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Do you have a story in your family history about an ancestor who tossed out family heirlooms? I do. I recall when my father rested his hand on a comb-back rocker in our living room and said to me, “I remember when my grandmother had one of these. It was her prized possession.”

I frowned and asked, “You mean this isn’t hers?” I had grown up thinking that it was.

He shook his head, “No. When she died, my grandfather tossed out everything that belonged to her. Everything.” I couldn’t believe what he was telling me. I had never heard this story before. “Why did he do that?” He shrugged. “It was too painful to think about her, I guess.”

At the time, that story made me angry. I had grown to adopt my parents’ adoration for antiques, particularly those that had been passed down in the family. I couldn’t imagine the scene where a husband throws out his wife’s favorite chair, denying the rest of the family the privilege of cherishing it. I felt, well, sort of cheated that this wasn’t really my great-grandmother’s rocking chair. My father had purchased one like it to replace the one that had been thrown away.

The story doesn’t make me angry anymore. Recently, my mother passed away. I sat down at her desk to go through some papers and my eyes came to rest on her eyeglasses sitting on her appointment book. I wasn’t prepared for the explosion of intense emotion—the glasses suddenly became her face, her voice, her touch. Their power over me was completely unexpected, and frightening.

Perhaps for the first time, I really understood what it felt like to want to get rid of objects that created pain. My mother’s “things” were all through the house. Even though she was gone, it was as if each of her possessions held out the possibility of hearing her voice again.

I think that truly understanding history requires life experience, requires living in the present. I have always been fascinated with the stories that objects tell, particularly the artifacts that are curated in museum collections. Sometimes these artifacts come with elaborate stories, illustrated with worn photos or brittle letters. More often, their stories are hidden. Curators hunger for the answer to the mystery—where has this object been? who owned it? and what made it important? How was it used? What were people’s feelings as they used it?

Years ago, when I was working on the Makah Reservation, gathering family oral histories, I often found that the decision of whether or not to tell a story, to preserve it, rested upon whether or not to reveal something painful. History is full of difficult stories. For the Makahs, their experience with the imposition of Christianity, English language, and “American” lifeways had created generations of memories, some too painful to share. Artifacts made by their ancestors, many of them in museums, bear these memories.

But this isn’t just a Native American story, an Irish story, or a Swedish story. It is a human story. Our personal memories, our family memories, our national memories are populated by objects—some beautiful, some not. For many of us, when we look at an object, whether on a desk or in a gallery, we are beset with emotion. Others of us are curious, hungry to know more, to know the story that is hidden there. These are the objects of power that our families, and our museums, celebrate.

Patricia P. Erikson is former curator of education at the Washington State Historical Society. She now consults and writes on her Heritage in Maine blog about communication, institutional development, civil rights, and cultural education.
Puget Sound Country, in the late 1840s, was on the cusp of rapid change. The first American settlers, known as the Simmons-Bush party, arrived in Tumwater on November 6, 1845. The Hudson's Bay Company was already fairly entrenched in the area, having established Fort Nisqually in 1833, but the arrival of American settlers on the scene threatened Great Britain's claim to the region. The Indians had adjusted to the presence of the Hudson's Bay Company, even learned to turn the situation to their advantage; but the Americans were different—less likely to seal relationships by taking Indian women as wives and very likely to build fences and enforce their concept of land ownership.

On the same day that the first American settlers arrived on Puget Sound, Catherine McLeod was born, the daughter of a Scottish father and native Indian mother. She saw her first glimpse of daylight in a temporary mat house along Clover Creek, not far from Fort Nisqually. Catherine McLeod's life story is one of resilience in the face of historic events and cultural stresses that wove themselves into the fabric of her life. Until the end of her days she remained strong but kind, and devoted to her family.

Catherine's mother, Cla-qua-dote (known to many as Mary), was the daughter of Scanewa, an important figure among the Indian people. He had wives and children living among the Cowlitz, Quinault, Nisqually, and Puyallup villages. Mary's mother was Scanewa's youngest wife, Haidawah. In 1828, when Mary was just a baby, her father was murdered while in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). Haidawah died several years later, and young Mary became a ward of the HBC, growing up in and around Fort Nisqually. In 1843, at age 16, she was living with the family of Joseph Carless, who was engineer aboard the HBC's steamer Beaver. Another member of the steamboat crew was 28-year-old John McLeod, whose job was chopping wood and stoking the steamer's boilers. He made many trips between Steilacoom, near Fort Nisqually; Fort Langley on the Fraser River; Sitka, Alaska, a Russian fur trading outpost; and Victoria, an HBC base of operations. It was around this time that McLeod and Mary met.

The two married in 1844, around which time McLeod switched from a seafaring life to work as head shepherd of the HBC's livestock operation at Whyatchie Station (Steilacoom Lake). Catherine was born the following year. What little we know of the family's history suggests that Catherine's father was, in the simplest of terms, distracted during the early years of her life. In 1849 he got caught up in the California "gold fever" and left Washington Territory for the San Francisco area. Not long thereafter, when rumors of his death reached Mary, her relatives insisted that she marry a wealthy older Indian who lived on the Humptulips River. Mary reportedly took Catherine with her, but the census of 1850 finds Catherine living with Charles and Elizabeth Wren, along with children of the Montgomery family. The Wren and Montgomery families lived along Muck Creek in an area now encompassed by Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

When he returned from California in February 1851, McLeod established
a farm along upper Muck Creek, on the eastern edge of territory claimed by the Puget Sound Agricultural Company (the HBC’s agrarian venture in Washington Territory). Finding Mary gone, he apparently entered into other relationships and fathered two sons with Puyallup Indian women—Edwin and John Jr. At some point, Catherine came to live with her father at his Muck Creek homestead.

The McLeod farm was a regular stopover for bands of Nisqually Indians who found it a good place for gathering camas, berries, and plums. Leschi, perhaps the most important leader of the Nisqually Indians at this time, would sometimes visit the McLeod residence. What had begun to develop into a relatively stable farm life for Catherine was disrupted by the growing discord between the American settlers and the Indians in the months after the territorial governor, Isaac Stevens, met with local tribes at the Medicine Creek Treaty Council on December 26, 1854.

When violence erupted in October 1855, most of the initial bloodshed occurred along the White River, a tributary to the Puyallup River, a short distance north of the McLeod farm. In March 1856, Governor Stevens ordered the arrest of John McLeod and four other former HBC employees on charges of aiding the enemy. He was held at Camp Montgomery on the outskirts of present-day Spanaway.

Upon her father’s arrest, 10-year-old Catherine was placed in the care of her neighbors. She was, however, compelled to return home to care for the menagerie of farm animals, many of them like pets to her. While there, she heard members of the volunteer militia as they approached on horseback. Terrified, Catherine hid in the loft above the living quarters of the house and peered out through a crack between the logs to watch as the territorial volunteers dismounted and went about helping themselves to whatever they could find. They fed her father’s grain to their horses and killed the McLeod’s only cow, cutting away barbecue-size chunks of the choicest meat and leaving the rest to rot on the ground. She saw them kill her pets—the pig given to her by the Smiths and her tame turkey gobbler. Below her, Catherine could hear the men ransacking her home and was petrified with fear when a shadowy figure climbed the ladder to peer into the dark loft where she hid. “My heart was beating so hard, I was certain he would hear it,” she told relatives.

The man apparently heard and saw nothing of interest and descended the ladder. Catherine continued to watch as the militiamen killed chickens and burned the granary to the ground, destroying some 500 bushels of wheat. After spending much of the night in terror, Catherine saw an opportunity during the predawn hours to slip out of the house and flee back to the Smiths’ house, where she knew she would be safe.

In view of the hostilities and McLeod’s arrest, Dr. William Tolmie, the HBC’s chief factor at Fort Nisqually, arranged to place Catherine in a safe home in Victoria. When it came time for McLeod and
the others to face court martial proceedings before militia officers appointed by Governor Stevens, the court concluded that it had no jurisdiction and ordered the men to be released.

Catherine, living with the family of Chaplain Edward Cridge, was provided with some schooling but mostly did household chores. She spent four years in Victoria, returning to her father's home in 1860 at age 14. Hard work and a tumultuous family life may have made it difficult for Catherine to derive much benefit from her schooling. In a deposition she later admitted, “I learned to read a very little when I was in school, which I soon forgot when I returned to my people.”

Soon after Catherine's return to Washington Territory, she met and married an American settler named Daniel M. Mounts. As she put it, the ceremony was “performed in the old Indian custom” on May 1, 1860. Like many other pioneers, Mounts had travelled to Washington from Iowa via ox-drawn wagon in 1851. He established his land claim at Dickinson Point, which is at the mouth of Henderson Inlet in Thurston County. The federal government hired him in 1857 to serve as Indian agent and agricultural instructor for the Nisqually Indian Reservation.

Catherine appreciated Mounts’s relationship with the local Indians. She said, “My husband was never recognized by any reservation but was considered a very good friend by all of the Indians. He could talk the Indian Chinook jargon as well as any Indian.” The couple lived on the reservation until what Catherine called “the change in politics about 1861.” Mounts then became serious about earning the money needed to buy a good farm. He started travelling extensively, mostly in Oregon and California, dealing in cattle. He also stayed with his parents, taking care of his ill father, Thomas J. Mounts, who lived near Gate City in southwestern Thurston County. For a brief period, at least, it might have appeared that Daniel Mounts had abandoned Catherine.

At this time, Catherine’s marriage to Mounts was à la façon du pays (in the fashion of the country), not recognized under American law. It is a matter of public record that Catherine was legally married at her father's home in February 1861 to one John Walmsley, an Irish immigrant who had been a soldier based at Fort Steilacoom. It is conceivable that Catherine's marriage was part of a scheme put together by unscrupulous characters who may have been manipulating John McLeod, perhaps in an attempt to wrest away possession of his productive Muck Creek farm. McLeod had a weakness for drinking and gambling. Mary, who eventually returned to live with McLeod, expressed disgust with him and his “cultus” (no good) Scottish friends, who drank their grain alcohol mix, played euchre for stakes of cut plug tobacco, and stayed up all night.

One of the men likely to have been involved in the late night carousing was a neighbor, Charles McDaniels, who had been accused of murdering his mining partner some years prior to arriving in Washington Territory. Edward Huggins (HBC clerk and long-time Pierce County resident), recorded background information on McDaniels and another person, Andy Burge—men of questionable character who somehow found their way into the McLeod home. In later years, according to Huggins, McDaniels and Burge clearly preyed upon one area homesteader, extorting some horses out of him. Not long thereafter, in January 1870, McDaniels was killed by Pierce County vigilantes enraged at his brazen attempts to steal others’ land claims.

When Catherine McLeod married John Walmsley in her father’s home in 1861, Andy Burge presided and Charles McDaniels served as witness. In hindsight, these circumstances appear suspicious and peculiar. Perhaps even stranger, John McLeod had had his own wedding ceremony just a few weeks before his daughter's, when he married Emma Kedge. This was a woman who a decade earlier, as the new bride of Richard Thornhill, had run off with two sailors barely six weeks after arriving in Washington Territory from England. Emma became well-known for her brief and frequent marriages, but this one may have been the briefest. Neither Catherine’s nor her father’s wedding seems to have amounted to much. When the announcement of Catherine’s marriage appeared in the newspaper, a notice below it informed readers that Emma Kedge had left McLeod's bed and board and that he would not pay debts contracted by her. It does not appear that Catherine’s descendants ever heard a word about either of these relationships.
The series of suspicious and disconcerting events continued the following summer when McLeod became a victim of notorious ruffian James Riley, a man accused of a long series of assaults, rapes, and attempted murders. Though apparently violent by nature, it is clear that Riley hated Indians and may have hated John McLeod for associating with them.

On August 18, 1861, Riley stabbed and killed an Indian named Scamooch outside the home of Henry Bradley. It was a drunken scene and John McLeod was among those who had been drinking. One witness testified that Riley had a habit of staying sober while plying his intended victims with liquor. On this night, after stabbing Scamooch multiple times, Riley pummeled McLeod with a rock as large as his two fists, pounding his face to a jelly and leaving him near death. It has been suggested that Riley was motivated by a desire to take the $400 McLeod was carrying or that the two had had a dispute over a woman. Testimony in the case and Riley's behavior patterns suggest racial prejudice as the most likely motive.

John Walmsley was present at the scene of the murder and assault that night. One witness testified that Riley boasted of killing McLeod and threatened to kill Walmsley. Strangely, Riley was acquitted of both the murder and the assault he committed that night. He moved to King County where, in 1864, he was again charged with murder, this time for killing members of the Snoqualmie tribe.

While McLeod and Walmsley were suffering the abuses of James Riley, there is reason to believe that the relationship between Catherine and Walmsley had dissolved. In September 1861, Daniel Mounts was arrested and charged with adultery. The primary witnesses in the civil case were Andy Burge and Thomas Lowe. In the 1860 federal census, Lowe is reported as living in the same household as Mounts. In a court case titled “Territory of Washington v. Daniel Mounts,” the government claimed that Daniel Mounts and Catherine Walmsley “on the first day of June AD 1861 and on each successive day inclusive up to and including the 25th day of August AD 1861 have been living together in a state of open and notorious adultery....” The indictment was dropped when challenges were raised concerning the legality of the charge and the fact that it was brought by a court and a prosecuting attorney with no jurisdiction. On August 4, 1862, Catherine and Daniel welcomed their first child, Christina.

Without stating the reason, Catherine filed for divorce from John Walmsley in April 1864. Thus ended a very strange chapter in the lives of Catherine and her father, a chapter that involved two apparently loveless marriages and an assortment of unsavory characters. Fortunately, there were happier chapters to come.

In about 1866, Daniel Mounts realized his dream of owning a farm at the mouth of the Nisqually River. He bought the 320 acres comprising the Joel Meyer's donation land claim and built a one-room home among the cottonwoods along the edge of the Nisqually River. This is where Catherine and Daniel Mounts began their path toward prosperity and stability. The couple reaffirmed their marriage according to local law in 1867. Beginning with the birth of John in 1868, a child was born in the Mounts family about every two to three years, until there was an even dozen of them—Daniel, Catherine, and 10 children.

A flood of the Nisqually River in 1869 partly destroyed the Mounts home. Daniel negotiated purchase of Philander Washburn’s property, expanded the farm considerably, and built a new home near a spring-fed well at the headwaters of Red Salmon Creek. When the railroad put in a new rail line in the early 1890s, the couple received a good price for a right-of-way. Now they could build the home they really wanted—a substantial two-story frame house with three brick chimneys, lath-and-plaster interior walls, a grand covered balcony over a large front porch, and a picket fence surrounding the yard. The home had eight bedrooms, including...
two long dorm-style rooms—one for the boys and one for the girls. The front door was inset with stained glass panes, and there were matching outbuildings—a milk house, a woodshed, and a privy.

Soon after completion of the main house, the business side of the operation received needed improvements. The farm soon boasted a barn equipped for a productive dairy and adequate hay storage. There were quarters for the hired men, a horse barn, carriage house, root cellar, and various poultry houses and other small buildings.

The house was a landmark along the Nisqually River. For travelers between Tacoma and Olympia it was a common stopping place. Teachers at the local school frequently stayed at the Mounts home as there were no other accommodations close to the school. Letters from this era survive, mostly from family friends and people who had visited the farm to buy produce, thanking Daniel and Catherine for their hospitality and expressing how much they enjoyed their visit. The Mounts home was a happy place, where Daniel presided over dinner at the big dining room table and the Mounts children played music in the evening.

Catherine managed her household masterfully. She kept the lanterns stocked with kerosene, canned and stored large quantities of fruits and vegetables, and made regular trips to the milk house. Water for baths and laundry had to be hauled from the spring and heated on the wood stove. With 10 children, regular guests, and short-term boarders, there was plenty to do.

Despite her busy daily regimen, Catherine found time to do other things. She and her husband were involved in the local social scene, attending parties at the homes of friends and participating in activities at the Nisqually Social Club. Catherine went to tribal gatherings whenever she could and kept up her relationships with Indian friends. She took fastidious care of her precious collection of Indian baskets, trade beads, carvings, and shawls—many of them given to her by her mother—and added to it from time to time, receiving some items as gifts, trading for others, and occasionally buying something particularly fine. Once a year Catherine would pull out the entire collection of baskets, build a small smudge fire in the yard, and carefully pass each basket through the smoke, as she said, “to keep the bugs from getting in and eating them up.” After this treatment, each basket was returned to its individual white cloth bag and stacked, one basket inside the next, so they could be returned to safe storage. This care kept the colors fresh and unfaded.
After four decades of marriage, Catherine lost her husband in July 1904. He suffered paralysis from multiple bee stings and died within a few days at the age of 71. Most of her activities continued to revolve around her family. For a time, her son Frank and his wife Kathlene lived with her in the big Mounts home. In later years, Catherine’s daughter Belle lived with her.

At age 64, Catherine took steps to advance herself and her family under the new order that had developed over her lifetime. The United States government was offering land allotments to Indians as compensation for the vast acreages of Indian homelands that had been transferred to private ownership over the course of Catherine’s life. Her sworn three-page deposition of February 1909 detailed her ancestry and the major events of her life and provided the basis for her and her immediate descendants to receive land allotments on the Quinault Indian Reservation.

Over time, Catherine’s descendants benefitted, to varying degrees, from these allotments. Some received considerable sums of money from harvested timber. Others were advised to take their allotments out of trust and subsequently lost them for failure to pay local taxes. Some of Catherine’s descendants still retain their allotments.

Delbert McBride reported that some of his earliest memories place him in the Mounts home, listening to his great-grandmother Catherine (McLeod) Mounts, and his grandmother Christina (Mounts) McAllister converse with friends. “They were talking softly, sometimes in Nisqually, but more often in Chinook jargon, laughing at times over something uproariously funny—a legend or incidents that took place many years ago—or sighing over things that had happened.” Delbert wrote that he had a small boy’s fascination with the women’s speech patterns, and although he understood very little of what they said, sometimes they would tell the Indian stories in English. “I was always fascinated to see the Indian ladies come in their long calico skirts, shawls, blankets, and brilliant head scarves. At times they stayed for days and brought tasty hard-dried salmon and their tightly woven, purple-stained baskets for picking juicy blackberries at the edge of our woods.”

Catherine was abundantly proud of her Native American heritage. Many times she was called “Siwash” and endured snubs and insults because of her mixed blood. Regardless, she taught her children to be proud of their Indian ancestry, proud of the native nobility that put them in a class known as “Tyee Tillicum,” a reference to their kinship and friendship with Pacific Northwest Indian leaders. Charles Forespring, whose grandmother Katie Mounts was Daniel and Catherine’s youngest offspring, recalled, “My mother always said that she wished she could be one-tenth of the woman her mother was and my grandmother always said the same of her mother. They were three great ladies.” Catherine McLeod Mounts died on August 20, 1933, at the age of 87. Several great-grandchildren, still alive today, were lucky enough to have spent time with this good-hearted woman who led such a remarkable life.

The authors are both descendents of Catherine McLeod Mounts. Kelly R. McAllister is a wildlife biologist who has worked for the State of Washington for 28 years, currently in the Department of Transportation. Annabelle Mounts Barnett, now 88, lives in California and is the youngest and last surviving of Catherine’s 28 grandchildren. The authors dedicate this story to Delbert McBride, one of Catherine’s many great-grandchildren, whose interest in the past and his Native American ancestry kept the family’s history alive.
IDA B. SMITH (1860–1923) moved to Olympia in the late 1800s to join her sister, Alice M. Price, who was also a photographer. This self portrait, dated 1895, was taken in Smith’s Olympia studio. The neck brace used by photographers to help sitters maintain a rigid position is visible in this portrait.

Like many early photographers, Smith came out West to try her hand at commercial portraiture during the mining boom. She and her husband worked as photographers in the Tonopah and Goldfield mining districts of Nevada before settling in Olympia. Genealogical records suggest Smith was a widow, living alone with her son Roy, by the year 1900. The Historical Society has several of her images, donated in 1952 by Patricia McCrady Miller. 📸

—Maria Pascualy

To donate prints or negatives of regional historical interest to the Washington State Historical Society’s photograph collection, please contact Ed Nolan, special collections curator (253/798-5917 or enolan@wshs.wa.gov). To purchase a photo reproduction of an image in the Society’s collection, visit Washingtonhistory.org and click on Collections, or contact Fred Poyner IV, digital collections curator (253/798-5911 or fpoyner@wshs.wa.gov).
Looking Backward

Edward Bellamy’s Impact in Washington

On April 28, 1932, 16-year-old Lester Benedict addressed the Economic Equality Club in the Lynden High School auditorium, speaking on “the appalling inequalities of our economic order.” His speech was printed in the inaugural issue of the Bellingham-based publication Economic Equality, whose masthead declared it to be “Devoted to the Philosophy of Edward Bellamy.” The youthful orator saw in the writings of this 19th-century author-turned-reformer a solution to the economic devastation of the Great Depression. He declared, “In my opinion, God has already fulfilled Himself...by submitting to us this Bellamy plan; by enabling Bellamy to look ahead into the future, to see the conditions as they are today and to offer a remedy.”

Benedict’s insight was not isolated. Many other Washingtonians shared his enthusiasm, the earliest taking an interest in the works of Edward Bellamy by the first year of statehood—1889—shortly after the publication of his utopian romance, Looking Backward: 2000–1887. Benedict’s speech provides a doorway to understanding Bellamy’s impact on Washington from the late 1880s to the 1930s and offers an intriguing perspective on the reform agendas and idealistic visions of Washingtonians like Benedict, who found inspiration in this man from Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts.

Edward Bellamy was born in 1850, the son and grandson of ministers. After a brief enrollment in college and travel in Europe, he tested his hand at law. Dissatisfied, Bellamy turned to journalism, first writing for a New York paper and then joining his brother Charles to launch the Springfield (Massachusetts) Penny News. While also starting a family with his wife Emma, whom he married in 1882, he had several short stories published from 1875 to 1889. Prior to writing the utopian romance that would change his life and lead to a reform movement that attracted enthusiasts across the nation and abroad, Bellamy penned four novels (the first, Six to One: A Nantucket Idyl) — which received little acclaim.

Ticknor and Company of Boston published Looking Backward: 2000–1887 in January 1888. The novel tells the story of Julian West, an affluent, snobbish Bostonian who, having engaged the services of a mesmerist to help him sleep, is put into a trance on the evening of May 30, 1887. During the night, his home burns to the ground, entombing him in a specially constructed vault he had built under the house to shut out all distractions. Over a century passes before Dr. Leete, a retired physician, discovers West and revives him in the year 2000. The world West awakens to is a utopian society in which industry has been nationalized and almost all of late-19th-century society’s other ills have been overcome. From that point onward, the novel involves West learning about these remarkable changes. Dr. Leete’s daughter Edith provides a romantic interlude as she and West become century-crossed lovers by the end of the novel.

Although sales were slow during the first months following its publication and reviews were mixed at best, a fast-growing number of reform-minded individuals saw a message of hope in the economic model described in Looking Backward. Soon booksellers could hardly keep up with the demand. Within three years of its release, publishers in Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Belgium, France, Switzerland, and Portugal translated the novel, and various English editions appeared in the United States, England, New Zealand, and Germany. Bellamy quickly became a celebrity...
Washingtonians showed interest in the movement early on. Four months before Washington became the 42nd state, the July 1889 issue of The Nationalist included an item from "WASHINGTON TERRITORY, Tacoma." It noted, "Aubin G. G. Locke, of 1305 Pacific Avenue, desires to form a Club in that city. He says: 'We have a young progressive country about to bud into Statehood. It would be desirable to impress our ideas on the coming constitution of that State.' All Nationalists having friends in Tacoma will aid the cause by getting them to correspond with him." Two months later The Nationalist ran additional information on the Tacoma Club:

A Nationalist Club was formed in this city, July 25, with 25 charter members. The club will meet the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month at the parlors of the First Unitarian Church. Rev. W. E. Copeland, the pastor of the above named church, who was largely instrumental in founding the club, is President; Robert Stevens, Treasurer; and Miss Ida Wright, Secretary. Rev. Mr. Copeland lectures Sunday evenings on Looking Backward, which results in increasing the membership.

That same issue reported that Dr. G. W. Carey, of North Yakima, was "zealously engaged in forming a club." These two Washington clubs appeared during a period of rapid growth in the Nationalist movement. By the first anniversary of the Nationalist Club in Boston, there were nearly 50 such clubs in the United States, with many more still in the formation stage.

Information on the club formed in North Yakima appeared in the March 1890 issue of The Nationalist: "North Yakima reaches across the continent and desires to be enrolled with the great movement of 'Nationalism.' We organized Saturday, Feb. 15th, and elected as president, Wm. Lee, and secretary, J. H. Needham. Although few in members, we are strong in the hope of good time[s] coming." The June 1890 issue carried an extensive report from the Tacoma club that suggested a shift to a more political agenda among the Nationalist clubs:

Resolutions were...drawn up to be presented to the City Council praying for municipal control of light, water, and street railway plants. These were also to be indorsed [sic] by other organizations who believe as we do. An independent (citizens') ticket has

and wrote articles for such publications as Twentieth Century, North American Review, and Ladies Home Journal.

By early 1889 a fledgling group formed to espouse the economic plan in Bellamy's novel. Adherents called it the Nationalist movement in reference to the nationalization of industry that was central to the new society depicted in Looking Backward. Nationalist clubs, first formed in Boston and other eastern cities, quickly spread across the country. A monthly publication, The Nationalist, appeared in May 1889, making stories by prominent authors and news of the movement available to audiences around the globe. California became a hotbed of Nationalist activity with clubs formed in Los Angeles, Oakland, and elsewhere. The movement spread abroad, with clubs forming in a number of countries, including England, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands.
been formed recently to run at the coming May city election, and one of its plans is that the city shall own and operate the above-mentioned plants. The prime organizers of this ticket are much interested in Nationalism, and we hope to win them over.

The issue of municipal ownership of light and water was of particular interest in a number of Washington cities. The report then provided details on typical club membership and activity:

The Club has now enrolled 52 members, but not all are active. The meetings average in attendance 20 or thereabouts. A few ladies are enlisted as members. At their meetings an original article is generally read by some member, together with selections read by some one from current sociological literature. The members are looking forward to brighter things as the Club has obtained permanent quarters in conjunction with the Tacoma Theosophical Society; and together with them they will open their rooms every evening as a free reading room where reform literature of all sorts may be found.

W
hile the Nationalist movement continued to grow in early 1891, it shifted from a “reading club” focus to one with specific political goals. Reflecting this, the publisher phased out The Nationalist, ending with the March–April 1891 issue, which included an item from White Salmon, Washington, on “Co-operative Horticulture” that claimed: “In its methods it aims at adopting the best features of the joint-stock or co-operative system, but relies more on the fundamental principles of nationalism for its permanent character.” The writer directed readers to contact Jewett Nurseries in White Salmon for additional information on the enterprise.

News from the Nationalist clubs appeared in some other publications. The magazine Twentieth Century included this letter from J. L. Johnson, the Tacoma club’s secretary:

Your article, and the extracts from Mr. Lloyd's book in your issue of June 12, portraying the outrageous injustice inflicted on the Spring Valley coal miners by the railway and coal-mining barons, was read before our club by Judge Frank T. Reid, of this city, a member of the club, at its regular weekly meeting, Monday, June 23. A resolution was unanimously passed and sent to the General Executive Board of the Nationalist clubs at Boston, requesting it to get up a memorial to the Government Bureau of Labor, petitioning that body to institute a special inquiry into the outrages; that this be done with...the view of memorializing Congress for the Government to work either all or part of the coal-mining industry on the same principle that it works the postal service, the government printing office at Washington, and other industries, as the present method of running the coal mines by corporations has resulted, and will continue to result, in rioting and bloodshed, and imperils the very existence of society....

The spirit of this letter reflected the Nationalist leaning toward a more political and reformist agenda.

As The Nationalist nears the end of its brief run, Bellamy initiated and edited a weekly publication called The New Nation, which made its appearance on January 31, 1891, and included articles, editorials, and reports of reform activities on several fronts. A column on “News from the Clubs” briefly appeared but was replaced by a recurring column called “Nationalistic Drift,” which covered a wide range of topics. This shift in the principal publication of the movement reflected not only the entry into political activism but also, as the above letter suggests, a growing relationship with the American Federation of Labor, the Knights of Labor, and other reform groups. Ultimately, the Nationalists joined forces with the Populist Party, which essentially absorbed Bellamy-inspired reformers as the 1892 elections drew near, although many still held on to a Nationalist identity.

Evidence of activities and interest in the Nationalist agenda in the state of Washington appeared often in the pages of The
New Nation. The “Nationalistic Drift” column included reports from various other publications as well as information of particular interest to readers of Bellamy’s weekly paper. Columns and features provided news from around the state. Most frequent were reports of efforts to bring water and electricity under municipal control—viewed as a step toward the Nationalist goals or, as the People’s Advocate in “Chealis” [sic] is quoted as saying in the February 18, 1893, issue of The New Nation: “Municipalism is nationalism in miniature.” These reports came from around the state, including Ballard, Seattle, Spokane, Spokane Falls, Kent, Colfax, New Whatcom, “Paylup” [sic], Walla Walla, Oakesdale, Tacoma, and Centralia. Although the likelihood of Nationalists being significantly involved in these achievements is questionable, The New Nation and its readership saw these as steps toward the realization of their objective.

The “Nationalistic Drift” column also included reports and views on other topics in Washington that fell within the scope of the Nationalists’ concerns. The March 14, 1891, issue included this assessment:

The vast mineral resources of this new state are elaborately shown in the report of State Geologist George A. Bethune. Will private parties be allowed to get control of all these magnificent natural resources, that should be held in trust by the state or nation for the benefit of the whole people, and corporate monopoly and greed cause the same misery and degradation in this new field as now exists in the mining sections of Pennsylvania and Illinois?

The following week the column printed a resolution from the Knights of Labor Assembly No. 7652 regarding the arrest in Spokane Falls of “a poor girl for washing a few pieces of clothing without a laundry license.” The resolution suggested that “at the same time about 600 women were supporting themselves by prostitution…in open violation of law—and were protected by the chief of police and city council.” Thus the assembly resolved, “That we sympathize with the chief of police and city council of the city, or any one else whose sense of justice is so dull as to make such a mistake as that above-mentioned possible.” The lumber industry was the focus of another report in the April 25, 1891, column: “The lumber mills in the vicinity of Seattle, to the number of 19, have formed a combination, agreed upon a scale of prices, fixed a forfeit for deviating from it, and now hold the consumers at their mercy.”

In 1892 politics became a central topic in The New Nation, and reports from Washington frequently appeared. The January 9, 1892, issue, under the headline “Nationalism in the Air,” included the following report from “G. W. C.” of Spokane: “The people’s party wants to nominate a man for president in 1892 whom they can elect; but he must be a thorough nationalist.” The author, later identified as lawyer and activist George W. Carey, appears several times in reports in The New Nation. “P. H. of Stanwood, Wash.” was quoted in a column of “Nationalism in the Field” in the February 13, 1892, issue: “The Farmer’s Alliance and the Knights of Labor are at present working to the end of establishing co-operation and bringing all the industrial class together. It is hoped through this move to bring us a step nearer to nationalism.”

The New Nation increasingly scanned the developing Populist Party platform for the inclusion of Nationalist planks and, again, highlighted news from Washington. In the May 14, 1892, issue, under the headlines “Nationalism in Politics” and “Politics Improved by the Infusion,” was the following report: “Word comes from the state of Washington that the St. Louis platform has roused the farmers to a great pitch of enthusiasm. There were counties in the state, so a correspondent wrote, ‘in which the old parties will not get 25 votes between them.’” Although the principal goals of Populism had been discussed in a previous meeting, the St. Louis platform, generated from a convention held in that city in February 1892, laid them out clearly.

Following the 1892 election, The New Nation reported on the Populist vote in Washington, where James B. Weaver received 19,264 votes for president and Cyrus Wilbur Young received 23,639 votes for governor. Early in 1893 the continuing interest in the Populist agenda in Washington, particularly as it related to Bellamy’s Nationalism, appeared in the newspaper. The “Things Said About the Cause and Us” column in the February 11, 1893, issue contained two contributions from Washington residents. G. W. C. of Spokane wrote: “The nationalistic idea is fast taking root in Washington soil, and in 1896 a political platform that does not ‘bristle’ with nationalism will not be supported.” "E. S. of Redmond, Wash.” offered a similar perspective that also reflected his personal background: “Nationalism is being considered here among the people’s party men, and we are having your points discussed in the alliance. I, myself, being of Swiss birth, take to nationalism readily, it being there to some extent in operation.” Later that spring in the “Nationalistic Drift” column of the May 13, 1893, issue, George W. Carey presented more of his views on the Bellamy plan:

Of course ridicule will be heaped upon those who first advance the idea that money and competition are evils, and therefore unnecessary, but ridicule is not argument. Under nationalism there will be but one corporation, and that will be our country. Nothing is impossible for 65 millions of people to accomplish when they work together. A railroad can be built across the continent in 60 days when we become one corporation, or as soon as each county or township can build across its section.

Like the Carey’s observations, some of the more intriguing Washington contributions in The New Nation were those of editors and individuals regarding the Bellamy plan or The New Nation itself. The Tacoma Globe was quoted in the “How the New Nation is Received” column in the May 9, 1891, issue: “If Mr. Bellamy’s health hold [sic] out, we shall have in this publication the best presentiment in advanced social views now published in America.” “A Practical Suggestion” from “a subscriber from the new state of Washington” appeared in the March 12, 1892, issue:
I believe in nationalism because I am a Christian. Nationalism follows closer to Christ's teachings than any other method of reform as proposed by others. I think that if societies were organized within churches and taught by religious persons as a matter of conscience, of justice and brotherly love, it would take a deeper and more enduring hold upon the men and women of this republic than by any other means. As to The New Nation, it interests me more than any other paper and is gladly welcomed.

The May 28, 1892, issue had a column—"From the New Nation Mail Box"—that included this entry:

E. A. W. of Fort Canby, Wash. – This subscriber is over 80 years of age. He originally subscribed through me for your paper. I met him a few days ago for the first time since, and as he handed me the money for his renewal, he said: "I am too old and infirm to read much myself; but The New Nation is the kind of a paper I like to have laying around for others to pick up and read."

This report from the Northwestern Tribune–Rural of Spokane appeared under "Miscellaneous" in the August 19, 1893, issue of The New Nation:

From the present political parties, from the present religion must arise a grander, nobler, purer, refined manhood. And the present order of things will be but the manure out of which shall grow and develop the new race. We are unconsciously marching to a diviner civilization. Edward Bellamy may yet live to see, in some measure at least, his plan of human life fulfilled.

And in the same issue, in the section titled "Things Said About the Cause and Us," was this comment from "Mrs. M. H." of Spokane: “You will never know the comfort your journal brings to sore hearts in times that try men’s souls.”

Unfortunately for Mrs. M. H. and other subscribers of The New Nation, the comfort it brought would not last much longer. For a variety of reasons, from the economic problems of 1893 to Bellamy's frail health, the final issue of The New Nation appeared on February 3, 1894. As Bellamy wrote in the issue: "Heavy sacrifices have been made to maintain the paper, and while not a dollar of money or an hour of gratuitous labor is regretted, the time came when no more could be done."

With the demise of this national publication, the fate of the Nationalist movement seemed to have been sealed. Although some local clubs continued to meet, much of the energy of those involved in the formation of such clubs was redirected to other reform activities or to their own economic survival in the aftermath of the Panic of 1893. Without this national organ of the movement, it became increasingly difficult to track local activities in Washington related to the Nationalists' agenda.

Bellamy's influence on other Northwest reformers and politicians is difficult to pinpoint, although there are some indications of at least indirect impacts. In Washington, John R. Rogers, elected governor in 1896, penned a novel that in its title borrowed from Bellamy's popular work. Looking Forward, or, The Story of An American Farm was serialized in the Kansas Commoner, a Farmer's Alliance newspaper that Rogers published in 1889, and then a revised and partly rewritten form of the novel appeared in 1898. Other than the title, however, there is little of Bellamy's influence in this romantic view of life on a Kansas farm. However, in a short booklet published in 1895, Homes for the Homeless, Rogers took direct aim at Bellamy and Nationalism, particularly in a chapter titled “False Hopes.” Here, Rogers discusses perceived defects of Bellamy's system, although he begins with some acknowledgment of the book's impact:

A few years ago Edward Bellamy published a very readable romance which he called Looking Backward. This was widely read and produced a very marked effect upon the public mind. In this book, which evidently drew its inspiration from Plato's Republic and More's Utopia, Mr. Bellamy supplies the defect which we have noted by the institution of a military form of enlistment and government.

Rogers is wary of certain aspects of the Nationalist scheme, particularly what Bellamy called the Industrial Army:

Mr. Bellamy has since named his dream "nationalism," and has a large number of followers throughout the country; indeed, most generous people are quite ready to sympathize with his views, to a greater or less extent. It is, however, now beginning to be perceived by many, who at first counted themselves as "nationalists," that this system contains many serious defects. Readers will remember that Mr. Bellamy, very wisely, makes no mention of "the land question," has nothing to say of the country, or of farms or farmers. All his accounts of life a hundred years hence relate to the manners and customs in vogue in cities.

It is this oversight of agrarian interests that Rogers finds particularly annoying in Bellamy's utopia and he uses some thinly disguised sarcasm to express his thoughts on Bellamy's approach:

He certainly was quite shrewd in the making of his story to say nothing of the farm, for when city streets are entirely covered with awnings or "omnibus umbrellas" on rainy days, the city everywhere brilliantly lighted by electricity and "credit cards" free to every body, entitling all to seats at hotel tables and the opera, etc., etc., it will surely need the whole “industrial army” to keep the farmers, and especially the farmer's boys, from rushing in and taking complete possession of the whole “show.”

Rogers takes exception to many aspects of the Nationalist agenda and states, “Mr. Bellamy's attempt is the old one of the abolition of private property, veiled under euphonious names and concealed in a story.” He continues:

Looking Backward was, it seems to me, rightly named, but men should look forward. To hold men together in military organiza-
tion, as a permanent proposition, with the idea of giving each one “a good time,” is surely a low idea of the vast possibilities of humanity. If a good time is the aim, each citizen will be sure that he is not having quite so good a time as his neighbor, and inside of 30 days after the launching of “the co-operative commonwealth,” if “the army” can vote and the initiative and referendum are in use, trouble will begin.

Despite Rogers’s less-than-supportive views on Bellamy and the Nationalist plan, others found elements of Bellamy’s ideals even among the agricultural communities in Washington. The People’s Advocate, published in Chehalis, offered this assessment in its September 24, 1897, issue: “Had Edward Bellamy visited the hop fields of Lewis County, he might have witnessed the actual working of his ideal state in which all kinds and classes of people performed the same service and received credits of the same value....”

Some sought to achieve the actual working of the Bellamy plan in an organized manner. The Glennis Cooperative Industrial Company, established in 1894 on 166 acres near Eatonville, 17 miles south of Tacoma, can be viewed as a direct impact of the Nationalist movement. A few details of the Glennis community are known—it had as many as 30 members at one point and operated a dairy, school, and blacksmith shop. Members soon found the rules in the Bellamy-inspired community too strict, and the colony dissolved less than two years after it started—a fate similar to a colony named for Bellamy established on the Oregon coast in 1897. Murray Morgan in The Last Wilderness (1955) offered this assessment of the Glennis Cooperative’s failure: “Either something was missing in Bellamy’s how-to-do-it, or the people involved weren’t up to being characters in a novel.” Bellamy, in fact, was not in favor of such colonies, as they drew away from the broader goals of Nationalism, a topic he addressed several times in the pages of The New Nation.

Much of what is known of the Glennis experiment comes from three of its members who left the colony in early 1896 to seek a new location for another attempt at communal living with a focus on tolerance and independence rather than the cooperative nature of Glennis. Oliver A. Verity (who acquired the land for the Glennis colony), George H. Allen, and B. E. Odell located land on the north shore of Joe’s Bay on Puget Sound, where they established the Home Colony. After clearing land and building structures, the founders developed principles for what would become the Mutual Home Association in January 1898. Far from being a Bellamy colony, Home was a reaction to some of the Nationalistic principles.

Several other colonies established in Washington in the late 19th century had ties to Bellamy and the Nationalist movement. Charles P. LeWarne’s Utopias of Puget Sound, 1885-1915, continues to be the principal history written on these and other colonies. In it, LeWarne examines the Equality and Burley colonies, both of which had some Bellamy connections. Equality in Skagit County was named in November 1897 for the sequel to Looking Backward, which Bellamy wrote to address some of the criticisms of his earlier novel. The experience of the Nationalist movement also helped shape the details of Equality, published in early 1897. The Brotherhood of the Co-operative Commonwealth, founders of Equality, sought to demonstrate some elements of the Bellamy plan but with a particularly socialistic emphasis. The first building erected there was Fort Bellamy.

Established in 1898 in Kitsap County, Burley, also known as The Co-operative Brotherhood, was, as its bylaws stated, created “to organize persons for the co-operative production of wealth, provide for the collective ownership of the means of production and distribution of the products of its co-operative industries.” In addition to sharing some of the general elements of the Bellamy plan, the Burley Colony had a direct connection with one of the instigators of the Nationalist movement. Cyrus Willard, who served as secretary at Burley,
had been one of the founders of the initial Nationalist Club in Boston and contributed articles to *The Nationalist*. Another individual involved with the Nationalist movement who came to Burley was the Reverend William E. Copeland, who earlier had been president of the Tacoma Nationalist Club.

Edward Bellamy died in May 1898, just as these two colonies were developing. His death was attributed to tuberculosis and possibly throat cancer, but the challenges of the decade following the publication of *Looking Backward* had taken their toll on him. *The New Nation* was a personal trial for him, and completing *Equality* also was hard on his already frail health. But Bellamy’s death did not end the interest in his writings or his ideals. *Looking Backward* and *Equality* continued to be printed and translated into many languages. And when the world confronted an economic crisis again in the 1930s, interest in Bellamy revived, championed by his wife Emma and daughter Marion, who toured the country speaking on the Bellamy plan. This included a stop in Portland in November 1936.

One of the earliest indications of the Northwest’s continuing and revived interest in Bellamy centered in Bellingham, where the Economic Equality Club of the United States of America established a chapter and brought out its publication, *Economic Equality*. The inaugural issue appeared on April 26, 1932, with J. R. Williams as editor and Mary Milbank Markland as contributing editor. The intent and purpose of the organization and the publication were outlined in that first issue:

> Economic stability is our goal and we believe that that goal can only be reached through one means—economic EQUALITY. Only through economic equality may the people of this land ever realize to the fullest extent that right of life, liberty, and happiness which the Declaration of Independence grants, is inalienable.

> Through the medium of this publication, public meetings, and radio broadcasts, we are carrying on an educational work through which we hope to achieve the four objectives as set forth in the item mentioned above.

The editors also stated, “IF YOU have not already done so, we urge you to read Edward Bellamy’s two books, *Looking Backward* and *Equality***.” In addition to Lester Benedict’s speech, the inaugural issue included an article titled “Only by Equal Division of Fruits of Earth May Prosperity be Restored,” a poem titled “Equality,” the first installment of a story titled “The City of Mystery,” and a “story for the kiddies” titled “The Story of the Kid Kat and the Tother.” The “Looking Ahead” feature announced that “Mr. Dore, mayor-elect of Seattle” would address the Economic Equality Club, as would Rabbi Koch of Seattle. It was also noted that “The Women’s Study Club, formed for the study of the works of Edward Bellamy, meets every Monday at 8:00 p.m., at the Henry Hotel.” Even more interesting: “A radio address is given every Tuesday evening at 6:00 p.m. over KVOS.”

The rhetoric and activities of the Economic Equality Club were reminiscent of the Nationalist clubs of the late 1880s and early 1890s, with the addition of using radio broadcasts to share information (an idea that would have pleased Bellamy, who utilized similar technology in the world of his imagined year 2000). This club in Bellingham was a precursor to similar clubs formed across the country in the 1930s, with a concentration once again in California. Communities established Bellamy associations in many countries, and the Internationale Vereniging Bellamy, based in The Netherlands, published editions of *Looking Backward* and *Equality* in Dutch as well as an edition of *Looking Backward* in Esperanto, the universal language.

As with the initial interest in Edward Bellamy in Washington and nationally, the revival of Bellamy-ism in the 1930s was short-lived, but it reflected a spirit of change in that difficult period and a possible message of hope. There is little to remind us of this later interest in Bellamy other than the recorded words of individuals like Lester Benedict. Yet, for a time, Edward Bellamy once again caught the attention of Washington’s reform-minded citizens and offered, as Mrs. M. H. of Spokane noted in 1893, some “comfort...to sore hearts in times that try men’s souls.”
Geraldine Sisneros of Tacoma donated this drum (WSHS #1999.105.8) to the Historical Society in 1999, along with several other objects that belonged to her father. Tyler J. Hobucket (b. 1899) lived near LaPush and in his capacity as a well-respected Quileute tribal leader often received gifts such as this during important events. Round skin drums, like this one, replaced the cedar box drums originally used during winter ceremonials. This piece is presently on loan to the Seattle Art Museum. For additional examples of Native American artifacts from our online image collections, please visit: www.Collections.WashingtonHistory.org/ and search on the keywords “North American Indian.”
The Olmsted Brothers, an internationally renowned firm of landscape architects based in Massachusetts, created and implemented Washington State's Capitol Campus landscape design. A review of their efforts provides an intriguing glimpse into state politics and the complications of long-distance project management. The state's internal political frays, coupled with the ongoing influence of Capitol Campus architects Walter Robb Wilder and Harry Keith White, strongly influenced the ultimate shape of the plan and the degree of its actual implementation.

The story begins with a March 1911 meeting of the Capitol Commission (later called the Capitol Committee) where architect Charles Saunders, at the request of Governor Marion E. Hay (1909-1913), urged the commission to employ the services of a landscape architect to create a master plan for what was then 20 acres of capitol grounds in Olympia. The state had just resolved to develop a national competition to solicit concepts for the capitol group of buildings that would house the executive, legislative, and judicial functions. Plans for the Temple of Justice were to be developed first. Saunders thought the campus program could be simplified for the competition if the approaches and overall organization were identified.

On April 13, 1911, John Charles Olmsted, at Saunders's urgent summons and without any contract in place, made the firm's first visit to the Capitol Campus for a meeting with the governor and the Capitol Commission, and a chance to tour the grounds.

Olmsted and Walter White discussed current property boundaries, which included the steep bluff to the north, at the foot of which stood the Northern Pacific Railroad roundhouse, yard, and tracks. Existing structures on the capitol grounds included the wood-framed Territorial Capitol Building and the Governor's Mansion, built for the 1909 Alaskan-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. Olmsted was surprised to learn that the state had just sold the land along the harbor (what is now Capitol Lake) as the back sides of industrial buildings did not make for a pleasing vista. He thought the overall site to be well-suited to the commission's plans but strongly encouraged the state to acquire additional land, particularly to the south, to provide street frontage along the campus edges.

Olmsted suggested that a more naturalistic treatment of the steep north bluff—rather than the massive stairway proposed in architect Ernest Flagg's unused 1893 plan—could afford the desired aesthetics at a reasonable cost. A planting of low, well-pruned trees along
the edge of the bluff could screen the industrial buildings along the harbor below while allowing a view of Budd Inlet and the mountain vista far to the northwest. Throughout the project, Olmsted stressed the importance of establishing a connection between the capitol grounds and downtown Olympia. He recommended a diagonal avenue (running southwest to northeast) along the edge of the bluff down to Sylvester Park and the Old Capitol Building (originally the Thurston County Courthouse). This avenue would provide an impressive, practical approach for the daily traffic between city and campus.

Following Olmsted’s visit, the Capitol Commission hired architect Charles H. Bebb to develop the competition program, which was approved by the commission on April 29, 1911. This program loosely folded the landscape into the overall concept, eliminating the need to hire a landscape architect. Bebb’s program also set the basic premise that a north–south axis should be the defining alignment of the group, a concept that would bring lasting complications. The state issued the competition guidelines in May 1911 and selected Wilder and White’s design as the winning proposal on August 3, 1911.

That same day, Governor Hay sent a telegram to the Olmsted Brothers to inquire whether they could, on short notice, advise the state on preparing a landscape plan for the Capitol Campus. The commission was eager to show progress to the public, despite a delay in preparing the architectural plans that resulted when one of the partners—Walter Wilder—fell ill. Consequently, the commission returned to the Olmsted Brothers.

James Frederick Dawson, a member of the Olmsted Brothers firm, met with the commission the following December. They discussed hiring the firm to provide a preliminary plan showing the location of the Temple of Justice in relation to the Legislative Building, the other three proposed office buildings, and the Governor’s Mansion. These plans would include the general layout of walkways, roads, and approaches. By the meeting’s end, the Capitol Commission resolved unanimously to hire the Olmsted Brothers for a two-year period.

Because the commission reopened this debate about the location of the Temple of Justice, Wilder and White and the Olmsted Brothers had an opportunity to adjust the plans. Over the next several weeks they traded communications on their perspectives for the capitol group and associated organization.

January 1912 proved a tumultuous month for the capitol grounds landscape (continued on page 22)
The Olmsted Brothers in the Pacific Northwest

By M. Eliza Davidson

John Charles Olmsted visited Olympia to consult on the proposed Capitol Campus plan in 1911, in the wake of a series of other landscape architectural commissions throughout the Pacific Northwest. Of these regional projects, many persist today in the form of urban park systems, college campuses, institutional grounds, and private subdivisions and gardens. All Pacific Northwest work was completed by Olmsted Brothers, successor firm to the partnership between Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. and John Charles Olmsted.

The Olmsted Brothers shaped public landscapes in our region from 1903 through the late 1930s and maintained client contacts through the 1950s. Olmsted family members—Frederick Law, John Charles, then Frederick Law Jr.—provided continuous leadership through a remarkable 100 of the firm’s 122-year history.

John Charles’s expertise derived from 23 years of working at Olmsted Sr.’s side, ripening from youthful apprentice in 1872 to full partner in 1884, then heading the firm from 1895 until his premature death in 1920. John Charles brought to Olympia and the Northwest a wealth of experience and finely-tuned professional skills. That he is less well-known and appreciated than his famous stepfather/uncle is attributable to the long shadow cast by Frederick Law Olmsted as “America’s Father of Landscape Architecture” and to his own modest, retiring personality.

Over decades of shared practice, John Charles absorbed and extended the elder Olmsted’s design sensibilities and strong undergirding philosophy. Both elements coalesced in his and later partner James Frederick Dawson’s work shaping the Washington State Capitol Campus. While never fully implemented, Washington’s plan stands out—in design extent (196 known plans), quality, and resemblance to the United States Capitol grounds—among the dozen capitol landscapes touched by the Olmsted firm.

The Olmsted passion for creating democratic spaces initially manifest itself in Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux’s first (and most famous) park commission, New York’s Central Park. Upon winning the design competition Olmsted wrote, “It is of great importance as the first real park made in this country—a democratic development of the highest significance.”

Olmsted Sr. intended Central Park to provide a restorative setting in which all citizens could mingle as equals and find deep refreshment. Equally important was the role of public landscapes in fostering community, for which he took rather idealized pride in these great parks. This egalitarian passion grew from his intense and varied earlier life experiences as inquisitive traveler, journalist, publisher, abolitionist, and public servant. He articulated his beliefs in 1855, well before he began practicing landscape architecture: “In a republic like the United States, the richest citizens must not be allowed to monopolize the most beautiful areas for their own enjoyment. Such areas must be reserved for the public…”

His deep moral conviction extended to the next generation. In his 1903 report laying out a Comprehensive System of Parks and Parkways for Seattle’s Board of Park Commissioners, John Charles articulated this mind-set in more practical terms: “In designing a system of parks and parkways the primary aim should be to secure and preserve for the use of the people as much as possible of these advantages of water and mountain views and of woodlands, well distributed and conveniently located.”

John Charles likewise echoed Olmsted Sr.’s devotion to the inherent “genius of place” as a fundamental principle of landscape design. The firm’s Pacific Northwest projects exemplify this commitment by placing natural features at the heart of such well-known designs as Rainier Vista at the University of Washington, created for the 1909 Alaska–Yukon–Pacific Exposition; Seattle’s 1903 Park and Boulevard System; Volunteer Park, Seattle; and, above all, the Washington State Capitol Campus.

Each is organized to capture striking vistas of forests, mountains, and water as a means to connect users with the quintessential character of the Pacific Northwest, in which the designed landscape is embedded. The Capitol Campus bridges native, pastoral, and formal design elements, each employed for specific effect upon visitors observing or moving through the landscape. Each powerfully draws...
the individual into a larger world of inspiration, beauty, and identity. The campus is configured to both dramatize and embrace its natural setting, visually reminding citizens that Washington is no ordinary place while fostering pride and stewardship among legislators.

As Olmsted Sr. initiated work on design improvements to the U.S. Capitol grounds in early 1874, he commended one aspect of the vast building’s otherwise problematic siting:

*The West front surmounts an elevation looking out upon a space of ground gradually and symmetrically widening as the distance from it increases, extending to a broad river a mile away, beyond which and toward the setting sun verdant heights terminate a prospect of natural elements which are all broad, simple, and tranquilizing; but if the most firmly established principles and the most satisfactory precedents in Landscape Architecture had been consulted, the arrangement would not have been different. The cause of regret lies solely in the poor use that has been made of the opportunity thus originally secured.*

Perhaps Olmsted Sr. influenced John Charles’s approach decades hence in Olympia, where he passionately advocated siting the Legislative Building to take full advantage of its expansive setting, rather than hiding it behind the Temple of Justice. In Washington, D.C., Olmsted Sr. struggled to organize circulation that would gracefully and logically connect the Capitol grounds with their complicated urban surroundings and create a dignified sequence of arrival with controlled vistas to heighten the impact of the Capitol. Oval lawns softened by shade trees welcomed and accommodated visitors, a counterpoint to elements of strict geometry. Effective linkage with the city, mediating pastoral spaces, and sequenced vistas focusing attention on the Legislative Building are all features repeated in the Washington State Capitol Campus plan. Some elements are visible in John Charles’s early concept drawings, although they subsequently assumed different form.

At the time John Charles considered the Capitol Campus landscape, he was at work on the Utah capitol grounds and recently had completed landscape plans for the Kentucky capitol. Neither was nearly as extensive as the Olympia project ultimately would become. In 1928, when Olmsted Brothers partner James Frederick Dawson resumed work in Olympia, capitol landscapes for Alabama and North Carolina were on the boards, with the Pennsylvania capitol soon to follow.

Pacific Northwest commissions spanning the 1911–12 period included a great number and variety of landscapes: Northern State Hospital for the Insane in Sedro-Woolley; Adams and Liberty Parks in Spokane; University of Idaho in Moscow; Thornewood Estate near Tacoma; the Uplands subdivision in Victoria, B.C.; Jefferson, Alki, Schmitt, Hiawatha, Seward, Frink, Green Lake, and Woodland Parks, and Montlake Boulevard in Seattle; Waverly Country Club near Portland; and multiple private gardens in Portland, Seattle, Spokane, and Vancouver, B.C.

Commissions tapered off but continued during the 1910s and early 1920s, a consequence of John Charles’s declining health and death. Activity surged in the mid to late 1920s, around the time that James Frederick Dawson drew his detailed plans for Washington’s Capitol Campus. Contemporary projects included large residential landscapes in Boise, Portland, Seattle, and Spokane; the Highlands subdivision north of Seattle; and Mount Hood National Forest in Oregon. In the years that followed, Dawson designed Seattle’s Washington Park Arboretum; golf and country clubs in Seattle and Vancouver, B.C.; private gardens in Seattle, Spokane, and West Vancouver; and approaches to Vancouver’s Lion’s Gate Bridge in Stanley Park.

Besides building unrivaled prominence, the Olmsted firm evolved in response to dramatic demographic and technological changes spanning the 1860s through the post-Vietnam era, and simultaneously accrued a continuity of vision, design influence, and client engagement unparalleled in the landscape architecture field.

A Seattle native, M. Eliza Davidson is a licensed architect and certified arborist who speaks and writes about and frequently leads tours of Olmsted Brothers-influenced landscapes in our region. She maintains a private consulting practice, Arbutus Design LLC, which focuses on heritage landscapes and urban forest management.
design. On January 4, Wilder and White revised their views on the placement of the Temple of Justice. The architects decided that the southern location they had previously discussed with the Olmsted Brothers in December cramped the overall composition, particularly the courtyard enclosed by these buildings. The architects also argued that locating the Temple of Justice north of the Legislative Building allowed the two most important buildings—in their opinion—to be visible, even though the discernible portions of both the Temple of Justice and the Legislative Building were their back façades.

On January 11, the Olmsted Brothers transmitted two sketches showing alternate arrangements for, and approaches to, the capitol buildings. The Olmsted Brothers wanted comments from the architects prior to submitting plans to the Capitol Commission before January 25, on which date the governor expected visitors and wanted to display the plans. If the architects favored one of the plans, they would send only that plan. Both plans were a substantial departure from the content John Charles Olmsted and Walter Wilder had discussed in December.

The same day that the Olmsted Brothers mailed the above plans to Wilder and White, they were sent a harsh letter from Capitol Commission Secretary E. W. Ross. This letter reprimanded the Olmsted Brothers, severing the verbal contract with them, and informed them that the commission had decided to locate the Temple of Justice north of the future Legislative Building site.

Due to the slowness of mail transit from the West to the Atlantic Coast, the Olmsted Brothers did not receive this letter until January 20, 1912. In the meantime, they kept working on the campus plan and building locations. Prior to January 20, Wilder and White advised the Olmsted Brothers of the commission’s decision to site the Temple of Justice north of the Legislative Building; however, they made no mention of the contract termination. The Olmsted Brothers assured Wilder and White in a January 12 letter that they would do everything in their power to achieve a successful result if the commission ultimately desired to locate the Temple of Justice north of the Legislative Building.

On January 17, the Olmsted Brothers mailed two perspective sketches to the Capitol Commission, illustrating views with the Temple of Justice north and south of the future Legislative Building site. The imagined vantage for these views was from the intersection of Water and Union Streets, north of the capitol grounds. The Olmsted Brothers believed this would most likely be the view for the majority of the public, as they would be driving south toward the capitol group from downtown Olympia. They urged consideration of the public’s day-to-day traverse as an important design factor and felt that the Temple of Justice, when placed north of the Legislative Building, greatly diminished the latter, which they considered the dominant feature.

The Olmsted Brothers felt that the Temple of Justice, when placed north of the Legislative Building, greatly diminished the latter, which they considered the dominant feature. Placement of the Temple of Justice south of the Legislative Building also afforded the opportunity to create a main boulevard from Sylvester Park up to the Capitol Group on the diagonal alignment noted earlier.

When the Olmsted Brothers received the letter from E. W. Ross severing their contract, they immediately informed Charles Saunders (who had first approached them as Governor Hay’s emissary) of this development. They then sent a response to Ross urging that a decision wait until either John Charles Olmsted or James Frederick Dawson could come to Olympia and meet with the commissioners to discuss their concerns. Meanwhile, Saunders worked his contacts behind the scenes to find out what had motivated Ross’s letter.

Saunders discovered that part of the commission’s displeasure stemmed from John Charles Olmsted’s back-dating of the contract to April 1911—when he made his first site visit—rather than from the date of the commission’s resolution in November 1911. The commission also expressed concern that the Olmsted Brothers emphasized too strongly the

BELOW: This 1911 Wilder and White concept drawing depicts a broad avenue running down the bluff between the downtown train station and Capitol Campus. The Olmsted Brother’s designs favored a connecting avenue along the top of the bluff linking to Sylvester Park and the Old Capitol Building.

FACING PAGE: General Plan prepared in May 1928 for public presentations by the Olmsted Brothers to illustrate their vision for the capitol grounds.
surrounding areas when the commission’s only concerns were the campus property presently owned by the state and the need to plan the buildings on those grounds.

Dawson suspected this might be a cover for the commission members’ deeper disagreement with the Olmsted Brothers’ proposed location of the Temple of Justice south of the Legislative Building. During Dawson’s visits with Governor Hay, the governor had expressed interest in considering the best possible plan for the entire area and identifying what other steps should be taken to achieve this long-term goal. With no further resolution, the Olmsted Brothers ceased work on the capitol grounds by the end of January.

On February 3, 1927, almost exactly 15 years after the termination of the Olmsted Brothers’ involvement with the capitol grounds, Charles Saunders, now a state representative, wrote Dawson to inform him that the Legislative Building (the last of the initial three built) was nearing completion. He noted that conversations had commenced about how to deal with the campus landscape and approaches. Saunders also let Dawson know that Wilder and White, having reached the end of their contract, no longer stood in close favor with the commission, and that the commission itself was split between the two commission members (C. W. Clausen and Clark V. Savidge) and Governor Roland Hartley—the commission having been reduced from seven members to three (including the governor) in 1927.

Throughout this second and last phase of the Olmsted Brothers’ work for the State of Washington, the continual decline of the political situation within the Capitol Commission exerted a profound shadow over the design work and the end product. Ultimately, behaviors regressed to verbal lashings from Governor Hartley, attacking the two other commissioners and Dawson directly.

On April 20, 1927, Dawson traveled to Olympia to walk the grounds and meet with the commission members. At this meeting, Dawson proposed to complete the plans in three stages, starting with a preliminary general plan for the overall layout of approaches, driveways, plazas, sidewalks, and relocation of the Governor’s Mansion, followed by a grading and then a planting plan. While walking around the site, Dawson had already picked out some notable large specimens of hollies, Lawson cypress, and Irish yew that could be protected and relocated for use within the landscape at minimal cost to the state.

The Olmsted Brothers wrote Wilder and White to let the architects know they had received the contract to do the landscaping and to request drawings of the buildings for use in preparing their planting and grading plans. Wilder and White took this opening to reiterate their 1911 vision of the capitol group as a series of small units combined to make the whole. The architects asserted that the only logical approach to the complex was from 13th Street off Capitol Way. They further suggested that the land between the new Insurance Building and Capitol Way be planted heavily and divided formally on a grid system, organized by the streets to the east, in order to eliminate any large open spaces that might detract from the effect of space immediately bordering the capitol group. This letter marked the first of a series of insertions into the process by the architects that ultimately complicated and, in concert with the existing political tensions of the Capitol Commission, effectively undermined the process of preparing and adopting the Olmsted Brothers’ plan.

In August 1927, the Olmsted Brothers submitted plans for the capitol grounds to the commission for review and approval in order to move on to the grading plans. By the end of August, Commissioner Clausen, with influence from Wilder and White, was still holding up the plan review and approval of the Olmsted Brothers’ concept. Despite this delay, the Olmsted Brothers kept working ahead on the drawings in order to keep up with a schedule that would see grading in the spring. They explored various options for grading and plazas and considered relocating the Governor’s Mansion east to place it parallel with the capitol group.

The Olmsted Brothers also solicited a list of available planting materials from J. J. Bonnell, a Seattle nurseryman held in high regard and with whom they had worked on numerous occasions in Seattle. As the commission continued to hold onto the drawings without issuing an approval or specific recommendations for changes, Saunders urged Dawson to return to Olympia to resolve the issue in person. To Saunders’s initial dismay, Dawson sent one of the firm’s chief designers, Hammond Sadler, to meet with the commission in October. Sadler
Almost a century after the Olmsted Brothers’ initial consultation, the Washington State Capitol Campus dutifully fulfills the many roles and purposes foreseen by its early planners and befitting its esteemed civic status. Over the years it has witnessed the shaping and evolution of Washington democracy and provided a forum for the exchange of ideas. Today as in the past, it is a multifaceted landscape: a beloved park and dignified foreground to the capitol group of buildings, a well-used, powerful, and highly valued gathering ground for diverse interests. This revered landscape, inherently dynamic, has developed and changed over time, and the Olmsted Brothers’ vision has proved a strong foundation and enduring framework for the capitol’s growth.

The initial impression of the Washington State Capitol from afar is breathtaking. The capitol presides atop a dramatic forested bluff overlooking Capitol Lake, Budd Inlet, and the city of Olympia. Axial alignments of buildings, trees, and landscape features connect the campus with the surrounding landscape and, reciprocally, draw the landscape into the campus as an integral part of one’s experience. This situation at the threshold between the community and the natural environment reinforces a unique sense of place and instills an honorable sense of pride for Washington’s center of governance.

A walk through campus reveals the layered history embodied by the landscape and buildings—stately structures, trees planted by previous generations, and memorials sited and designed to commemorate important events and people. Trees, once young, have become mature specimens, sentinels that quietly welcome visitors, artfully frame views, and subtly direct circulation. Recently, the Washington State General Administration (GA), taking a closer look, found that resources had been incrementally aging, declining, and disappearing. Without a comprehensive landscape preservation plan, a valuable chapter of Washington’s historic narrative would soon be lost.

In September 2008, the GA enlisted Mithūn, a landscape architecture firm based in Seattle and San Francisco, to lead the development of a landscape preservation master plan for the West Capitol Campus, the historic portion of the capitol grounds. The purpose of the plan was to clarify a vision for preserving the roughly 50-acre campus, establish a framework for ongoing stewardship, and structure a series of priority items and specific actions for prompt and immediate implementation. In collaboration with Arbutus Design Group, the project included a landscape master plan to inform future planning efforts, a large tree layer plan to address initial vegetation rejuvenation, and a vegetation management plan to guide ongoing landscape management. Together, the three plans provide a sustainable link between past and future, preserving and honoring the characteristics and features of historic design while integrating compatible uses, modern functions, and increased ecological performance.

A host of historic documentation recently retrieved by Artifacts Consulting of Tacoma from the Library of Congress and the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site provided the foundation for planning and design. As prescient today as in the past, the Olmsted Brothers’ design principles and philosophy provided a valuable conceptual framework for integrating infrastructure, place, and people.

In envisioning the future, the design team layered the continuum of influences that have shaped the Capitol Campus over time, placing particular emphasis on the established “period of significance” spanning 1911 through 1931, encompassing the Olmsted Brothers’ campus design with collaborative contributions from Wilder and White, the capitol group architects. Rigorous comparisons of the historic plans, correspondence, and documentation with current conditions led to a determination of the health and integrity of the campus’s landscape elements. Layered with sustainability goals, this analysis informed the recommended preservation treatment, the shape of the master plan, and detailed actions and management for the future.

Based on assessments of the health and integrity of the existing cultural resources, in conjunction with considerations regarding the necessary growth and modern function of the state capitol, the recommended goal or treatment for the campus as a whole was rehabilitation. Within this approach, carefully considered landscape interventions are allowed where such modifications are compatible with historic resources.

Cultural landscape preservation differs from building preservation in the sense that landscapes are inherently dynamic. Growth, phasing, and cycles of change must be anticipated, and with vegetation and living systems, encouraged. As the landscape grows and changes, so, too, does our understanding and experience of it. The increasing knowledge base of best management practices and environmental science constantly inform and improve the science and art of landscape preservation. Both must be considered holistically for the landscape to achieve its greatest potential. Over time, rehabilitation efforts for the Capitol Campus will involve an adaptive interpretation and management strategy,
blending the best available science with the best available historic knowledge, identifying the elements that achieve multiple goals and realize the highest value.

The design team found that the campus’s critical structural elements and character-defining features—the “bones”—were remarkably intact. On the other hand, much of the Olmsted Brothers’ design intent remained unrealized, had been lost due to attrition or development, or was jeopardized by encroachments, age, or deferred preventive care. This condition, combined with a wealth of historic drawings and correspondence, provided an extraordinary opportunity for cultural landscape preservation. The state could continue to build upon the existing campus framework, optimize sustainable landscape management, and activate the Olmsted Brothers’ vision within a 21st-century landscape.

The landscape master plan describes the vision for rehabilitation, and the attendant vegetation management plan provides the implementation framework to support the vision—replenishing aging trees, establishing new ones, and replacing portions of energy-intensive lawn with layers of vegetation, as originally intended. Rehabilitation efforts will improve sustainable landscape performance by increasing water-holding capacity, reducing and treating storm water runoff, reducing irrigation, reducing the heat island effect, and economizing landscape maintenance.

Improvements described within the master plan will enhance the sense of arrival in approaching the capitol and elevate the sequence of progression in moving throughout the campus to provide a fitting complement to the historic capitol group of buildings. The plan also recommends the relocation of some parking away from critical pedestrian areas in order to help return the most civic aspect of the state to a place for people rather than cars.

Implementation of proposed rehabilitation measures and maintenance practices is ongoing, and work is slated to continue over the course of the next 50 years as opportunities arise. The landscape master plan and vegetation management plan describe how to invest in the landscape over time in order to reinforce the historic vision and cultivate a high-performance, sustainable landscape. Some initial changes will: replace appropriate portions of lawn with historically intended shrub beds; replace numerous outdated gas-powered maintenance vehicles with electric vehicles; plant new trees to replace key declining specimens; plant new trees that reinforce the Capitol Campus structure; improve turf management to reduce irrigation, improve soil health, and reduce labor costs; use organic fertilizer, with applications based on soil sample test results; increase composting; and develop a donation program to help fund landscape improvements.

Just as the West Capitol Campus is the setting for influential events and the sharing of ideals, conversely, events and ideals leave their impressions on the landscape—impressions that reveal our values and principles. Stewardship of this living legacy—culturally, economically, and environmentally—is not only part of our civic responsibility to preserve and sustain the places within which democracy is shaped, it is also a tangible statement of our convictions and a gift that we bequeath to future generations of Washingtonians.

Susan Olmsted is an architect and landscape architect with Mithūn, an integrated design firm based in Seattle and San Francisco. She is a guest lecturer and juror at the University of Washington and a board member for Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks.
quickly proved his diplomatic abilities and relieved all of Saunders’s concerns. This commission meeting proved particularly prickly. Wilder planned on attending to present his own report. The commission had not asked him to do so, but he felt obligated to present his and White’s vision for the campus.

At the meeting, Wilder and Sadler each presented their concepts for the capitol grounds. Wilder’s proposal brought forth his previously described vision for dense planting near the buildings and access to Capitol Way via 13th Street. In his October 13, 1927, report back to Dawson, Sadler characterized the planting scheme as a “hot day effect in summer and a cold and bleak day in winter.” Although the commission purported to prefer the Olmsted plan, internal politics kept them silent.

Ultimately, the commission determined to have Wilder meet with Dawson in New York to work out a compromise. The governor wrote Dawson directly on October 14, 1927, expressing his admiration of the Olmsted Brothers’ plan. He recognized the advantage the diagonals would provide in allowing a view of the capitol from the city and noted that the street arrangement facilitated delivery truck access to the rear of buildings, both built and proposed. He liked the reduction of square corners at street intersections, which he thought would help to keep traffic flowing and reduce congestion. He agreed that Wilder’s scheme for the land east of the Insurance Building would eliminate any potential for large public gatherings. He also supported the informal semi-open park setting with scattered groups of trees, which would provide an important buffer between the noise and traffic along Capitol Way and the offices in the capitol buildings.

On November 23, 1927, after meeting with Wilder in New York, the Olmsted Brothers submitted their revised drawings for the capitol grounds. The overall scheme remained the same with the following changes: 1) the north diagonal moved slightly south to align with the cross axis of the Insurance Building while still remaining aligned with the dome; 2) the plaza dimensions reduced in front of the Insurance Building; 3) embellishments added to the road intersections north of the Insurance Building and south of the Temple of Justice; 4) the overlook terrace north of the Temple of Justice enlarged; 5) the widths of the diagonals set at 30 feet, with the width of the road between the plazas in front of the Insurance and Legislative buildings and the Temple of Justice set at 40 feet.

In May 1931, Governor Hartley attempted to have the existing sidewalks and roads torn out, replacing them with new, straight sidewalks and roads.

By 1928, the Olmsted Brothers, with an approved general plan now in place, moved ahead with developing the details for the layout and grading of the site while continuing to urge the state to purchase the land parcels between 14th and 15th streets and Capitol Way. During this period, Dawson corresponded with sculptor Alonzo Lewis, preparing the site for his Winged Victory monument north of the Insurance Building. The Olmsted Brothers drew upon their prior work in Washington, D.C., for the light standard style, with the change of a lantern from the Territorial Capitol building on axis with the garden at the northeast entrance.

The Olmsted Brothers recommended hiring J. J. Bonnell as a consultant to provide Dunham with plant and soil knowledge. On May 15, 1929, the commission approved the grading and landscaping plans and began advertising for bids. On June 10, 1929, the state opened bids for the Capitol Campus landscape work. General contractor C. L. Creelman of Seattle won with the low bid of $199,130.10. While work on the grounds commenced, the Olmsted Brothers continued to work on planning entrance gates to the campus that tied in with the concepts and materials of the sunken gardens and concrete walls. The Olmsted Brothers also submitted a preliminary plan for the sunken garden east of the Temple of Justice.

The seemingly smooth process of implementing the developed plans took a rough turn two months later. The commission wrote Dawson asking that he immediately plan a trip out to meet with them and discuss landscape plan changes. Following Dawson’s meeting with the commission, he commented in his July 23, 1929, report that the governor “nearly knocked his head off.” He urgently directed staff to start looking at a series of radical changes demanded by Governor Hartley. These included lowering the...
grade in front of the Insurance Building by approximately four feet, straightening the grade from 11th Street to the base of the Legislative Building's stone terrace, and removing every tree possible so the ground at the base of the Temple of Justice and the Legislative Building would be clearly visible from Capitol Way.

Fortunately, in subsequent meetings, both Savidge and Clausen confronted the governor and refused to modify the existing plans. In October, Savidge wrote Dawson inquiring about the date of his next visit to Olympia; the commissioner informed him that the governor would have nothing to do with the landscaping (no voting on any motion concerning it nor any signing of vouchers), assuring Dawson that he would not be harassed.

Amidst the turmoil, Alonzo Lewis inquired of Dawson if the circle that would contain the Winged Victory sculpture might be moved to the west and placed in the middle of the intersection of Cherry Lane Southwest and the east–west roadway running between the Temple of Justice and the Legislative Building. Dawson responded with a lengthy description of the reasoning for the existing location; he added that such a change “would be suicidal to the entire design of the plan.”

Lewis politely dropped the matter.

On January 10, 1930, J. J. Bonnell wrote Dawson to report on the status of the capitol grounds landscaping. The general contractor, Creelman, had proved a problem. Bonnell cited the inefficiency of their operation, such as refusing to purchase additional forms for concrete work. This meant that they had to wait for each section to set up before moving to the next, delaying the landscape work. Creelman’s contract stated they were to have been finished by January 1, 1930, yet none of the parking strips were done and no pits had been dug for relocating trees or planting new ones. The contractor had completed most of the road paving, except for the porte cochère and part of the plaza between the Temple of Justice and the Legislative Building; provided rough grading; and placed topsoil for the lawn and shrubbery areas. Dunham and Bonnell, in their landscaping discussions, opted to leave the slopes rough behind the Legislative Building and Temple of Justice in order to direct funds and work to the prominent areas between 11th and 14th streets and Capitol Way. By June 1930, the planting still had not been completed. The state was well into feeling the effects of the Great Depression, making landscaping a difficult priority.

In August 1930, Olmsted Brothers designer George Gibbs traveled to Olympia to conduct a site visit for the firm and bring their contract to a close. At the time, the Capital Commission had asked the state attorney general to intervene to reach a settlement for $6,250 in claims against C. L. Creelman for delayed work on the campus landscaping. In October, the Olmsted Brothers submitted their final invoice to the commission.

From 1931 to 1934, Saunders lobbied for the Olmsted Brothers’ involvement and the completion of their plans. This period marked the last phases in design implementation, with decreased involvement on the part of the Olmsted Brothers and repeated attempts by Governor Hartley to sabotage elements of the plan.

In May 1931, Hartley attempted to have the existing sidewalks and roads torn out, replacing them with new, straight sidewalks and roads. Savidge and Clausen voted against this proposal and resolved to carry through with the lighting and sprinkler plans. In June, the Capitol Commission awarded Martin Hardware Company of Olympia the lighting system contract for $14,560. Viking Automatic Sprinkler Company of Seattle won the sprinkler system contract for $11,440. As this work commenced, Governor Hartley again intervened, trying, unsuccessfully, to have the Winged Victory monument moved to a new location. Despite his efforts, those three substantial elements of the Olmsted Brothers’ landscape design remained intact, and their work on the Capitol Campus was completed 20 years after it began.
In 1941, Irving Petite was attending the University of Washington when he and a friend acquired two hens, a rooster, and a goat at a farmer’s auction in Kent. When it became apparent that their U-District apartment was not suitable for animal husbandry, they went out and bought a 165-acre stump ranch on Tiger Mountain near Issaquah—and thus, for Petite, began a relationship with the land that generated four of the best works of nature writing ever produced in the Northwest.

Likened to Henry David Thoreau, whom he often quotes, Irving Petite (1920–2004) has just as much in common with essayist E. B. White, for his easy-mannered prose style, and Doctor Dolittle, for his affinity for animals both domesticated and wild. His first book was the best-seller *Mister B.* (1960), which chronicles the year he spent raising an orphaned bear cub. Filled with anecdotes of Mister B.’s playful antics about the ranch, the book is also a meditation on the deep though ultimately mysterious kinship between humans and all things wild. In fact, Mister B. is one of many feral animals that Petite adopts throughout the four books set on Tiger Mountain. A deer, mink, coyote, wood rat, and opossum become at various times Petite’s cabinmates—to say nothing of the many goats, chickens, and dogs that roam the property. And while some might question his tendency to anthropomorphize, Petite remains respectful of each creature’s self-contained nature, recognizing that animals, like people, “crave a margin to their life.”

In his next three volumes—*The Elderberry Tree* (1964), *The Best Time of Year* (1966), and *Life on Tiger Mountain* (1968)—Petite fully explores, and reflects upon, his Tiger Mountain environs. “The elderberry tree taught me hope…simply by its being, as it was and is,” he says in the opening of the book, based on his observations of the elderberry tree near his cabin. He’s taken by how the tree provides for such a variety of birds: towhee, junco, wren, song sparrow, cedar waxwing, robin, thrush, and pigeon. And while he ponders the consumable possibilities for himself as well—“jam, jelly, cobbler, dumplings, pies and (happiest thought of all) wine”—he decides the berries are too strong for his taste. It’s the elderberry tree he always notices first upon returning to the ranch after an excursion, realizing “this elderberry tree, or another offspring of its berryings, will always come to leaf again, and then to bloom and berry, to food and beauty—infinity.”

In *The Best Time of Year*, Petite recounts a near-fatal auto accident that helps him understand that “each time of year, as we come to it and truly appreciate being able to come to it, is the best time.” He frequently draws from the journal he faithfully kept following the accident. On January 26, he remarks how “there’s cold rain (and then cold-cold rain)…chilling and cutting rain (then doubly chilling and cutting),” acknowledging that, despite his renewed appreciation of life, “during too much continuous rain the spirit shrivels and pulls its head in like a tortoise.” Eventually, though, he recovers his bon esprit and finds the rain-soaked landscape not a “miserable milieu any more but an encompassing one—even, in a sense, a refreshing one.”

In *Life on Tiger Mountain*, Petite recounts his first years as a latter-day homesteader, laying out the ethos by which he would live his life on the mountain. He acknowledges his guilt for not keeping a steady job, making ends meet as he does by placing the occasional article, filling orders for fence posts, selling goats’ milk, and eventually becoming a substitute rural mail carrier. He praises the power of procrastination, proposing that most things—from physical ailments to broken appliances—fix themselves if one just delays long enough. We learn, too, of Petite’s early literary interests, including novel reading, which complements his inclination to put off till tomorrow what can be done today.
This inclination is offset, though, by his dedication to thrift and his make-do attitude. He wears only second-hand clothes, whether they fit or not, and insists that “any implement or artifact that could possibly do double or triple duty [on the ranch]...has done so.”

Throughout the Tiger Mountain books, Petite refers to his family’s pioneering past, including his Grandmother Wolverton, who came to the Oregon Territory by wagon train in 1847, and his Grandpa Petite, who homesteaded near the Lewis River. He also refers to the family and friends who, upon visiting the ranch, comment with admiration or consternation upon his lifestyle. He recounts the periodic trips he makes across the Cascades to go hiking with a friend in the Methow Valley or to visit a Yakima Indian family he knows in Toppenish. He avoids overly personal details, sharing with readers instead his appreciation of the things that matter most to him: water ouzels and mountain beaver, wild rhubarb and chanterelle mushrooms, the quiet of the woods, and the light and shadow the moon and clouds make at night.

Petite’s fifth and final book, Meander to Alaska (1970), recounts his voyage up the Inside Passage from Seattle to Skagway in a small cabin cruiser called Meander—the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. In 1984, citing the congestion and development encroaching on Tiger Mountain, Petite sold his property and moved to eastern Washington. For the next 20 years, he lived off the grid in a cabin along the San Poil River, near the small town of Keller on the Colville Reservation, where he became known for his regular donation of bananas to the local Head Start program. One might say, as he does of his ursine friend Mister B., “He had a good, full life, every day (save only two) until the end. What more can anyone, man or beast, ask?”

Peter Donahue’s latest novel, Clara and Merritt (Wordcraft of Oregon, LLC, 2010), is about longshoremen and Teamsters in Seattle in the 1930s and 1940s.

Al-ki

I wanted to congratulate you and the rest of your colleagues on the spring 2011 issue of COLUMBIA. So far I have only had time to read David Nicandri’s heartfelt eulogy to John McClelland Jr. and Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs’s insightful commentary on Sacagawea, but they have whetted my appetite to read the rest in the issue.

I am truly amazed at all you folks are still able to do with all the funding cuts you’ve had. But then again, it’s hard to keep a good historical society down. I think Mr. McClelland, were he still with us, would be mighty proud to see how you all soldier on, nobly and steadfastly honoring his literary legacy to the history of Washington State.

Wishing you continued success, all the best, and of course, al-ki (as in hope for the future)....

—Bill Barker, Shelton

Additional Reading

Interested in learning more about the topics covered in this issue? The sources listed here will get you started.

Catherine McLeod Mounts


Looking Backward


Capitol Challenge


Begging with the publication of Stephen Ambrose’s *Unbitten Courage* in 1996, and continuing through the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, persons interested in the Lewis and Clark expedition were flooded with reading options. Five years later the noise has died down and David Nicandri of the Washington State Historical Society presents *River of Promise: Lewis and Clark on the Columbia*, a work that distills some of the most interesting points from the bicentennial while breaking new ground in scholarship about the two explorers.

Nicandri’s objective is to place Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in the larger context of Columbia River exploration. This exercise yields some interesting discussions. In Chapter 9, for example, while discussing the disputes over William Clark’s sighting of the ocean, Nicandri cites the journals of George Vancouver and John Meares, Clark’s three separate recordings of the event, plus the writings of numerous scholars, all of whom have expressed opinions about the circumstances of the expedition’s arrival at the Pacific in November 1805. It is doubtful that his conclusions will convince every Lewis and Clark scholar, but those who disagree will still find value in Nicandri’s ability to look beyond the right or wrong of Clark’s observations. Changes in the landscape, the expedition’s use of their on-hand reference library, and Clark’s knowledge of geography and mathematics are all drawn on to present a comprehensive view of the expedition’s arrival at the mouth of the Columbia from Clark’s perspective.

The focus on Lewis and Clark’s exploration of the Columbia branches into fresh territory when it introduces readers to the influence and impact of the expedition’s traveling library. Throughout the book Nicandri examines references by the captains to such sources as the accounts by Alexander Mackenzie, James Cook, and Vancouver. Chapter 11, in particular, provides a thorough case study of how Alexander Mackenzie’s journal shaped Lewis and Clark’s ideas about exploration, their understanding of Native Americans, and their geographic perceptions of the Pacific Northwest.

This fresh perspective, however, comes at the expense of overlooking some key, albeit dated, contributions to the understanding of Lewis and Clark in the Pacific Northwest. References to Olin Wheeler’s *The Trail of Lewis and Clark*, 1804–1904 (1904), Stewart Holbrook’s *The Columbia* (1956), and Emory Strong’s *Seeking Western Waters* (1995) are noticeably absent. In Wheeler’s case, his travels down the Columbia during the expedition’s centennial add to an understanding of the river’s changing landscape and environment and act as a historical marker and reference point in any discussion about this portion of the water trail.

It can be difficult to provide new perspectives on a subject that has recently received such extensive coverage and at times Nicandri seems to overstretch in his attempt to break new ground. For example, discussions of the dynamics between Clark and Lewis tend toward speculation and overplay the psychological and social interactions between the two captains. Despite this criticism, Nicandri’s research consistently cites multiple sources, including the journals of Lewis and Clark, the oft-ignored Nicholas Biddle—Paul Allen, *History of the Expedition* (1814) and the several journals of other expedition members to defend his theses.

By taking a portion of the Lewis and Clark expedition—a concentration on the Columbia River—and focusing almost exclusively on events related to it, Nicandri has both adeptly added to our overall understanding of the expedition and, at the same time, framed some key issues for future discussions of the role of Lewis and Clark in the history of the Pacific Northwest.

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**A Home for Every Child**

The Washington Children’s Home Society in the Progressive Era


Reviewed by Ann Patricia Peyton.

Patricia Susan Hart, a professor of American Studies at the University of Idaho, goes right to the point in the first paragraph of the book under review: “For those of us who have not been through the arduous process of relinquishment, foster care, or creating an adoptive family, adoption can appear to be fully integrated into the American social fabric…. Yet, to the degree that adoption is commonplace today, it has not always been so in the past.”

There was not always adoption in America. It began as a “social gospel” promotion by Protestant ministers during the Progressive Era, a period of reform that began at the end of the 19th century. After the establishment of the National
An appropriate accompaniment to David Nicandri’s book on the Lewis and Clark expedition that is reviewed above. Included in the volume are references to Lewis and Clark campsites near Wallula Gap and landmarks observed by the Corps of Discovery in the vicinity of Columbia Hills State Park, Lyons Ferry State Park, and Cape Disappointment State Park.

Another book suitable for reading alongside the Nicandri volume is Shotgun on My Chest: Memoirs of a Lewis and Clark Book Collector, by Roger Wendlick (Portland: 12-Gauge Press, 2009; 299 pp., $28 paper). Wendlick began to purchase books about the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1984, and he continued until 1998 when he sold his entire inventory to Portland’s Lewis and Clark College. Doug Erickson, the college archivist who now manages the collection, believes that Wendlick assembled “the world’s finest private collection of Lewis and Clark materials.” Appendix B proves the point by listing the multi-hundred print materials acquired by Wendlick: newspapers, maps, pamphlets, and articles all arranged by date of publication.

Among the best features of Wendlick’s easy-to-read book—it could almost be called a memoir—are his thumbnail sketches of other book collecting men with whom he competed for the few remaining rare books there are about the Lewis and Clark expedition. Among the most influential in Wendlick’s life was George Twney, a Boeing Company executive from Burien who knew how to cajole book dealers into telling secrets about holdings in private libraries. Wendlick learned much from Tewney and others, and he passes that information along to readers of his book. Like many other teachers, Wendlick has, he says, a Ph.D., the meaning of which in his case is, “Public High School Diploma.”

Ann Patricia Peyton is a native of Renton. An advocate of classical education and home schooling, she took her graduate training at Vanderbilt University and Columbia University.

**Current & Noteworthy**

**By Robert Carriker, Book Review Editor**


Forty-two historic trails from across the state are examined using a standard format: Getting There, Distance, Level of Difficulty, and Historical Highlights. Students of the author at South Seattle Community College field-tested the given directions for accuracy.
**Made in Hanford**

*The Bomb that Changed the World*

**Hill Williams**

In 1932, James Chadwick, a British scientist, discovered the neutron. Ominously, in late 1938 on the eve of World War II, German researchers used the sub-atomic particle to split the uranium atom, and the United States soon found itself in a race against Germany for the ultimate weapon—one able to release the energy of an uncontrolled chain reaction. President Franklin D. Roosevelt took a significant gamble and approved a project based more on hopes and assumptions than actual accomplishments. But the amazingly complex operation was carried out with a speed and secrecy unheard of today. Engineers designed huge buildings at Hanford to produce bomb-size quantities of plutonium, a massive scale-up from laboratory work that had produced the element in amounts too small to be seen even under a microscope. In just two years, the farming community became the world’s first plutonium factory. On August 9, 1945, when the “Fat Man” fell on Nagasaki, Hanford workers understood their part in changing the world. Yet even after the war ended, nuclear testing continued, profoundly impacting the people of the Marshall Islands. Hill Williams offers scientific explanations and his own reminiscences as he traces Hanford’s role in the story of the plutonium bomb.

**Hill Williams** was reared in Pasco, Washington. He is a former Seattle Times science writer.

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