presents the group’s basic beliefs, their spiritual disciplines, distinctive dress, their habit of taking new names, and their complex sexual and child-rearing practices. LeWarne details the Family’s centralized, charismatic authority structure, centered on Love. When Love’s behavior led key lieutenants to question his authority in 1983, that structure fractured but was not destroyed. Striking to LeWarne is the number who remained, though whether out of faithfulness to Love or to the bonds of communal life cannot be fully determined.

The volume tracks the internal cycle of the Family as its members moved through life. The need to care for their children altered many members’ perspectives on resource allocation and communal practices, and helped precipitate the 1983 division. Some of the most interesting parts of the book detail the influence on children growing up within and then leaving the Family.

LeWarne gives extensive attention to the Family’s economic life, which replicated a key tension of any communal group—managing economic self-sufficiency while remaining separate from the world. Successful economic enterprises, including a finishing/carpentry business and restaurants drew members away from the rhythms of the commune’s daily routine and brought them into greater regular contact with outsiders. Unsuccessful economic ventures, including clashes with the county over a land development plan and over-reaching for project financing, in the end propelled the Family into bankruptcy and the loss of the Arlington Ranch.

The most complete treatment of the Love Israel Family to date, LeWarne’s narrative, with its extensive notes and bibliography, provides a path for other researchers. This volume, a fitting successor to LeWarne’s classic Utopias of Puget Sound, is a welcome addition to the history of the Pacific Northwest, particularly for those readers interested in religion, communal life, and regional culture.

Patricia O’Connell Killen is the primary editor of Religion and Public Life in the Pacific Northwest: The “None” Zone (2004) and coeditor of the forthcoming critical edition of selected letters of A. M. Blanchet, the first Catholic bishop of Walla Walla and Nesqually (University of Washington Press).

“They Are All Red Out Here”  
Socialist Politics in the Pacific Northwest, 1895–1925  

During its prime years in the early 20th century the Socialist Party of America (SPA) experienced some of its greatest electoral successes in the four Pacific Northwest states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. Historian Jeffrey A. Johnson summarizes that experience in They Are All Red Out Here. Johnson correctly avers that “while other states and locales have often been regarded as the most energetic and determined examples of American socialism, the Pacific Northwest was home to some of the nation’s most active and hopeful socialists.” After a short and worthy bibliographic essay, Johnson attempts to set the record straight. His account first describes those circumstances and activities that helped make the region a fertile source for socialist ideas and organizations as he follows more than a decade of political activity and optimism to the disappointing decline after World War I and the repressive 1920s. The peak of electoral success came in 1912, when Eugene V. Debs garnered almost 12 percent of the region’s popular vote for president amidst local victories. This is a topic and a book that makes a useful contribution to the national accounts of socialism in which the region is often treated as a footnote.

Responses to industrialism in the Pacific Northwest had included a collection of “solutions” and a sprinkling of small socialist groups before the SPA was founded in 1901. That event provided the impetus for better-organized socialist efforts. Parties were organized at several levels (including very small communities), leaders emerged, and small socialist newspapers abounded.

The treatment of a region rather than individual states poses some problems. Despite attempts at a topical account framed by time periods, the narrative skips from one state or community to another so frequently and freely that the context sometimes becomes confused. There were differences in parties, personalities, and issues in these four states, and while Johnson attempts to blend them into themes, such distinctions all too frequently become lost before the narrative moves on to another theme, place, or incident. The book is largely an account of party activities. Prominent individuals become mere names as the reader moves from one to another. Except for Butte mayor Louis Duncan, we never really learn much about who these socialists were or why or how they became involved with such activities. Nor do we learn much about issues and experiences in the several states. Places are named with little real discussion of what they were like or why socialism seemed to thrive in some and not others. We rarely learn which issues prompted electoral success.

The author’s primary resources are newspaper accounts, particularly the socialist press, although several secondary books and occasional documents are noted. Short quotations, largely from newspapers, are sprinkled liberally throughout the text, many being of a general nature. Nevertheless, the book does fill a gap in the treatment of early 20th-century socialism in the United States.

Two curious quibbles: The book’s title would have been appropriate during the years when everyone understood that “red” described socialists, communists, and other liberals, but present-day media pundits have decreed “red” states to mean those dominated by the Republican Party and even ultraconservatives. Current readers and surely future ones might well wonder why the region was considered “red.” And strangely, the jacket illustration features Mount Rainier, which has no relevance to the region or the narrative.

Charles P. LeWarne has published widely on Pacific Northwest history. His most recent book is The Love Israel Family (2009).

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