INSIDE
Willie Bush, child soldier during the American Civil War
Untold Stories

...unexpected characters

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The Curious Case of Quenaudenville

By John C. Hughes

Steve Willis did a double take as he was cataloging a 1853 map at the Washington State Library, where we both work. He squinted at Grays Harbor, as he always does, and found a strange place name—Quenaudenville—right where Aberdeen is today. He made a copy and swept down the stairs to the oral history office. I too was flabbergasted. We both live at the confluence of the Wishkah and Chehalis Rivers—but never had we seen a reference to such a place name.

When I Googled it, I made the serendipitous mistake of substituting an “n” for an “u.” Up popped: “QUENANDENVILLE, a village of Lewis co., in Oregon territory, at the confluence of the Chehalis river with Grey’s harbour, 142 m. N. by W. of Salem.” The source was A Gazetteer of the World, Vol. VI, published in London and Dublin in 1856 by the Royal Geographical Society.

My coworker Lori Larson, an ace researcher, took up the search and found this: “Lewis, a large county in the W. part of Washington Territory, has an area estimated at 4000 square miles. It is bounded on the W. by the Pacific, on the N. by the Straits of Juan de Fuca, partly on the E. by Admiralty sound, and on the S.E. by Cowelle [sic] river, and is drained by Puget Sound, Chehalis river, and several smaller streams. . . . There were 13 pupils attending an academy. Capital, Quenaudenville.”

Was it a Brigadoon-like place that emerged from the drizzle along the muddy banks of the Wishkah every 200 years; a mirroring of an explorer’s journal; an honest misunderstanding, or perhaps a bit of mischief?

David Thompson, Canada’s great explorer and mapmaker, in 1813 drew a map of the West depicting a nonexistent Caledonia River flowing into Puget Sound from British Columbia. He based its existence on native accounts. Given “the scarceness of information and the degree to which maps were copied,” the fictitious river persisted for decades, Derek Hayes wrote in the Historical Atlas of the Pacific Northwest.

David Nicandra, former director of the Washington State Historical Society, noted that mapmakers going back to ancient times and really up to about the late 18th and early 19th centuries took fanciful liberties with their documents: “The oldest of them had mythological sea creatures as adornment, while speculation on lost continents bordered on a pastime. All that changed with Captain James Cook, who established a new paradigm for mapmaking with his terribly exact, indeed, chaste cartography.” After Cook, mapmakers couldn’t get away with much of the fanciful.

Lori Larson solved the mystery one night by searching the Internet using alternate spellings of Quenaudenville. She discovered a series of articles that appeared in The Seattle Times in 1952, written by the late Lucile McDonald, a prolific Northwest historian. She was chronicling the recently authenticated diary of Andrew Levitt, a Lewis County pioneer who frequently worked the timber. Dr. Daniel Quenaudon was scouting for a place to found a colony of some 3,000 Germans from Pennsylvania. The pair had come to Grays Harbor, liked what they saw, and filed “donation claims,” which were grants of 320 acres of public lands to a single man or 640 acres to a man and his wife, given by the federal government to encourage settlement.

Having done all that was required, “according to act of Congress,” for taking possession of 36 square miles of land along the banks of the Chehalis, the two men left Levitt to watch over their claims. In his diary Levitt wrote that the doctor’s stay was brief and bizarre. After sniffing the sea breeze and sitting up the trees, he headed back to Oregon. Levit described Quenaudon as “a strange being and the most inconsistent and least accommodating of any human beings I ever had anything to do with or ever wish to have.”

“Levitt’s appraisal of the doctor appears to have been an accurate one,” wrote McDonald, “A Pennsylvania professor, Dr. Wilbur H. Oda, recently completed some research on Quenaudon which was published in The Pennsylvania Dutchman.” Oda characterized the doctor as “brilliant but eccentric.” Quenaudon came to Pennsylvania from Europe in 1829 and established a practice as a magnetic healer, specializing in hypnotic medicine and homeopathic remedies. He was also the inventor and distributor of a sure-fire nerve tonic.

An early advocate of psychotherapy, “he headed a species of medical school, and after completing studies in the Reformed Church was licensed to preach.” He went on to teach herbal medicine in Charleston, South Carolina, served as a state notary in New York, and got himself appointed as chaplain to an artillery regiment. Around 1837, he led “Captain Quenaudon’s Company of Pennsylvania Volunteers” in Florida during the Seminole Indian War. Afterward, he petitioned Congress for $200 to compensate him “for forage of his own horses during the campaign.” The War Department was ordered to pay up.

This 1853 map of the state of California and its neighboring western territories places a nonexistent Quenaudenville (centered in the detail above) at the eastern end of Grays Harbor on the coast of Washington Territory.
By 1840, McDonald wrote, “he was back in New York, effec-
ting hypnotic cures, and by 1844 he had founded a peculiar
medical institution in Berks County, Pennsylvania, staying with
this for a year until he ran into financial difficulties.” Rebound-
ing, the doctor promoted himself to major, ran unsuccessfully
for his herb and whey treatment. One of his contempo-
raries, not numbered among his admirers, complained that “his
God was wine and beer and his principles were rather airy.”
A handbill disseminated in Washington, D.C., in April
1847, offered a “Spring Cure.” Dr. Quenaudon’s extract of
green herbs “for purifying the blood and the cure of all
ailments arising from its impurity, also of all other chronic
diseases,” including consumption, liver complaints, bilious
fever, bleeding at the lungs, rheumatism and gout, scrofula,
ringworm, drops, swelling, and derangement of the
pulmonary and digestive organs. A teacup full of the herbal
extract was to be taken every morning, followed by “an early
promenade in the free air.” All those “desirous to use this pleas-
ant mode of treatment will please make early application to me
at my office: Pennsylvania Avenue, South side, 2d door west
of 12th Street. Nervous diseases, which no more yield to any other
mode of treatment will please make early application to me
in Oregon.” In 1847 he presented a memorial to the United
States Congress in Berks County, Pennsylvania, staying with
his colony to the Pacific, and who guaranty protection to the neighborhood where
they are to settle. They wish to locate in one particular spot, in
order that their party may not be dispersed and so weakened so
as to become an easier prey to the savages.

Meanwhile, back at the shack, Andy Levitt’s only com-
pany in his lonely vigil as caretaker of what the doctor dubbed
Quenaudon’s Ruhe (German for resting place) came from the
Indians. Their ancient village was at Point Chehalis in the
area of Westport now bordered by the South Jersey. Members
of Chief Carcovan’s tribe had a hut near Levitt’s and inter-
normally stopped to chat.

On January 9, 1852, George Phillips, captain of the schooner
Columbia, came ashore with some of his men. Surprised to
find Levitt with no white companions, he supplied him with 40
pounds of beef, syrup “and many necessities of life and would
receive no reward.” However, I prevailed on him to take some of
these things with him. “I had lent the doctor $50 with the understanding he was to
purchase “some provisions.” Dr. Quenaudon had left him
with “three pounds of drying sugar and about as many pounds
of apples, only 13 pounds of beef and bone. He said it was plenty.”
The crew of the Columbia received him “bounteously,” Levitt
wrote, bestowing him with “a quantity of books, and some of
them religious subjects, and presented beets and turnips, and
a number of other luxuries for which I shall ever feel grateful.”
An Indian named Honest Jim gave him some seal oil and
three “hys” (very good) clams. In mid January the weather
became bitterly cold, and Honest Jim and his wife returned
with a gift of sturgeon. Near sundown a few days later, B. C.
Armstrong arrived back at the point accompanied by John W.
Champ, a settler who later became justice of the peace at
Braceport on Willapa Bay. “ Glad to see them,” Levitt told
his diary. “They was tired and hungry.”

Here Dr. Rev. Maj. von Quenaudon was still in Portland,
drilling and disciplined for the protection of the colony. He asks,
on behalf of himself and his associates, a grant of land, on the
assurance that on each section of 640 acres, they will bring an
actual settler of family stock within the period of five years… If they
are men, hardy, enterprising, industrious, and many of them have
seen hard service in the field, who desire to proceed at once to the
Pacific, and who guaranty protection to the neighborhood where
they are to settle. They wish to locate in one particular spot, in
order that their party may not be dispersed and so weakened so
as to become an easier prey to the savages.

But a fabulous character. On the one hand, Querna-
don appears to have been a bona fide medical
doctor—to the extent medicine was learned and practiced
in that era—with theories rooted in homeopathic and
Chinese medicine. On the other, he comes across as a snake-oil
salesman, experimenting with hocus-pocus and whey to cure
crooks and whatever else. He spoke fluent English and
wrote elegant letters and spoke in an elegant hand. The
current is that Quenaudon enjoyed some genuine
credibility in Pennsylvania, or at least possessed impressive
public relations skills, is evidenced by the fact that someone
printing otherwise excellent maps in Philadelphia in 1853
and writing gazetteers as far away as England actually believed that a
fictional place called Quenaudonsville was the “capital” of Lewis
County in the wilds of the Oregon Territory. Let history also note
that his colony was to be across the river and 20 miles up the bay
from where it was placed on the map.

Enterprising Germans came to Grays Harbor in due course,
but the Irish, English, Scots, Swedes, Finns, Croatians, Poles,
were ready “on a day’s notice” should the Germans or other Lewis
County settlers be attacked by Indians. “I all want to make my
fellow citizens happy, give them in Oregon a good home and do the
best for our glorious Union, following the principles of our
immortal Jefferson. I have the honor to remain very respectfully
your most obedient servant, Daniel V. Quenaudon.”

The doctor was clearly adept at press agentry. In 1848,
three years before his arrival on Grays Harbor, The New York
Herald reported he had “already engaged 3,000 persons from
Pennsylvania and other states who are ready to proceed at once
to Oregon.” Once there, he would organize regiments from
the settlers’ ranks, keeping them

John C. Hughes, former editor and publisher of The Daily World at
Aberdeen, is chief oral historian for the Washington Secretary of State.
Hughes is the author of seven Northwest history books and a former
trustee of the Washington State Historical Society.

1855 Gazetteer of the World, volume 6, page 213, contains an inexplicable listing for the “village” of
Quenaudonville, a place that never existed.
Following the Civil War, many Union veterans headed west in search of opportunity and, perhaps, a chance to make real the vision of the “more perfect Union” for which they had fought so hard and sacrificed so much. A. K. Bush and his son William carried the influence of the Civil War into southwestern Washington, where they had a hand in postbellum community building up to the brink of World War II. The Bush family story is a classic case study with some unusual twists.

On the day of his funeral, William Henry Bush was given tribute as “the Grand Old Man” of Montesano, Washington. The October 28, 1938, Montesano Vidette reported, “All business houses in Montesano have been asked by Mayor Calder and the chamber of commerce to close from 2 until 3 o’clock this Friday afternoon.” The article recognized Bush for an impressive list of contributions to the public good, but not a single word was said about his unique place in Civil War history. Only the editorial page mentioned what has perhaps become his most famous claim to fame: “A treasured memory of Will Bush was the time he talked with Abraham Lincoln during the dark days of the Civil War. And it seems, in that childhood encounter, that he caught something of the gentleness and nobility of character we associate with the name Lincoln.”

Family lore has it that young Willie Bush met the president in 1864 when he was only six and a half years old and was possibly the youngest person to wear a military uniform on either side of the Civil War. From the 1970s to 2005, Civil War scholar Jay S. Hoar gathered a great deal of data on children serving in the military during the 1861–65 period. In a war where it was not unusual to have soldiers in their mid teens, the definition of “children” can be relative, but in a 1997 letter Hoar wrote, “Of all the childlike martinetts who were to ‘perform duty’ in the Union forces—musicians, powder monkeys, messengers, orderlies, guidon markers, mascots, valets, or waiters—very probably the latest born and youngest of all was Willie H. Bush.”

Hoar went on to qualify that claim: “True, he was never issued formal enlistment papers, never had pay records, never drew a Civil War pension, and practically never mentioned himself as ever having done anything in or for the war effort…. But Bush’s scarce credentials, while not quite in next order, are for all their humble nature unmistakable, credible, reportable.”

The story begins with Asahel Kidder Bush, Willie Bush’s father, who was born September 9, 1832, in Yates County, New York, a descendant of 17th-century Dutch immigrant Hendrick Albertus Bosch. The A. K. branch of the family was described as “Maryland-English and Pennsylvania-Dutch.” Asahel was the oldest of the numerous offspring of Henry Lodowick and Margaretta (Lacey) Bush. The family migrated to southern Wisconsin in 1846 after living in southern Michigan for seven years. A. K. read medicine and interned with Rufus Howard, MD, from 1847 to 1850. In the final year of that internship he attended the recently established Rock Island Medical College, 1849–50.
Bush married Eliza A. Congdon in early 1857, and the couple took up residence in Indiana, where their first child, Wil, was born in 1857. In 1858, the family moved to Nashville, Tennessee. In 1857, Bush entered the medical profession, and in 1858, he was mustered in as a first lieutenant in Company B, Ninth Infantry, Central Railroad Company.

After his enlistment, Bush was stationed in the South. He was primarily involved in medical care for soldiers, and his medical skills were highly regarded. In early 1864, Asahel and Willie Bush were assigned to the Veteran’s Reserve Corps (renamed the Veteran’s Reserve Corps in March 1864), a unit designed to place disabled soldiers in noncombat roles. His hemoptysis was severe enough to keep him off the battlefield and, apparently, away from potential patients. Although the army desperately needed physicians, Bush’s medical skills were never put to use.

When he was about eight years old, William and other boys were playing soldiers in a suit of uniform near the White House. During this time, they would sometimes see President Abraham Lincoln out for a walk. The boys always stop what they were doing and salute the president. One day, one of the boys cried, “Here comes the President!” They all stood and saluted him. He turned the salute and then asked, “Are you boys going to be soldiers when you grow up?” “Yes,” they replied. “Well,” said Mr. Lincoln, “It’s to be regretted that we have to be soldiers at all. I hope you’ll never be called upon to fight.” Then he walked away.

In Ferryville, in October 1862, Bush contracted a virus that evolved into hemoptysis, or coughing up blood. He was hospitalized for “several months” in Nashville but released in time to participate in the Battle of Chickamauga (September 19–20, 1863), his last Civil War battle experience. At the end of September, he received a transfer to the Invalid Corps stationed in Washington, D.C., and it is here that Willie met President Lincoln. Although there are no primary documents that verify the meeting, Civil War historian Jay Hoar pieced together the following account based on local Montesano lore:

Father and son in a party of White House visitors were scheduled for a brief walk and greeting from the president. The affair came off almost magically. “Uncle Abe” beamed, walked down to the boy, extended a hand, and inquired, “Your name, Son?” “Willie!” exclaimed the six-year-old, not realizing that this giant commander-in-chief had lost a son named Willie [on February 20, 1862]. The boy’s tragic death had plunged the First Family into deep grief. The Great One swallowed hard and, stooping, conferred upon the surprised youth a hug….

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In the latter half of 1882, Will Bush, then age 24, was appointed to his first position of civic authority as Riverside postmaster. Around January 1883 he relocated a bit north to Montesano, the Grays Harbor County seat, where his father had moved to set up a medical practice and pharmacy.

The Bush family had moved to that area when young Julia Bush was four years old, and Asahel become the region’s justice of the peace and postmaster.

In 1883 the Bush family purchased a 160-acre donation land claim directly across the Willapa River from present-day Raymond, in an area then known as Riverside. He and his father soon set up a sawmill, and Asahel became the region’s justice of the peace and postmaster.

Will arrived in Montesano in 1883 with his family. Their first son, William Jr., was born in 1886. Will was appointed a deputy sheriff on January 18, 1886, his first step into a law enforcement role that earned him great fame during his lifetime. In July of that year he helped organize Montesano’s first fire department, and in November he was elected county sheriff as a Republican.

The local newspaper endorsed him thus: “For sheriff, W. H. Bush, the present deputy, is candidate. As a deputy, Mr. Bush has had no superiors; his business is promptly and carefully executed, and no real cause of complaint has arisen. He will execute his duties fearlessly, without regard of persons or friends. His past record as deputy is sufficiently recommend.”

Will, modest in physical stature, and according to Grays Harbor historian Paul B. Taylor, “so well mannered and so reserved in disposition that the citizens thought he was too gentle—manly to ever go up against any hard- ened lawbreakers,” Sheriff Will Bush had a chance to reshape his image in the Fishermen’s War of 1887 when gillnetters from Astoria invaded the territory of local Grays Harbor trap fishermen. A shooting war ensued, possibly resulting in the deaths of a few Astorians.

Even though the Oregon fishermen came out in this battle, they were viewed as the instigators, and all war warrants were issued for 19 of them. Sheriff Bush gathered a posse of a dozen or so, and they left Montesano aboard the SS Haney, headed down the Chehalis River for Aberdeen. Where the fisherman had been a lot of young fellows who agreed with me. Enough of them to carry the day, and that is how E. H. Gant, now of Aberdeen, was nominated and elected county surveyor. He was later re-elected.

Will was re-elected as sheriff for four terms. When the 20th century rolled around, Bush was regarded as a local legend. He engaged in a number of commercial adventures: con- ventor on a patent for a coupling device, co-owner of the Montesano Steamship Company, a dealer in Rambler automobiles, insurance broker, freight service owner, real estate agent, and shingle mill owner. Still held in high regard by the populace in 1922, he made a second run for mayor at age 65, three decades after he had last served, and won a landslide victory, 274–24.

In fact, the Civil War was a national war about radically different ideas—slavery, state’s rights, political dissent, and federal power—not just a regional war on eastern battlefields. The people of the Pacific Northwest responded to the conflict and its related issues in many different ways. This exhibit, curated by historian Lorraine McConaghy, is about the choices they made and where those choices led. These Civil War pathways were discovered through a large crowd-sourcing project that turned everyday citizens into historical researchers who collected valuable references to Civil War-era life in Washington.

In 1883, Bush resigned from the military the day Raymond, in an area then known as Riverside. He and his father soon set up a sawmill, and Asahel became the region’s justice of the peace and postmaster.

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When the 20th century rolled around, Bush was regarded as a local legend. He engaged in a number of commercial adventures: con- ventor on a patent for a coupling device, co-owner of the Montesano Steamship Company, a dealer in Rambler automobiles, insurance broker, freight service owner, real estate agent, and shingle mill owner. Still held in high regard by the populace in 1922, he made a second run for mayor at age 65, three decades after he had last served, and won a landslide victory, 274–24.
During much of human history, baskets have been essential tools of daily life. They have been used for gathering, processing, and keeping food, carrying babies, catching fish and birds, and storing clothing as well as religious items. Today, many of us use baskets, but very few people in our culture make baskets. We rely more on baskets made in other countries or manufactured by machines.

People have been making baskets for millennia all around the world. In the Northwest, many of us are familiar with basket making as an activity traditional to Native American cultures, but few people realize that immigrants from many parts of the world have brought their basket making traditions with them to Washington. Historically, baskets have been largely utilitarian; more recently basketry has become a recognized art form.

The Seattle area has one of the most active basketry guilds in the United States. At the beginning of the new millennium, members of the Northwest Basket Weavers Vi Phillips Guild became increasingly concerned that the work of older members would pass away with them. The death of Vi Phillips, the basket maker for whom the guild is named, was a special motivation. Guild members contacted the Historical Society and proposed a collaborative project to preserve basketry history in our state. The guild began recording oral histories and collecting baskets from its members.

In 2004, the guild donated the first group of baskets to the Historical Society. Over the past 10 years, the group has donated eight oral histories and 43 baskets, plus raw materials, tools, and other related items. The examples illustrated here give some sense of the variety in this collection, which includes traditional baskets from several different cultures as well as baskets made as art.

A. Lidded basket by Jan Hopkins; orange peels, waxed linen thread, 2001. A traditional ginger jar shape executed in a very non-traditional material. (WHS #2006.54.3)
B. Backpack by Nhia Heu, Hmong, bamboo, 1999. Heu came to Seattle as a refugee and has sold traditional Hmong baskets in the area for many years. (WHS #2004.143.7)
C. Clam basket by Ed Carriere, Suquamish; cedar withes and cedar root, 1987. A modern version of a traditional Northwest Coast clam basket. (WHS #2006.54.6)
D. Basket by Mary Irvine; reed, gut, paint, c. 2005. This nontraditional basket was made by stretching gut over a base of woven reeds. (WHS #2012.78.1)
E. Basket by John Engfer, hazel and vine maple splints, 1980s. Engfer was a German-American resident of Orting who made and sold traditional splint baskets. (WHS #2006.54.2)
F. Antler basket by Joyce Johnson; antler, reed, sea grass, c. 1990. (WHS #2006.135.8)
STUDENTS OF THE American West might be familiar with William F. Sturgis—of the Bryant and Sturgis shipping firm—as one of the more prominent Boston merchants engaged in the sea otter trade in the early 19th century. Others may recall that the brig Pilgrim, engaged in the hide and tallow business in Mexican California and the scene for much of Richard Henry Dana Jr.’s 1840 maritime classic Two Years Before the Mast, was a Bryant and Sturgis ship. Yet, too few today appreciate the important role Sturgis played in American controversies surrounding territorial claims in the Pacific Northwest. While not as popular as Dana’s opus, his political writings, produced as early as the 1820s, gave a respected intelligence and complex individual who did not shy away from criticism of his own nation’s expansionist claims. He checked the interests of Russia and England as well as those of some of his contemporaries. This may come as no surprise to those familiar with William Sturgis the sea otter trader, as he was one of the most vocal critics of the mistreatment of Northwest indigenous peoples at the hands of American crews.

William Sturgis was born in February 1762 in Barnstable, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod. Completing rudimentary schooling at the age of 14, the youth was sent to Boston as a junior shipping clerk to learn the family business. By 1798 he found himself at sea aboard the Eliza, engaged in the Northwest-Canton trade. Sturgis quickly gained a reputation as a skillful fur negociator with Pacific Northwest natives and in the fur trade. He commanded the Athaqua in 1809, which sailed directly to Canton to exchange silver dollars for Chinese goods, one of the last of many successful voyages for Sturgis as a merchant at sea. He then settled in Boston and joined with John Bryant in founding a highly lucrative shipping firm.

Bryant and Sturgis vessels were seen often in Pacific waters in the first half of the 19th century. Over time, Sturgis himself grew into his role as an authority on the fur trade. At a major address in Boston in the 1840s (which, according to an observer, was “set forth in a clear, methodical, and comprehensive manner”) he detailed the history, geography, and economy of maritime fur traders during the 1840s (which, according to an observer, was “set forth in a clear, methodical, and comprehensive manner”) he detailed the history, geography, and economy of maritime fur traders during the 1840s.

S. W. Jackman notes, “His political career was respectable but not very successful.” Yet Sturgis made valuable contributions to the political world beyond Boston. His first opportunity to do so involved national debates on American interests in the Oregon Country in the late 1810s and early 1820s. Following the Treaty of Ghent, which formally ended the War of 1812 between the United States and England, it remained unclear if Astoria on the Columbia River should be considered a settlement that had been captured by the British—and thus returned to Americans according to the treaty—or a property purchased at the end of the conflict by British competitors of John Jacob Astor’s venture. The uncertainty dragged on for a number of years until negotiations in London in 1818 offered the solution of joint occupancy of the Oregon Country. Eager to move on the matter, a number of American congressmen, most prominently Representative John Floyd of Virginia, introduced bills throughout the 1820s meant to provide government support for joint Astoria settlement in the Northwest. Congress never took action on the proposals, but a lively public debate about Oregon captured the attention of many, ultimately proving irresistible to Sturgis.

The former shipmaster first entered the fray in a letter to the Boston Daily Advertiser published on January 26, 1822. Sturgis noted that while his interests in a settlement on the Pacific Coast “are much less sanguine than those avowed by Mr. Floyd”—in part a reference to the heavily anti-Russian rhetoric of the first congressional bill—he agreed that the United States government should establish some form of presence in the territory, despite concerns of many at the time that such a move would violate the joint occupancy provision. Like Astor, Sturgis was one of the more prominent maritime traders who envisioned and sought governmental involvement in the Northwest fur trade. Unlike Astor, he had been to the region, and he argued that the Columbia River was a bad choice.

Spurned by the British, Sturgis pointed to his own experience as a sailor along with the testimonies of others to demonstrate the region could support many much larger settlements than Astoria. He cited the British captains John Meares and George Vancouver as well as his fellow countrymen Robert Gray and William Shaler. Writing under the pen name “Circumnavigor,” he ended the letter: “From these facts we may reasonably conclude that the mouth of the Columbia can never be entered by loaded vessels of 400 tons barthen—that its navigation must always be exposed to delays, difficulties, and dangers, and therefore is not an eligible situation for the proposed settlement.”

Following up three days later with a second letter, Sturgis emphasized where he felt a settlement should be built: “on the Southern side of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, in the vicinity of Port Discovery.” He wrote of the strait’s safety, its natural harbor, and the existence of good harbors in the area, including Puget Sound. The letter demonstrates that Sturgis, like many of his contemporaries, worked with incomplete cartographic knowledge of the Northwest. He misunderstood the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The letter demonstrates that Sturgis, like many of his contemporaries, worked with incomplete cartographic knowledge of the Northwest.

Grounds of Our Claim

WILLIAM STURGIS AND COMMERCIAL DIPLOMACY ON THE NORTHWEST COAST

By Richard Ravalli

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By Richard Ravelli
Sturgis questioned the wisdom of "making distant settlements and encouraging emigration from the United States to a region too remote." From the Atlantic to the Pacific was perhaps nothing more than "flattering to national vanity" and not "sound policy." In this regard, Circumnavigator expressed many of the same philosophical, Jeffersonian sentiments regarding the frontier and national unity that vexed politicians in Washington, D.C., during the Oregon debates of the 1820s. The fact that Oregon was not a contiguous territory and the question of where the hearts and minds of future settlers would be fixed—to Asia? to Spanish-speaking countries?—troubled those in Congress who formed the opposition to Floyd's bills. As an expert in Pacific commerce, Sturgis added an economic layer to these arguments. Beyond the fur trade, he was skeptical about the value of Oregon. He pointed out the marginality of sea otter pelts in terms of American involvement in the China market.

The proximity of Asia is not an important circumstance—it is well known that most of our commerce with that quarter is merely an exchange of the precious metals [silver] for what may be generally considered as the luxuries of life, and therefore not beneficial to a newly settled country—the western shores of North America produce nothing valuable for export (furs only excepted) but what is common to both sides of the stony mountains, and even Asia can be supplied with such products, on more favorable terms from the Atlantic States than from the borders of the Pacific.

Furs therefore only played a partial role in procuring Asian tea and silk. Sturgis also was critical of the American policy of Northwest for the whaling industry, based in part on the fact that whaling was just beginning to reach its heyday in the Pacific in the early 1820s.

Sturgis therefore argued in a fourth and final letter to the Boston Daily Advertiser. His narrative of major developments in the trade is one of the earliest histories of it, and lays forth a chronology that became standard for future authors: Russians in the North Pacific, followed by Captain Cook, American voyages, and Astoria. Sturgis noted the decline in sea otter populations and the shift to less valuable land furs, which made profits in Canton more difficult to come by. Likewise, he reported that the current trade was best north of 51 degrees latitude, writing with emphasis: "On this part of the coast only is the trade worth pursuing, and from this part of the coast the late Russian ukase [proclamation], if enforced, will entirely exclude us."

Indeed, the ukase became an urgent concern for Sturgis. The economics of the fur trade may have prompted him toward a more cautious diplomatic tone in relation to the British, but it inspired in him a firm stance toward the Russians. The renewed royal charter for the Russian American Company in 1821 coincided with a dramatic statement of czarist sovereignty in the Pacific. Alexander I declared that territory from the Bering Strait to 51 degrees latitude, or the northern tip of Vancouver Island, was exclusively Russian and that foreign vessels were prohibited within "100 Italian miles" (about 92 miles) from shore. For years officials in St. Petersburg had complained about the presence of American ships in Alaskan waters, and the ukase—even if a diplomatic bluff—was in large measure an attempt to deal with Yankee interlopers. The Secretary of State John Quincy Adams met with Sturgis later in 1823, one of his many personal dealings with the Boston maritime trading community.

Sturgis first suggested that controversy surrounding national claims in the Pacific Northwest might be better handled by surrendering the territory to native tribes. If, by negotiation, the whole extent of coast, from Cape Mendocino [sic] in latitude 40, to Prince William Sound, in latitude 60, could be left in quiet possession of the native and rightful proprietors of the soil, it would be better for the civilized, even in a political point of view, to say nothing of those moral considerations, which might lead one to doubt the strict justice of depopulating a brave and independent people, of a country which, for ought we know, has been in possession of their ancestors since the dispersion of Babel.

Sturgis coupled genuine concern for indigenous civilization with a critique of Representative Floyd and his supporters based on worries over national cohesion. He questioned the wisdom of "making distant settlements, and encouraging emigration from the United States to a region too remote." Settlers would find it difficult to defend such an expansive territory from invasion, and, after all, "countless millions of fertile acres" were already available within the Union. Sturgis opposed the notion that the government of the United States "is adapted to a populous empire" and suggested that a continental nation from the Atlantic to the Pacific was perhaps nothing more than...
As a challenge to advocates of “54-40 or Fight,” Sturgis once again emphasized the dangers of a republic growing too quickly.

A number of years passed before the Northwest again demanded national attention in a major way. With joint occupancy extended indefinitely in 1827, a diplomatic deadlock existed in which neither the United States nor England would budge from its collection of arguments for legitimate title to Oregon. Meanwhile, settlers began arriving in the 1830s and 1840s, strengthening the United States’ positions as new political debates emerged. Sturgis represented the northeastern Whig position, as did his Massachusetts colleague Daniel Webster, in opposing those who called for the “whole of Oregon.”

Such a stand, it was felt, would unnecessarily provoke a war with England and damage the investments of Pacific whalers and traders.

As Mallory notes, another of Sturgis’s New England associates, Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft, corresponded with him in 1845 and 1846 during Sturgis’s push for a treaty at the 49th parallel. Of primary importance to these advocates were ports, not land. In the words of one congressman, Oregon “will command the trade of the isles of the Pacific, of the East, and of China”; another argued that “[a]s to land, we have millions of acres of better land still unoccupied on this side of the mountains.” Since many of the basic elements of this position had already been set forth by Sturgis two decades earlier, it was only natural that his latest pamphlet gained prominent attention as it buttressed an uncompromising stance against the ukase by the James Monroe administration. Adams demanded that American ships be free to trade anywhere on the coast and that Russia restrict its aggressive claims. A treaty in 1824 allowed American trade at unsettled points on the coast for 10 years, and Russia agreed not to form new colonies south of Sitka. The diplomat from Barnstable had succeeded in helping defend his nation’s interests in the Pacific Northwest.

In the first part of the article, Sturgis sought to explain the economic importance of the fur trade for his audience, “independent of any territorial rights which it may be thought to involve.” He then quoted from the ukase as well as a lengthy letter to Secretary Adams from the Russian minister to the United States, Pierre de Polotski, before providing a critique of the Russian position. As he did earlier in the year, Sturgis relied on historical information—in this case, data relating to Russian discoveries in the Northwest—in order to cast doubt on the southern limits demanded by the czar and Polotski. Conceding that Russia had a “plausible foundation” to the Aleutian Islands, Cook’s River, and Prince William Sound (basically, western and southern Alaska), he argued that any title to southeastern Alaska and surrounding lands was weak, partly because Spanish explorers made historical sources in order to defend his view. Established in 1799 for English, American, and other visitors, the Russian fort at Sitka lacked strength, and the czar had no right to forbid foreign shipping where merchants knew a lucrative trip could still be made:

It is well known to the Russian fur company, that nearly all the sea otter skins, and most of the other valuable furs, are procured north of the 51st, and if “foreign adventurers” can be prevented from approaching that part of the coast, the company would soon be left in undisturbed possession of the whole trade, for south of 51 it is not of sufficient value to attract a single vessel in a season.

This would not only secure to them a monopoly in the purchase, but give them control of the Chinese market, for the most valuable furs, which would be still more important.

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because the United States had a better title ‘under the law of nature and of nations.’” Yet Sturgis, perhaps anticipating what his published lecture would become as a bargaining tool, underlined that diplomacy required a calm and comprehensive approach. Thus after explaining the various grounds for the United States’ claim to Oregon, he moved to an evaluation of the British claims.

Allowing willing to concede something to the opposition, Sturgis argued that it is “evident to any one who looks carefully and impartially into the whole matter, that some of the pretensions of each party are, to say the least, plausible.” Even so, he sought to undercut the British position by pointing to the facts of the Northwest fur trade. Sturgis once again employed economic conditions to make his case, stressing the meager profit for the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) south of 49° degrees. Realization of that fact by England should make her leaders more willing to yield. Although Malloy may be correct that Sturgis “grossly simplifies” the value of the area’s fur trade at the time, it is clear that market considerations remained central to his geopolitical thinking. Additionally, the HBC did indeed relocate operations from the Columbia River to Vancouver Island in 1845, based at least in part on a decline in the trade.

As a challenge to advocates of what became known as “54-40 or Fight,” Sturgis once again emphasized the dangers of a “most passionate and forthright statements regarding the lack of imperative into the whole matter, that some of the pretensions to rise to prominence. Indeed, near the time he was recalled from London by Polk, Everett sent a copy of “The Oregon Question” to a trade advisor for the British foreign secretary, writing that Sturgis, “now a wealthy merchant in Boston, was originally a shipmaster and passed several years in that capacity on the coast of the debatable territory.” Sturgis’s expertise, coupled with rational compromise that even Polk wished for, at the very least gave his pamphlet a respectable place in the final Oregon settlement. What is less certain is whether the map that he produced of the proposed borderline played a major role in the settlement. Malloy notes that it likely accompanied the original lecture in Boston, but it was also reproduced for printed copies.

IN THE LAST paragraph of “The Oregon Question” Sturgis returned to his concern for Native American rights in the Pacific Northwest. If Polk’s focus on American claims and interests, it is one of the most passionate and forthright statements regarding the lack of attention given to Indian sovereignty during the Oregon controversy. It represents William Sturgis at his best: free-thinking, resolute, and truly considerate of all sides:

There is a third party interested in this matter, of whom I have not spoken, and who have not been mentioned or even alluded to in the discussions and negotiations that have been going on, in relation to this territory, among four civilized nations, for more than thirty years. The claims of this party do not depend upon discovery, or exploration, or contiguity, but rest upon actual, undisputed possession—by themselves and their fathers—from a period of which the history of the continent does not reach. But these claimants are powerless, and have neither the right to make war, nor respect the rights, of savages and heathens! The rights of the Indians, from one extremity of this continent to the other, have been disregarded, and will, I fear, continue to be disregarded until the day of retribution comes, when equal justice will be meted out to in the discussions and negotiations that have been going on, in relation to this territory, among four civilized nations, for more than fifty years. The claims of this party do not depend upon discovery, or exploration, or contiguity, but rest upon actual, undisputed possession—by themselves and their fathers—from a period of which the history of the continent does not reach. But these claimants are powerless, and have neither the right to make war, nor respect the rights, of savages and heathens! The rights of the Indians, from one extremity of this continent to the other, have been disregarded, and will, I fear, continue to be disregarded until the day of retribution comes, when equal justice will be meted out to

RICHLAND RIVER

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A Washington Town that Grew Up on an Indian Reservation

PEOPLE OFTEN WONDER how the city of Toppenish, composed mainly of non-Indian residents, became established inside the boundaries of the Yakama Reservation. After all, Article 2 of the Treaty of 1855 states, “nor shall any white man, except those in the employment of the Indian Department, be permitted to reside upon the said reservation, or to perform any act of ownership, or to suffer any act of others in the said reservation without permission of the tribe and the superintendent and agent.”

Like many tales of western development, this one begins with a railroad. Another section of the 1855 treaty—Article 1—authorized roads for the convenience of the public, and in 1866 Congress empowered the Northern Pacific Railway to lay track westward until it reached Puget Sound. The route it was to take, if the tribe granted permission, ran just inside the northeastern border of the Yakama Reservation.

In 1854 an estimated 1,700 tribal members had homes on the reservation and operated farms or grew gardens and raised livestock to achieve varying degrees of self-sufficiency. Only a few whites worked for the tribal agency at Fort Simcoe; two-thirds of the workforce consisted of Indian employees. Many tribal members continued to rely on fishing at various times of the year, particularly when drought reduced crops or severe winter weather diminished livestock. Meanwhile, more than 1,200 Indians subject to the treaty still lived off the reservation. Most of the time they followed traditional seasonal rounds and lived at established campsites, according to Yakama agent James Wilbur. Some were of Yakama lineage, but many were Palouse, Columbia Sin ké, Wenatchee, Wana-

By Jo N. Miles

Toppenish town site, 1906. The name is said to come from a Yakama-Sahaptin word that translates roughly to “a way out of mountains into valleys or plains.”
grading roadbeds on the reservation in October 1884. The track was completed on December 11, the day Agent Milroy received the first report complaining of livestock killed by a locomotive. The railroad paid stock owners for losses of this type. A council with the Yakama Nation was held in January 1885 to set the price of land and make a final transfer of property before construction of depot buildings commenced.

The Fort Simcoe Council set a purchase price and formally relinquished the necessary property from the tribe to the railroad. The steps mirrored those taken at the 1875 Walla Walla Treaty Council. A commissioner, Robert S. Gist, met with representatives of the tribes and bands. Also present were Agent Milroy, witness James McNaughton, and interpreter Andrew Riddle. The document was signed by Joe Stwire, Captain Eneas, Thomas Fearie, Willie Shuster, Thomas Simpson, George Waters, and 12 other headmen. The tribe received $35,309 cash for the land. Apart from a written agreement, railway negotiators verbally promised free passage to Yakamas wishing to travel by train between Toppenish, Wallula, and Ellensburg. For a year or two, local Indians rode for free, but the program came to an end after a change in railroad administration.

The arrival of the railroad dramatically altered activities on the reservation. Soon, white employees began residing at new depots and section houses situated on land relinquished by the tribe. Farmers and settlers living outside the boundaries took advantage of the opportunity to ship goods to and from depots at Toppenish and Simcoe (Wapato).-boundaries took advantage of the opportunity to ship goods to and from depots at Toppenish and Simcoe (Wapato). Farmers and settlers living outside the reservation population was in favor of the act when it was passed. But by the time allotments were surveyed and assigned five years later, only seven or eight families were reported to be in opposition to the plan. Most families claimed their shares and made sure eligible children also received their entitlements. The agent assigned allotments to the reluctant few who did not wish to select their own.

By 1894 a total of 1,927 tribal residents had taken allotments. Indian agent L. T. Erwin boasted in his 1895 annual report, “Indians occupying (ceded) lands, as a rule, are self-supporting, and some of their crops are equal to the whites. For example: ... Mrs. Lillie, half-breed, raised 75 bushels of oats per acre on 200 acres.” The report did not specify that Josephine Lillie’s white husband Nevada was the principal farmer. The Lillies, like many other families, enjoyed multiple allotments—those of Josephine and the six Lillie children—totaling 560 acres. A general说明 prohibiting non-Indians from living on the reservation remained in effect. Agent Erwin posted notices at the Toppenish depot: “All white men shall be removed from the Reservation except the fifty bearing permits and those married to Indian women.”

The policy restricting non-Indian residents relaxed in 1898 when the first of hundreds of agricultural leases went into effect. Grazing permits had been approved for years, but for the first time outsiders were allowed to reside on land and farm up to five years in return for making payments to the Agency which in turn remunerated individual Indian landowners. Federal financial support had diminished since the 1880s, after the government finished paying the purchase price for ceded lands and the treaty-specified 20-year obligation to provide services had expired. With the last of the annuities distributed in 1896, federal support became limited primarily to the children’s school.

The Interior Department allowed leases provided that Indian landowners kept at least 40 acres for their own homes and gardens. New sources of income became important because congressional budget reductions in 1902 resulted in the closure of several mills operating on the reservation—a gristmill, a shingle mill, and two sawmills—and corresponding loss of jobs.

In 1902 the federal government eliminated Jay Lynch’s position as United States Indian agent and reasigned him—at a lower salary—to the post of superintendent of the children’s school. Despite his demotion, Lynch continued to carry out administrative duties at the agency and even stepped up law enforcement.

Congress opened the door for outsiders to legally own land on reservations in 1902 when it granted heirs the option of selling the allotments of deceased relatives. Indian heirs had a choice of keeping the inherited land or requesting reversion from the Department of the Interior to sell it to the highest bidder. The program began slowly at first. No lands were sold in 1903, and eight allotments were purchased in this manner in 1904—a total of 653 acres—for $20,645.

Two of the first petitioners were Chief Joe Stwire (White Swan) and his...
Between 1902 and 1904 the commissioner of Indian Affairs approved non-agricultural leases, allowing a school and a number of businesses to operate on allotted parcels in addition to 335 agricultural leases on 27,338 acres. Indian owners received payments twice a year at between $2 and $5 per acre. A directory published in 1904 described the Toppenish community as having a public school, a Methodist church, two hotels, two meat markets, two blacksmith shops, two barbershops, two livery barns, telephone service to Sunnyside, a lumber company, post office, mail stage to Zillah, general store, and trading company. All could operate with written permission of allotment owners and the agent in charge, and approval from the Department of the Interior. Rules required allotment owners and persons leasing land to meet face to face in the agent’s office to sign documents. The directory listed as residents 53 farmers, 12 laborers, seven storekeepers, four teamsters, three carpenters, three bookkeepers, and two teachers. Agent Lynch reported that there were so many white leaseholders living on the reservation that Yakima County had established two public schools near the depot, hired three teachers, and enrolled 40 Indian children to be taught alongside white students.

By 1905 agriculture and business were well established on the reservation. Horace M. Gilbert leased and farmed up to 2,000 acres as part of a venture he began in 1899 with his father-in-law, James Richey. The Richey and Gilbert Company shipped approximately 60 railcar per month filled with hay, potatoes, grain, livestock and assorted fruit. Washington Nursery began operations near the railroad’s right-of-way in 1903, and company officials lived in cottages leased on Indian land. The nursery employed 54 men in the field and nine office workers filling orders from all over the United States and Canada. A nationwide demand for young fruit trees arose as unplanted lots of the reservation enabled the nursery to produce pest-free trees. The company grew 1,500 varieties of trees and shrubs on more than 320 acres. The Toppenish Depot rivaled North Yakima at times, shipping more than 100 tons of fruit monthly.

At the beginning of 1905, two delegations of Yakama tribal leaders journeyed to Washington, DC, to meet with President Theodore Roosevelt and testify for and against issues related to selling tribal lands. One group, represented by Chief Joe Stwire and Charles Wannassay, favored expanded sales of allotted reservation land. The second group consisted of head men Thomas Simpson and former tribal police chief Captain Ennis, accompanied by interpreter Frank Meacham. They argued against the proposed sale of unallotted reservation land and strongly supported restoration of disputed property on the western boundary, which Congress had approved in December 1904. Together, White Swan and Simpson advocated a common issue, tribal fishing rights. Their position was successfully upheld by a United States Supreme Court decision in 1905 that prevented Columbia River fish wheel operators from denying Indians access to their traditional fishing places. More action by Congress approved restoration of disputed reservation ground on the western boundary and allowed additional allotments to Indian children who had not yet received them, increasing the total number of allotments to 3,154.

While unallotted lands never received tribal approval for sale, the federal government did grant fee patent titles (in essence, private ownership) to a number of individual allotment owners, beginning with Josephine Lillie on March 3, 1905. Soon afterward, Frank Meacham was the next to receive a fee patent for his allotment near the Simcoe (Wapato) Depot. Within three weeks of congressional approval, Lillie filed a platted survey, naming it City of Toppenish. The document dedicated all of the streets and alleys “to the use of the public forever.” In April, Lillie began advertising and selling the first of 143 city lots for $25 to $40 each.

Lillie’s business success in 1905 encouraged other allotment holders to apply for fee patents for their properties. Charles Wannassay, Susan Stone (Swasey), Franklin P. Olney, and Thomas P. Robbins received approval from Congress in 1906. The allottees platted tracts into city lots known as city additions that bore their names on county records. A portion of the allotment of Franklin P. Olney’s late daughter became a public city park. Margaret (Maggie) Spencer, a teenager in the Yakima Nation, expressed her desire to build a Boys’ Club at the park. Spencer also advocated for the demand of the other Yakama people for the use of the place as a park.

As noted by the Yakima Republic, “the purchase of the land that the city of Toppenish is located on was made in the manner provided by the Indian act of 1887, in accordance with the law and the provisions of the act, the city of Toppenish was granted a right-of-way and allotted reservation land on the yakama reservation.”
1906, had an allotment adjacent to the depot but did not seek a patent until 1920. Her allotment became property of Toppenish Rodeo and Livestock Association and Silgan Containers. Maggie’s father, Lancaster, opened the first blacksmith shop in town with his son Jesse and later went into real estate. Another son, James, operated a harness shop. Thomas (Tommy) Robbins operated one of the meat markets in town and also sold real estate. Robbins and Olney had white fathers and Wasco or Warm Springs mothers born in Oregon. Oregon tribes had a separate treaty and their own reservation. Consequently, the Yakama Tribe filed a claim against the United States in 1951 for loss of lands from erroneous allotments issued to 411 persons alleged not to be members of the original 14 tribes and bands under the Yakama Treaty. The Indian Claims Commission found in favor of the tribe and in 1968 the Yakama Tribal Council and General Council voted to accept a $2.1 million settlement from the government that also included compensation for 125,536 acres lost to white settlement on the western boundary because of erroneous surveys associated with tract “D” (Mount Adams area) and Cedar Valley.

Some allotments issued to people originating from other tribes had logic behind them. For example, Franklin P. Olney lived with his Wasco mother and famous white father, Nathan Olney (former Oregon Indian agent and volunteer captain), on Altahun Creek, adjacent to the Yakama Reservation, in the 1960s. After his father’s death in 1866, “Frank” attended tribal school at Fort Simcoe, became employed at the Yakama Agency, and lived on the reservation with the consent of Yakama tribal members. At age 29 Olney was backed by some tribal members during an unsuccessful bid to open new elections for Yakama head chief in 1882 (five years prior to the allotment act). Wannamay and Lancaster Spencer were full-blood residents with Klickitat (an original Yakama Treaty tribe) and Cowlitz (too treaty signed) lineage. Robbins’s late brother James had an allotment just northeast of the depot. His heirs sold the property to G. Dew McQuesten for $16,668 in 1926.

United States Congressman Wesley L. Jones was a driving force behind converting Indian allotments into free and clear title for their owners. In 1889, at age 26, Jones moved from Illinois to North Yakima with his wife Mindy. He opened up a law practice with two partners and in 1898 was elected to Congress as a Republican representative. He and his wife had a house on Naches Avenue in Yakima and owned a 100-acre ranch near the Sunnyside Canal. The irrigation canal, completed in 1892, extended 42 miles along the Yakima River north of the reservation boundaries between Yakima City (Union Gap) and Sunnyside.

Jones worked diligently to expand useful farmland and commercial de- 
velopments originating from other tribes to sell surplus or unallotted lands if they so desired. He also promoted legislation allowing Indian tribes to sell surplus or unallotted lands, if they have law and order here; and further that we may have local government and not be obliged to take all the small matters that may arise to North Yakima for settlement.”

At that time only two deputies were assigned to all of Yakima County, and Deputy Sheriff John Edwards did what he could to help clean up hobos camps. On one occasion, after a group of vagrants refused to leave, the deputy pulled out his six-gun and shot up all their cooking utensils. Jay Lynch, along with a deputy United States Marshal, raided Toppenish establishments and arrested owners of drug stores and pool rooms accused of illegally selling liquor and allowing gambling. Some Toppenish businesses, including Richay and Gilbert Company, supported closing down liquor businesses entirely.

For fiscal year 1906, Agent Lynch reported 14 business leases on 49 acres and 396 farming and grazing leases on 29,995 acres, which paid Indian lessees $32,209. The sale of 24 allotments of inherited Indian lands totaling 2,020 acres paid heirs $73,796. Grazing permits paid from non-Indians on unallotted lands brought in $11,415 for the agency. The Yakima County Board of Commissioners approved Toppenish’s incorporation on April 22, 1907. An election by local citizens resulted in 100 ballots in favor and none against. Since incorporation, the city’s population has remained about 90 percent non-Indian.

Outside influences and economies drove many of the decisions that brought Toppenish into existence, but the signatures of Indian people were required to approve agreements, negotiate prices, and enter into leases and contracts. The City of Toppenish materialized from a combination of circumstances. Some steps resulted from the actions of the tribe as a council, such as approving a railroad agreement and developing irrigation. Other developments arose as a result of individual tribal members selling inherited allotments and investing non-Indians to occupy Indian land. Eventually allotment owners, many of them business owners themselves, formed a city. They were allowed to do so after being granted fee simple patents signed by the president of the United States. Allotment rolls closed in 1914, and in 1944 the Yakama Nation became a self-governed entity with an elected Tribal Council overseen by a General Council of enrolled members. Since then emphasis has been on Yakama rights as a people above the interest of individuals. Toppenish remains a bustling residential and business center, having grown to a population of just over 9,000, and has had tribal members elected to the city council, including the council position of mayor.

Bottom: Jay A. Lynch (1850–1937) was the younger brother of Franklin P. Olney lived with his Wasco mother and famous white father, Nathan Olney (former Oregon Indian agent and volunteer captain), on Altahun Creek, adjacent to the Yakama Reservation, in the 1960s. After his father’s death in 1866, “Frank” attended tribal school at Fort Simcoe, became employed at the Yakama Agency, and lived on the reservation with the consent of Yakama tribal members. At age 29 Olney was backed by some tribal members during an unsuccessful bid to open new elections for Yakama head chief in 1882 (five years prior to the allotment act). Wannamay and Lancaster Spencer were full-blood residents with Klickitat (an original Yakama Treaty tribe) and Cowlitz (too treaty signed) lineage. Robbins’s late brother James had an allotment just northeast of the depot. His heirs sold the property to G. Dew McQuesten in 1926.

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Jones worked diligently to expand useful farmland and commercial developments originating from other tribes to sell surplus or unallotted lands if they so desired. He also promoted legislation allowing Indian tribes to sell surplus or unallotted lands, even though many individuals chose differently for their personal allotments. By the end of 1905, business in Toppenish had expanded to include another hotel, two Asian restaurants, a weekly newspaper, bank, resident physician, drug store, barber shop, and laundry. The push toward incorporation picked up in 1906. Toppenish became anxious to have their own government. This would enable them to hire local law enforcement and regulate saloon establishments considered harmful to women, children, and Indian residents. Private lots were rapidly being sold by Josephine Lillie, and more were coming into the marketplace following fee patent approvals from Congress for Olney, Robbins, Swaney, and Wannamay. According to Toppenish attorney O. G. Lee, “The citizens of Toppenish desire to incorporate this town for the protection of themselves and their property from the ravages of the Hobo Element, and in order that they may have law and order here; and further that we may have local government and not be obliged to take all the small matters that may arise to North Yakima for settlement.”

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The smattering of years that Ed- ward Dorn (1929–1999) spent in Seattle and the Skagit Val- ley in the 1950s represents a formative period in the influential poet’s career—a period in which he produced a number of significant works featuring the region, including the classic Northwest novel By the Sound (1971).

According to Tom Clark, author of Edward Dorn: A World of Differ- ence, Dorn first came to Washington in 1949 while still a college student in Illi- nois. After working the summer on a logging crew near Mount Pilchuck and at Boeing in Seattle, he returned to Illinois but soon thereafter found his way to Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where he met poets Charles Olson and Robert Creeley. In 1952 Dorn returned to Seattle, took a logging job in Monroe, and spent his weekends in the Seattle public library. “Like it here and I will say it,” he declared to a friend about Seattle. Before long, he met his first wife, Helene. He also published his first poems, and though tempted to en- roll in the University of Washington to study English, he chose to pursue his own course of reading and writing.

In 1954 Dorn returned (with Hel- ene, their new baby, and her two chil- dren from a previous marriage) to Black Mountain to finish his studies under Olson and Creeley. By 1955, though, he was back in Seattle, but only briefly before settling his family 65 miles north in Burlington so he could take another temporary logging job. He struggled for the next three years while he and his family lived in the Skagit Valley. Dorn depicts this period of struggle in By the Sound (first published as The Rites of Passage in 1965). It is set during the winter, when the wet weather is “ceaseless, and nagging” and there is never enough firewood to keep the house warm.

Carl, the protagonist, staves off destitution by picking up odd jobs. He goes from stomping silage blown into silos to helping a born-again hell-raiser who runs a chicken farm. The farmer evangelizes to Carl while performing autopsies on diseased hens—“The kidney is corrupt!... It is vile. Vile. It has succumbed to vile- ness”—and yet he leers at Carl’s wife after Carl intro- duces them. Throughout the novel Carl keeps company with an assort- ment of unemployed, hard- drinking characters who “cling to life as though it were precious when all their experience... tells them it’s cheap.” They wait out their days in the unemployment office or, if they can pay the $75 membership fee, the union hall then hit the taverns and return to their dilapidated farms and pea camps. Like Carl, they’re usually married with a passel of kids. These characters include James, a handyman/scavenger, and Billy, a drifter trying to settle down, with whom Carl mostly knocks around.

After working to land jobs at the reflot- ing in Ferry Town (Anacortes), Carl and Billy secure work at a dam site up the val- ley (on the Baker River near Concrete). What follows is a harrowing depiction of the grunt work inside the tunnels and peristocks of a hydroelectric plant. Whenever a dropped wrench echoes down the shaft or the seeping water rises above their shins, the men fear the flood gates have burst and they’ll be washed away before they can scramble to the hatchets in the powerhouse.

Dorn retains a deep sense of the humanity of the people he portrays, and, whether his characters are digging clams at the beach, poaching a deer in an alder thicket, or just staring at the river from its muddy banks, he main- tains an abiding appreciation for the landscape of the Skagit Valley. Dorn’s prose has an unself-conscious honesty to it (reminiscent of early Dos Passos and Steinbeck) that makes his charac- ters particularly sympathetic and the setting particularly appealing.

In addition to By the Sound, Dorn wrote a series of prose sketches and poems set in the region. Among these is “1st Avenue,” which recounts his Dante-esque journey down Seattle’s most notorious thorough- fare, accompanied by his half-Russian, half-Kickapoo mentor from the logging camps, as he seeks to outfit himself for a new job in the woods. The piece appeared in a 1963 anthology edited by LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) that also included Jack Kerouac’s “Seattle Butlerscape,” another poem to First Avenue. Dorn also wrote “Notes from the Fields,” which Clark calls “perhaps the most poetic of all Dorn’s prose evocations of place.” It exalts in the avian life of the Skagit Valley. Observing two meadowlarks, Dorn exclaims, “they tumble together and roll over and over and flashing the deep blue wings and the buff yellow breast... Everything flashing in the sun... What flying!”

Meanwhile, in several key poems set in the Skagit Valley, Dorn honed his aesthetic—an irregular yet responsive phrasing and lineation that, like the needle of a seismograph, record the world as he experiences it. In “Hem- lock” he observes: “That clean grey sky/ That fine curtain of rain/like face held our cupped, in it, a kerchief for the novel/softest rain. Red house.”

In “The Rick of Green Wood” he notes: “Out of the thicket my daughter was walking/singing—backtracking the horse hoof/joined earlier this morning, the woodcutter’s horse/pulling the alder, the fir, the hemlock/above the valley/in the movements, in the world, that was getting colder...”

D orn left Washington in 1959 to resume an itinerant life that led him to Idaho, New Mexico, Colorado, and elsewhere. His renown as an innovative poet—and a poet of the West—steadily grew. In 1991, Black Sparrow Press reissued By the Sound. In 1996, three years prior to his death, Dorn made one last pass through the Skagit Valley, giving a reading, appropriately enough, in a barn outside of La Conner.


The Historical Society’s Annual Meeting takes place June 21. Join other members for lunch and a program featuring a state-of-the-organization address by Director Jennifer Edsall, award presentations, and a lecture by Head of Education Stephanie Dorn. To RSVP, call 253-798-5899.

The Curious Case of Quenauendive


Grounds of Our Claim


Peter Donahue is a participant in the Humanities Washington Speakers Bureau, 2012–2014. His talk is titled “Washington History and Fiction.”
Politics Never Broke His Heart

John Spellman

Reviewed by W. Clinton “Buck” Sterling.

Heritage Center Legacy Project, 2013; 409 pp., $35.00.

By John C. Hughes. Olympia: The Washington State Politics Never Broke His Heart

John Spellman
Flowers in Spokane

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY recently acquired 58 glass plate negatives—photographs of early 20th-century Spokane—attributed to photographer Walter E. Flowers (1879–1952), who moved to Spokane in 1922. He attended Whitworth College and later taught botany there, but in the early 1900s he listed himself in city directories as a photographer. The flowers images are available for viewing on our Web site: WashingtonHistory.org.
CONTEMPORARY NATIVE ARTS EXHIBIT
June 19 – August 10, 2014

CONTEMPORARY NATIVE ARTS MARKET & FESTIVAL
August 9, 10am–6pm
FREE Museum Admission All Day

Organized by the Washington State Historical Society, IN THE SPIRIT 2014 is made possible in part by the Nisqually Indian Tribe, the Tacoma Arts Commission, and media sponsor KUOW-FM.