A Time of Gathering
Native Heritage in Washington State

Edited by Robin K. Wright

The major Centennial exhibit "A Time of Gathering" brought together one hundred masterworks of Washington Native art, never before assembled. The long-awaited book resulting from the unprecedented exhibit provides a permanent record in full color of all 100 of these historic and contemporary artworks, accompanied by essays written by both Native and non-Native authors. From the drama of coastal seagoers, the nomadic lifestyle of the Plateau, and the rich maritime life of Puget Sound dwellers, this richly illustrated volume provides the first comprehensive ethnography and history of the diverse cultures of Washington State.

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Published with the Burke Museum, Seattle

Clothbound, $55.00 • Paperback, $29.95

Available through your local bookstore or call 1-800-441-4115
(In Seattle call 543-8870)

University of Washington Press
P.O. Box 50096, Seattle, WA 98145-5096
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In 1903 a diminutive Asian man stepped off a stagecoach at Conconully, Washington, a boisterous gold-mining town in the North Cascades, about 300 difficult miles north-northeast of Seattle. Passersby glanced curiously at Frank Matsura—a slight gentleman just over five feet tall, dressed immaculately in suit, tie and jaunty straw hat. His appearance contrasted sharply with the flannel-shirted, overalled miners and ranchers of the town. After inquiring the way to the Elliott Hotel, Matsura picked up his bag, his bulky camera and tripod, and set off down the street. Stopping at the back door of the place, not the front, he opened a squeaking screen door and announced, “I’m Frank Matsura. Please tell Mr. Dillabough I’m here to start work.” He was the new cook’s helper, obtained by Dillabough through an ad in a Seattle newspaper. Partly through hearsay from their parents, this is how Okanogan pioneers remembered the arrival of Matsura.

Hired to do menial work, Matsura cheerfully threw himself into his assigned tasks, but before long his real talent as a photographer surfaced. After discharging his kitchen duties, he hauled his heavy camera equipment everywhere—to scenic spots, mine shafts, socials, school graduations. Seventy years later it was the clarity, imagination and verve of such photographs that intrigued me. Each was signed “F. S. M.” or “Frank S. Matsura,” clearly by an artist satisfied with his work and proud enough to acknowledge it for posterity by signing his name on the prints.

Okanogan County of north central Washington in the first decade of the 1900s was a backwater of the Old West, perhaps the last frontier of the contiguous states, a ranching and mining community only beginning to see homesteaders. Around Conconully the lands of the Colville Reservation had been opened to non-Indians for less than 20 years. Hudson’s Bay trappers had previously moved through the area, establishing and then abandoning Fort Okanogan at the confluence of the Okanogan and Columbia rivers. Next came pack trains and cattlemen driving stock to the gold fields of Canada. It was a stunningly beautiful land of snow-covered mountains and green valleys, laced with rushing streams. But it was isolated. Coming from Seattle, travelers rode horses, stagecoaches, or—for part of the way—steamboats on the Columbia and Okanogan rivers (when the latter had high water). One did not take the trip frivolously.

Since Japanese persons seldom ventured into remote frontier towns, preferring to work in cities or agricultural areas, I wondered how Matsura, an apparently cultured man, ended up working as a cook’s assistant in Conconully. Clues were sparse but intriguing. Items in the Conconully newspaper, the Okanogan Record, mentioned stylized dances by Matsura at gatherings, performances that included the brandishing of a sword. In 1904 the Okanogan Record published, under Matsura’s byline, a learned article concerning the education of Japanese women. Other items in social columns mentioned Matsura traveling here or guesting there. Advertisements of cameras for sale or postcard photos could also be found in the Record, as well as a commentary in a local column that Matsura had just acquired an expensive new camera.

Frank Matsura was of gentlemanly birth. He was the direct line descendant of Emperor Saga, a feudal lord of about 800 A.D. His family, the Matsuura or Matsura lords of southwestern Kyushu Island and Hirado Island, controlled large blocks of land and eventually were conquered by the Tokugawa family, the originators in the 1600s of the designation of a single lord as shogun, or “taisho-gun,” ruling all of Japan. The successive shoguns of the Tokugawa family continued to rule with an iron fist until ousted in 1868 by forces loyal to the Emperor. 

RIGHT: W. R. Kahlow was an imposing figure, especially standing next to Frank Matsura. Kahlow, an opinionated but kind man, owned a livery stable and hotel in Okanogan.
The Okanogan Government Irrigation Project derived its water from Salmon Creek, and dams were built near Conconully. Frank Matsura photographed the construction extensively.

When the change of government took place in 1868, the Matsuras—like other lordly retainers—were stripped of their political power. Frank Matsura was born to Yasushi Matsura and his wife in 1873, a time when Yasushi and his brother Masashi struggled to keep poverty at bay by becoming tea merchants. Frank and his three sisters were orphaned by Yasushi’s death in 1877, their mother’s death in 1879.

The whereabouts of the three sisters has been lost, seemingly forever, but six-year-old Frank (Sakae was his Japanese name) went to live at a newly formed school for girls, the Shoei Gakuen, with his uncle Masashi and aunt Sumi Okami. There he learned the English language.

Friends of the intellectual Okami family included Kiyomune Okami, a student of the American doctor and stalwart Presbyterian James Curtis Hepburn. Okami founded the Takanawa Presbyterian Church in Meguro-Ku, Tokyo, still an active church. A pastor of that church who baptized Frank into Christianity, Kumaji Kimura, is credited with founding the YMCA in Japan. Even more influential in Frank’s life was Shimaoka Renjo, Japan’s “Father of Photography,” another friend and cohort of the Okami family. The source and inspiration for Matsura’s Washington photographic pursuits were laid there in Tokyo as he listened to Renjo and watched him work.

In 1901, however, something untoward happened in Frank Matsura’s life. It is likely he then learned that he had tuberculosis. Not wishing to contaminate the children of the Shoei Gakuen, he abruptly took passage on a steamship bound for America—not telling his family beforehand. His passport indicated that he was traveling to Seattle to “study commerce.”

Through photos in the Matsura Collection at the Okanogan Historical Society we see that Matsura sailed aboard the Rōjun Maru, a ship of the Nippon Yusen line. Since the NYK line today states that their ships did not go to Seattle at that time, Matsura must have traveled first to Alaska. Photos in the Matsura Collection show him standing at the door of the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka.

He was in Seattle some time in 1901, undoubtedly heading for the Japanese immigrant community. A photo shows the Japanese Baptist Church, then located at Sixth and Jackson, bearing a sign about English classes. Random street scenes, undoubtedly of Seattle, are unidentified. Other photos show well-dressed young men of Asian origin in small rooms—probably a boarding house or hotel. At the time many immigrants worked at fish processing, but there is no evidence that Matsura did so.

Probably running out of money, then, Matsura came to the Okanogan country in 1903, soon plying his trade as a photographer as time permitted. Those who met him found
him pleasant to talk with, and his different appearance seems to have been forgotten. In 1904, in response to publicity on the Russo-Japanese War, Matsura packed up and traveled to Seattle, purportedly to return home to join the army. He returned to Conconully in a few days, joking about “missing the boat,” but historians maintain that the Japanese recalled mainly officers for this fight.

More soberly, Frank told friends that America was his country now, as he resumed his hotel and photographic duties. In a country with a scattering of people, probably 5,000 at most in about 5,000 square miles, making a living at photography was impractical. Although Matsura maintained a friendship with O. H. Woody and Frank Putnam, two successive editors of the Okanogan Record, his photographs did not find a market there. Newspaper reproduction of photographs was expensive and Conconully too distant from engraving shops. While he sold some photographs to Conconully residents, it was not until he moved to the new town of Okanogan in 1907 that he became a full-time professional. In a shack-like building with a cheerful striped awning adjacent to the Okanogan River, Matsura set up shop.

He photographed everything and everyone: the digging of the Okanogan Irrigation Project dam and canals; cowboys branding bawling cattle; Indians and their families at home or in teepees; horse races down the streets of Okanogan; the svelte belle of the town gracefully riding sidesaddle on her horse; cowboys (often Indian cowboys) splendidly dressed to go to town in warm bearskin coats and sheepskin chaps. With his good friend the surveyor Bill Muldrow, he rode by buckboard to the south half of the Colville Reservation, visiting Indian people and taking photos of them, or inviting them to his studio for staged pictures.

In 1907 Washington counties were asked to send displays and photographs of industries and resources in their communities to assist in organizing the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Expo-

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In 1907 Washington counties were asked to send displays and photographs of industries and resources in their communities to assist in organizing the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Expo-

Building the roadbed for the Great Northern involved horses and Fresno scrapers, picks and shovels.
Okanogan area, especially emphasizing the fledgling orchard industry.

One must remember that the quality of Matsura’s work was all the more remarkable considering that photographic art was still evolving. In earlier decades Civil War photographers and others used a piece of glass coated with a photosensitive solution, exposing it while it was still wet. Then came immediate developing in a darkroom tent—a cumbersome process. After 1880 George Eastman produced dry plates, but because they could not be reused they were so much more expensive that many photographers were slow to change. Wrapped or backed film was only common near the turn of the century—nitrate film that was highly flammable and difficult to preserve. Matsura chiefly used glass plates, preferred even today in some situations because of their stability and the sharpness of the image in the hands of an expert.

As early as his Conconully days Matsura conceived the idea of marketing his photographs as picture postcards, a relatively new technique first credited to a French stationer in 1894, ten years earlier. Sent by purchasers to friends throughout the world, the postcards helped to publicize Okanogan County. In 1908 Matsura bought a stamp photo camera, responding to a fad of the time. Flocking to Matsura’s small studio, the town’s young people especially came to socialize and have their pictures taken in this manner. The small photos daubed with adhesive after printing were collected much as baseball cards are today. The camera utilized a battery of small lenses, partitioned into as many frames as there were lenses. Using sheet film, the photographer took one frame, then physically moved the position of the dark-slide to expose a second frame, and so on, resulting in twelve to sixteen images on one sheet, then cut up into individual photos.

In 1983 one of Matsura’s stamp photo subjects, Bessie Mills of Tacoma, identified herself, having found her own photo in a book about Matsura. She confirmed the delightful evenings at the studio with other young women and men, staging comic and serious photos for fun.

The Columbia was one of several small steamers plying the waters above Wenatchee on the Columbia River, up the Okanogan River to Okanogan and sometimes beyond, depending on water depth.
ABOVE: Sam George and his large family of Okanogan. The Indians near Okanogan lived peacefully with the settlers, often adopting their lifestyles and dress.

RIGHT: The child remains unidentified, but a consultant from Colville Tribes said that Chinese miners sometimes took Indian wives and that the child appears to have Chinese ancestry.

Despite the considerable sales of photos, Matsura's income was meager; in 1908 he almost gave up full-time photography, advertising his services as a cook. No job materialized, but money came from somewhere; it is believed that his aunt Sumi sent him small sums from Japan—possibly from lands originally owned and rented out by his father's family.

By 1912 Matsura's health began to deteriorate with what seemed to be a persistent cold. In October 1912 he closed his studio for an indefinite period, only to reopen for Christmas and again in February 1913. Later that month he was in extreme pain. In its later stages tuberculosis produces symptoms similar to those of arthritis.

Yet his indomitable spirit commanded his failing body. He was taking a walk on a warm evening, June 16, 1913, when he encountered the local deputy sheriff, Joe Leader. "Frank," he said, "someone has broken into Newman's store.
On warm summer days, typically hovering around 80-95 degrees F., the Okanogan River was a handy place to cool off. The site was near Matsura’s studio.

Will you fetch him to tell us what is missing?”

Never one to move slowly, even as he weakened, Frank set off at a trot for Newman’s home. Suddenly he began to feel faint and cough convulsively. Seeking help from his friend, the surveyor Muldrow, whose home was nearby, Frank veered off his course and staggered up the stairs of Muldrow’s home. He frightened Muldrow’s wife by beating on the door, then half fell down the porch stairs to collapse on the lawn. Although his friend’s wife and neighbors converged on him within moments, he was already dead, lying in his own blood, for he had sustained a tubercular hemorrhage of the lungs.

The stunned community of 300 buried him in the Masonic cemetery on a bluff above Okanogan. There he still lies, overlooking his adopted homeland of ragged bluffs and stair-step benchlands topped by the impressive peaks of the North Cascade Mountains. There his grave was tended by a grateful community, in recent decades by a gentle lady, Addie Mitchell.

The Okanogan Independent of June 20, 1913, credits Matsura with doing more than any individual to advertise Okanogan city and valley. He left Washington a legacy of fine pictorial history of one of its last frontiers where stalwart people grappled with an unpredictable environment. His life and works have also helped to forge a bond between Washington and Japan.

In 1983 a movie company produced a full-length docudrama about Matsura, starring Morio Kazama, a well-known Japanese movie star, for TV Asahi. During the several months of 1984, 30 gallery prints of Matsura’s works and 20 each by Darius Kinsey and Edward Curtis were shown in major galleries throughout Japan. As part of Washington’s centennial celebration, Matsura’s photographs were showcased in a special gallery exhibition in Okanogan, while others were hung in the governor’s office at the capitol during July 1989.

JoAnn Roe is an award-winning freelance journalist and author. This article is derived from her 1981 book entitled Frank Matsura, Frontier Photographer. Her most recent book, The Columbia River, a historical and travel guide, is due out this spring.

Frank S. Matsura’s photographs appear here courtesy of the Okanogan County Historical Society.
Besides having to contend with uncharted waters, uncooperative wind and weather, and unreliable navigational instruments, 18th-century sea captains had to be constantly on the alert for scurvy, the unrelenting companion of long sea voyages. Scurvy, now known to be a nutritional deficiency disease caused by a lack of Vitamin C, left crew members with bleeding gums, swollen and weak legs and arms, and sores on their bodies. It could, if unchecked, decimate a ship almost as fast as enemy cannon.

For Northwest maritime explorers, away from their home ports for several years, the problem was especially serious. Although their trips began with what seemed like adequate supplies, by the time they anchored in the Pacific Northwest the ships’ stores resembled a department store the day after Christmas—all the best items gone. Many crews suffered. “The entire crew is disheartened. Some 14 to 16 are affected by scurvy and in very serious condition,” wrote Juan Pérez, the first European to sight the Northwest Coast. According to Pérez, scurvy along with bad weather kept the trip from being successful.

A careful reading of the letters and journals of the Northwest maritime explorers reveals that many echoed this sentiment. Bruno de Hezeta complained that the frigate Santiago had to abort its first trip north because of scurvy. James Strange, in command of the Captain Cook, at Nootka Sound in 1786, recorded that his first duty on landing was to “provide Accommodations on Shore for the Sick.” John Hoskins, a clerk on the Columbia, wrote, “Indeed, there is scarce a person on board the ship but what has felt . . . the baneful effects of this dreadful distemper.” The success of voyages to the Northwest was as dependent on surviving scurvy as it was on securing sea otter pelts. The planning and implementation of treatment for this once feared disease adds another chapter to the history of the era of Northwest exploration.

By the late 18th century there was a vast amount of information pertaining to the prevention and cure of scurvy. It was the age of scientific investigation. Learned men all over Europe were writing about the strange disease that attacked men at sea. Unfortunately, like today’s controversy regarding low fat, low cholesterol diets, there was much confusion and misinformation.

Vasco da Gama was the first to describe and mention a cure for this sickness. While on the coast of Africa in 1498 he noted in his journal: “Many of our men fell ill here, their feet and hands are swelling . . . they could not eat.” He goes on to explain that after receiving oranges from Moorish traders the men recovered. The word “Skurvie” appeared 100 years later. Modern scholars trace it back to the Scandinavian form of skjoerbug, which they think means “cut” (or ulcerated swellings).

From the days of Vasco da Gama to the time when men dreamed of riches waiting to be gathered on the northwest coast of America, scientists agonized over how to prevent the seaman’s curse. Some ideas, such as gathering fresh vegetation when the ship docked, were valid and practical; others, like a gargle of oil, were worthless. As late as the 1770s there was no clear consensus on the cause and cure of scurvy. In fact, as theories about scurvy became more complicated the treatments became less effective. Everyone had a favorite remedy, and no one could say
The colorful berries growing in the Northwest became a nutritious treat for the early marine explorers. Some innovative cooks added them to puddings. Pictured are wild strawberries (above) and salmonberries (below).

for certain what really worked.

The person selected by the British Admiralty to carefully document and determine what was an effective antiscorbutic and what foods would be stable after years at sea was Captain James Cook. In choosing Cook the Admiralty knew they had a man who had successfully completed long voyages, could understand and carry out experiments, and was passionately determined to conquer this dread disease. They chose well. Cook's meticulously recorded reports became guidelines for those planning arduous sea voyages. The maritime explorers emulated his methods as they followed his navigational charts to the Pacific Northwest.

However, it must be noted that even though Captain Cook eliminated scurvy from his ship, the Resolution, others who followed his advice were not always so successful. In fact, some of his recommendations, such as sugar as a preventative and beef and pork fat as a cause were simply wrong. Also, Cook tried so many cures it was impossible to say which worked. Nevertheless, Cook led in determining what foods would be effective and stable after a year or two at sea. For that he is rightly considered a hero.

The experiments began with Cook's second voyage and continued on the third, the famous voyage that brought him to the Pacific Northwest. When Cook left England in July 1772 with 200 men and two ships, the Victualling Board, on orders from the British Admiralty, supplied him with sauerkraut, salted cabbage, "portable soup," malt, saloup (a starchy thickener), and mustard, all classified as anti-scorbutics. Also included were 30 gallons of carrot marmalade and a device for making "water impregnated with fixed air" (soda water). In 1776, while preparing for the third voyage, Cook wrote that the Victualling Board "furnish[ed] me with the very best of everything that lay in his department."

Cook also requested a supply of "rob of oranges and lemons," a concentrated and evaporated juice that could be mixed with water. This was to be used only by the surgeons in treating the sick. Its efficacy depended on how it was made and how long it was kept. Modern analysis shows that it was probably not an effective antiscorbutic. What is surprising is that even though many had written about the effectiveness of fresh lemons in preventing scurvy, these were not included in the list of supplies. Not until 1796 did the lords of the Admiralty agree to a daily allowance of three-quarters of an ounce of lemon juice.

The supplies that Cook and others began with would be supplemented with foods found at ports of call made along the way to the Pacific Northwest. The Hawaiian Islands were a regular stop, and here the mariners would supplement their holds with such goods as sweet potatoes, white potatoes, sugarcane, taro root and water. Both kinds of potatoes made good antiscorbutics, although the sweet potatoes quickly spoiled. Unfortunately, even with a stop in Hawaii, all foods with even a hint of Vitamin C were gone before the boats approached the Northwest shores.

The crews became very resourceful in utilizing the native vegetation. Nathaniel Portlock, a ship captain who reached Nootka Sound in 1787, made beer from a vegetable he called "sweet root." The root was peeled, placed in a kettle with a large quantity of water, and allowed to boil for several hours. Then yeast was added. The next day the crew had beer which was considered a "most excellent antiscorbutic."

The carrot marmalade was experimental. Prepared by first making carrot juice and then simmering the juice until the final product was thick like molasses, it evidently did not taste good. Cook wrote to the Victualling Board, "We were happy in having few or no opportunities in giving a full and fair Tryall to either Marmalade of Carrots or Water Impregnated with Fixed Air." It was just as well—neither were effective antiscorbutics. The carrot marmalade was eliminated on the third voyage, but "water impregnated with fixed air" would be tried again. The Victualling
Board felt that if the rapid decarbonation caused by the ship's motion could be slowed down the drink might be effective.

Of the other supplies Cook was more positive, calling wort of malt (a beer) and sauerkraut excellent antiscorbutics. The sauerkraut was cut up cabbage that had been cured by fermentation; salted cabbage was simply chopped cabbage preserved in salt that had to be boiled before eating. In a famous passage from his journal Cook describes how he persuaded his men to try new food. It "requires both the example and Authority of a Commander, without both of which, it will be dropped before the People are Sencible of the benefits ... the men, at first, would not eat [the sauerkraut provided] ... but as this had no effect on my conduct this obstinate kind of prejudice ... wore off and they began to like it." Obviously he was right about sauerkraut—cabbage is a good source of Vitamin C.

The men on the Resolution were served a pound of it twice a week when at sea.

Cook was not the only one to sing the praises of sauerkraut. Don Alejandro Malaspina, an Italian sea captain sailing for Spain who came to the Northwest Coast in 1791, added this useful advice: "Suspecting that some barrels of sauerkraut had spoiled, we proceeded to examine them. We found that only that which was packed well in conditioned casks had retained its brine and that all the rest was spoiled. This experience taught us how much care is necessary to preserve this healthful food ... for its efficacy as an antiscorbutic."

Like Cook, Malaspina had many ideas about conquering scurvy. In a letter he wrote to the chief doctor of the Spanish Royal Navy he discussed a number of these treatments. Some he credited to Cook; some were his own based on earlier trips. One of the most interesting was the recommendation to supply gazpacho, a thick soup made mainly from tomatoes, peppers, garlic, vinegar and olive oil. He said it would be beneficial for sailors and "we ought to insist on its continued use even if the men do not like it." Whether anyone followed this advice is unknown, but he was right, as the soup would have stored well and the vegetables in it are rich in Vitamin C.

Of wort of malt, which Cook said "is without doubt one of y best Antiscorbutic Sea Medicines," there is more controversy. Its effectiveness depended on whether it was made from sprouted barley seeds and how long it was stored. The wort, which could be stored in its dry state, was extremely popular and made a good beer. A few crews added sugar or molasses, as Captain Nathaniel Portlock recorded in his 1787 journal: "Three quarts of molasses were put into six gallons of beer, in addition a pint of essence of malt; ... it was nothing inferior to the finest cider." Both Cook and Malaspina thought sugar prevented scurvy. Cook suggested that the sugar ration be increased and even replace butter and cheese, which cause a "disagreeable stench." Malaspina wrote that sugar turned tea and coffee into antiscorbutics.

Spruce beer was another popular beverage that had universal appeal for all the maritime explorers. Cook had written that it, along with fish and vegetables, banished scurvy from the Resolution, whereas the crew of the sister ship Adventure was "unacquainted with the method of making Spruce Beer." The basic ingredients were the leaves and branches of the spruce tree, yeast, molasses and/or rum. If spruce was available Cook made the beer whenever he planned to stay in a port. Nootka Sound, where the ships anchored in March 1778, was no exception.

Making spruce beer was serious business and could be considered the first attempt at brewing in the Pacific Northwest. In the journal kept by Captain George Dixon who arrived off the coast in 1787, there is a note about the yeast used to brew spruce beer. "We brought out a quantity of yeast in bottles, prepared by a Mrs. Stainsby, of London; and it would be doing her an injustice not to say that the yeast was now found to answer our most sanguine expectations, in working the spruce, being equally good as when first brought from
An annual plant that readily reseeds itself, orache is similar in taste and appearance to spinach. Captain Vancouver called it “fat-hen.”

Sea parsnip or samphire is a “green” found growing among coastal rocks. Joseph Ingraham pickled samphire and said it lasted until he reached China. This old plant is occasionally seen in today’s seed catalogs.

England.” The ship’s cooper was employed in brewing the beer. Captain George Vancouver allowed his men to drink freely of it in “lieu of their Grog.” The “portable soup” that Cook mentions as being “very nourishing & valuable” was a meat-based, gelatin-like concentrate that when mixed with water made a broth. One ounce of the concentrate made one quart of broth “so strong that it will jelly when cold.” This was not an antiscorbutic—meat contains no Vitamin C—but Cook added fresh vegetables when he could and turned this nourishing broth into a carrier for the vitamin.

At Nootka Sound he found wild garlic and nettles, which were added to the soup pot. Had he arrived later in the season there would have been a better selection. In fact, Alexander Walker, who came to this coast in 1786, commented on Cook’s reports of sparse vegetation, “The vegetable productions are more numerous, than Captn. Cook, at the Season in which he was in the Sound, could observe.”

Others who followed Cook did find an abundance of local vegetation that could be used as antiscorbutics for their ailing crews. From berries to scurvy grass, all hailed this botanical bounty. “Nature was prodigal in her gifts,” wrote Don Aleandro Malaspina. “Of vegetables fit for use and good antiscorbutics there are a great plenty in most places, such as dock, wild celery, wild peas, lamb’s quarter, samphire, etc.,” boasted Joseph Ingraham, second mate on the Columbia. Others mentioned nettles, hogweed, leeks, and wild orache, vulgarly called fat-hen. The captains would order their crews to gather large quantities of these greens, which “were eaten with avidity by all hands.” They served to “relish our salt provisions,” noted Captain George Vancouver. The vegetables could have been eaten raw or added to soups. Ingraham pickled the samphire, a hardy plant similar to purslane, and said it lasted until they reached China.

At Nootka Sound and Neah Bay the Spanish supplemented the local wild greens with vegetables they grew in their own gardens. Cabbage, salad greens and potatoes added Vitamin C to the crew’s diet. Ingraham, who received some of this produce as a gift from Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, commented, “Considering the part of the world we were in, I thought it a very handsome present.”

Besides greens, there was an abundance of berries—excellent antiscorbutics. “Each [Indian] canoe brought with them large quantities of berries ... most acceptable things they could have brought to most of our seamen who were in a very advanced state of scurvy,” wrote Robert Haswell, an American on the first voyage of the Columbia. The ship had not “called at any place” since leaving the Falkland Islands. The Columbia’s crew picked “whurtle” berries (probably huckleberries) and blueberries all winter. The berries made good puddings. Other explorers found wild strawberries, raspberries, salmonberries and crab apples. This was a veritable feast and a reminder of home, as many of the berries were similar to those in Europe.

Alexander Walker wrote movingly of the fine produce growing in the Northwest: “Those only however who have been some time absent from their Native Country can appreciate the pleasure and gratification, of meeting with those Plants and vegetables to which they have been accustomed in early life.”

It is speculative to say that nature’s bounty and Cook’s experiments hastened the development of the Pacific Northwest. But a careful reading of the diaries and journals left behind leaves no doubt that finding fresh foods to nourish the crews and supplement their depleted stores was a major concern. The bountiful Northwest solved that problem. Clearly, a healthy crew would enhance the voyage home and be a good argument for a return trip.

Jacqueline Williams is a freelance food and nutrition writer/educator and co-author of four cookbooks. Her interest in nutrition spurred her to research the importance of food preparation to the development of Northwest culture.
The Road to Attalia

For the past 140 years the Pacific Northwest has been considered a land of agricultural opportunity. From the 1870s through the 1920s railroad companies were the leaders in promoting the area. While the Northern Pacific had a large land grant to sell, other railroads such as the Great Northern and the Union Pacific owned no grant lands in Washington but sought to encourage settlement along their routes in order to create freight traffic and revenue.

Attalia, on the Columbia River in western Walla Walla County, was the subject of this 1910 brochure issued by the Oregon Railroad & Navigation Company, a Union Pacific subsidiary. Cheap “colonist” fares were offered to encourage potential settlers to visit the “busy little settlement, a trifle crude as yet, because of its youth . . . .” It is interesting to observe that the travel time is September-October rather than July-August, when the summer heat might have discouraged the intending settler.

The acquisition of this rare piece of ephemera by the Special Collections Division was made possible by the Friends of the Washington State Historical Society Library.
BALLYHOO?

In the 1920s American advertising agencies attained heights of popularity proportionately higher than at any time before or since. The flood of ads during that decade would soon create a more jaded public, but for a brief time a relatively eager audience awaited each new promotion.

J. Walter Thompson Sells the Northwest

The advertising industry flogged thousands of products, from tooth powders to tin lizzies to entire geographic regions like southern California and Florida. Everyone bought, the savvy along with the gullible—although the latter were perhaps more susceptible to "ballyhoo," over-inflated advertising that pitched a product's promise with more hot air than facts. In such fast-paced times, marketers showed remarkable restraint if they kept promotions even mildly realistic.

Even the damp Northwest had its pitchmen during this period. Some were small-scale operators like local chambers of commerce. But the region also enjoyed flattering attention from the most illustrious advertising agency of the era, J. Walter Thompson. From 1922 through 1925 the Thompson agency conducted a million-dollar campaign intended to correct Easterners' "astounding misconception" that the "Far Corner" consisted only of primitive log cabins and buckskin-clad frontiersmen wallowing in mud.

Thompson's client for this campaign was the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad. Linked by some common shareholders and directors to the Great Northern and Northern Pacific lines, the Burlington Route hoped to gain customers for all three railroads through general promotions to the Northwest, a region served by the lines.

LEFT: Thompson brochures captured the frontier imagery of the Northwest while also asserting the economic potential of the region's resources. This picture adorned the cover of an agency brochure entitled "Timber Billions In The Pacific Northwest."

RIGHT PAGE: Although a key goal of the Thompson program centered on drawing permanent residents to the Northwest, many of the ads appealed to tourists and featured prominent natural wonders throughout the region.
Initially, the Thompson agency would be paid only by the Burlington, but its directors believed that a successful campaign would soon convince the other railroads to chip in.

Thompson's charge was to sell the Northwest to an ignorant nation. But the agency knew no more about the area's charms than did its potential customers. To remedy this, in November 1922 two members of Thompson's Chicago office undertook to investigate the land of fog and forests.

Reaching Seattle first, Carl McQuinn and Harlan Smith discovered many local promoters receptive to the admen's attentions. Invitations to speak about the Burlington-Thompson venture overwhelmed the two men. Chambers of commerce throughout the Northwest courted them assiduously. At every speech they made McQuinn and Smith drew praise and encouragement. One talk to the Seattle Chamber of Commerce drew over 500 listeners and was front-page news the next day.

But McQuinn and Smith did not simply explain the ad agency's plans; they also sought advice and information. This solidified their popularity. A report in Tacoma's Daily Ledger on a speech made by the two pointed proudly to the fact that the Thompson men were humbly asking local experts for ideas and agreed that the region "had not attracted the attention of the country as its merits deserved, solely because it [had] not had its attractions presented to the tourist, the home-seeker and the potential investor through sufficient advertising."

McQuinn and Smith spent a month in the Northwest giving speeches from Aberdeen to Astoria, from Billings to Bend. In all, the two Chicagoans spoke to 34 different communities, usually via the chamber of commerce, Rotary or Kiwanis clubs. A Thompson report on this tour happily described the "enthusiasm and fireworks" that had greeted the men along their route and noted...
Passenger traffic managers for the Burlington, Great Northern and Northern Pacific attested to strong increases in ticket sales, which they chalked up to the ads’ influence.

That impressive amounts of information had been amassed.

Especially valuable were facts that McQuinn and Smith collected about business, industrial and agricultural opportunities in the Northwest. Copywriters sat down with the data to sketch a campaign that would do more than introduce Mount Rainier and other tourist landmarks to New Yorkers and their plan a trip to the region—and that trip would surely involve purchase of a Burlington, Great Northern or Northern Pacific ticket.

Although each booklet was individually tailored to a specific audience, ranging from the industrialist to the tourist, the initial wave of advertising took a more general tack. Called the “educational campaign,” this first phase placed 13 different ads in major national magazines like Collier’s and

With their routes well distributed throughout the region, the three railroads would benefit from development and tourism in any of the five northwestern states.

ilk. They devised a phased progression of ads designed to attract permanent residents and investors to the area.

First, the Thompson ad makers created a dozen booklets with subjects and titles ranging from “Washington For The Farmer” to “Timber Billions In The Northwest.” As the booklets’ names suggest, Thompson gave the Burlington Route and its sister railroads second billing to the region they served. Ads would educate the public and raise interest in Northwest opportunity. Readers would then be invited to send for the booklets in order to learn more. With luck they would then plan a trip to the region—and that trip would surely involve purchase of a Burlington, Great Northern or Northern Pacific ticket.

Although each booklet was individually tailored to a specific audience, ranging from the industrialist to the tourist, the initial wave of advertising took a more general tack. Called the “educational campaign,” this first phase placed 13 different ads in major national magazines like Collier’s and Columbia Gorge... any more than a housewife planning her family’s vacation should wonder about the financial strength of Spokane’s banks? The new ads, placed in 1924 and 1925, offered specialized information for narrow audiences while continuing to educate the public “to the fact that the Pacific Northwest was not a wilderness.”

Ads in the second series fell into five categories: promotion of individual cities in the Northwest; efforts to foster an image of the region as one developing rapidly, much like southern California; standard marketing of tourist attractions; appeals to farmers; and information for industrialists. While this more focused approach easily outpaced the “educational campaign” in its rate of reader response, success rates varied for each of these five campaigns.

Smallest of the five specialized promotions, the individual city series highlighted Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane and Portland, and involved just a few months’ advertising in early 1924. This program evolved mainly to reward chambers of commerce in the Northwest, so many of which had supported McQuinn and Smith during their 1922 tour. Small though it was, the campaign drew 6,000 inquiries, all routed to chambers of commerce in the cities advertised.

Much more impressive in its accomplishments, the “developmental” category of ads depicted the Northwest as the new place to live. This campaign ran through 1924-25 and centered its promotions in women’s magazines. The Thompson agency had a long-standing reputation for selling to women, and in this instance analysts argued that “the influence of woman is

RIGHT: Thompson Company campaigns directly targeted occupational groups—farmers, for example—in an effort to draw new residents to the Northwest.
There is a Happy Land

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST
"The Thompson ad makers created a dozen booklets with subjects and titles ranging from "Washington For The Farmer" to "Timber Billions In The Northwest."

an extremely important if not the pre-dominant factor in the average family on such a question as moving to the Northwest. Whether or not this was correct, the ads did generate a strong reaction. Over 40,000 readers sent for booklets, roughly quadrupling the rate of return from the 1923 appeals.

Perhaps the most graphically attractive ads were those aimed at tourists, placed in general interest magazines in 1924 and 1925. All displayed scenes of natural beauty—Mount Rainier, Crater Lake, the Columbia Gorge and more. The Northwest's diverse recreational and sporting opportunities were featured, with many images of "happy people" having fun. Clearly, vacationers liked what they saw. The ads generated more than 60,000 requests for more information. Railroad agents recorded more concrete results, noting increases of 35 to 56 percent for passenger sales from eastern points to Portland and Seattle in 1925.

The farm campaign leaned heavily upon Thompson research and data. Ads cited "agricultural authorities" like Ernest Holland, president of Washington State College, and William Kerr, president of the Oregon Agricultural College (Oregon State). Placed in publications like Breeders Gazette and Dairy Farmer, this series also promoted Montana with enthusiasm. Since the Northern Pacific railway owned many acres of land in that state, it seemed especially desirable to call attention to Montana's agricultural potential. Over the course of 1924-25 the farm ads pulled roughly 25,000 inquiries. Thompson had anticipated a rate of response lower than that for the developmental and tourist campaigns, but reasoned that one emigrating farmer would be of greater value than several householders or half a dozen tourists since the farmer would theoretically become a regular customer of the railroads' shipping divisions.

Finally, the industrial promotion offered dignified and detailed advertisements in prestigious magazines like Forbes and Atlantic Monthly. Run in 1924 and 1925, this campaign targeted "Group A," Thompson's designation for wealthy and well-educated readers with money to invest. These "most influential and wide-awake business executives" could scarcely be troubled to write for a brochure, so this ad series (unlike all others in the Burlington-Thompson program) did not invite readers to send for more information. Instead, the ads provided information, especially on growing Pacific markets and the Northwest's booming ports.

As 1925 drew to a close the Thompson agency paused to assess three years' worth of selling the Northwest. An in-house report began with the acknowledgement that accurate results of the campaign were difficult to ascertain given the problems involved in determining which visitors or newcomers to the region had been enticed there by Thompson ads. In addition, the report noted that such ads often had a delayed "cumulative effect," which meant that while the campaign might successfully have planted the notion of moving in a reader's mind, actual relocation might be some years away.

However, the report also noted many positive signs attributed to the promotions. Chambers of commerce in the Northwest remained buoyant about the program, as documented in many laudatory telegrams to Thompson and the Burlington Route. Passenger traffic managers for the Burlington, Great Northern and Northern Pacific attested to strong increases in ticket sales, which they chalked up to the ads' influence; freight solicitors for the three lines also reported solid increases in business, accompanied by customers' positive comments on the Thompson campaigns. Finally, both in response to requests and through unsolicited distributions, Thompson delivered close to half a million copies of its 12 Northwest booklets to the American public. This, the agency claimed, represented a "valuable potential market" of informed consumers that might generate growth in the region for years to come.

Despite such glowing assessments and prognostications, Thompson closed the Northwest campaign at the end of 1925. Agency reactions to the program's demise were puzzled and a bit wistful. All along, the Burlington Route had paid the bills with the expectation that its two sister railroads would soon join in; but while the Burlington spent a million dollars, the Great Northern and Northern Pacific paid nothing. According to Thompson analysts, the latter two roads benefitted greatly from the Northwest promotions, but "bitter, competitive rivalry and their lack of foresight" kept them from cooperating. Stretched financially by the campaign's costs, the Burlington retreated to a policy of advertising its own services only.

Thus by 1926 the largest and most sophisticated promotion of the Northwest to that date was no more. The region did grow in the 1920s, although not as dramatically as Florida or California, and perhaps less as a result of Thompson's ads than of general national prosperity. Yet the Thompson touch surely had some effects, if only to decrease the area's reputation as a primitive backwater and plant some tiny seeds of interest in the minds of Americans around the country. The agency's pride in its solid, factual approach to marketing may even have resulted in some understatement of the region's appeal—and those Northwest-ers in the 1990s who bemoan their area's dramatic recent growth may take some solace in the observation that, with a little more ballyhoo 65 years ago, things could have been even worse.

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The Forest Professional and His Mobile Phone—September 1922

Before portable two-way radios became available after WWII, the forest service's communications were limited to telephone transmissions sent via number nine iron wire strung through insulators attached to trees.

The early decades of the 1900s saw hundreds of miles of telephone line strung through our national forests to help provide effective fire control and efficient forest management. The lines joined towers, guard camps and ranger stations. Using their new telephone system, personnel could easily stay in touch with headquarters while out on their patrols. To "cut in" on these lines, an alligator clip would suffice and a crank or two to the generator could ring another party.

In some areas of our national forests, crank or battery operated telephones were used into the early 1970s.

—Laurent O. Dubois III
Whitman County Grit
Palouse Vigilantes and the Press
By Jean F. Hankins

The people of Whitman County have suffered long and patiently. They have looked calmly on while murderer after murderer walked out of the law’s meshes, after having piled up thousands of dollars of costs for the overburdened taxpayers to bear. They have been laughed at in their uneasiness, and their county has become the Mecca for the murderer. They could stand it no longer, and last night the blow fell. It is said that men gathered from all over the county to aid. It was not a mob, it was a society up in arms against a wrong that frivolous law would not right. Whitman County asserted her independence last night, and last night’s work will do more toward lessening taxation in Whitman County than all the populist reform that could be inaugurated in a hundred years. The Graphic does not favor lynch law, but...it believes in the people taking things into their own hands. While we deplore the necessity, we glory in Whitman’s grit.

—Pullman Graphic, June 2, 1894, on the hanging of George Parker and Ed Hill in Colfax

The 1894 execution of Parker and Hill was not the first instance of vigilantism in the Palouse, and it was not to be the last. By 1894 this rolling, wheat-producing region of eastern Washington and northern Idaho had become a prosperous agricultural area. With its two small land-grant colleges, one on each side of the Washington-Idaho border, the Palouse even had aspirations to becoming an intellectual center. It bore little resemblance to the rough mining areas of the Idaho and Montana mountains where, in the absence of effective law enforcement, responsible but angry men often found it necessary to form vigilante committees for the maintenance of civil order. But while the setting for the four cases of Palouse vigilantism between 1882 and 1898 was unusual, the cases themselves were not much different from other instances of Western vigilantism.

Although vigilantes usually hanged their victims, vigilantes were more than lynchers. Unlike a lynching, a vigilante action is commonly considered a premeditated deed performed by a group or committee that is secretly but formally organized for a definite period of time. Vigilantes were not usually rowdies or hooligans but men of substance and standing who had the most to lose if the incursions of the criminal element were not stopped. Even in more stable regions of the West such as the Palouse, where law enforcement systems and courts were well established, respectable men sometimes felt it necessary to organize themselves into a group to act as judge, jury and executioner.

Among the reasons for the persistence of vigilantism was the community’s distrust of judge and jury who, ironically, were drawn from and represented the public. The legal system of justice, some felt, was too slow, too uncertain and, above all, too expensive. One of the major forces perpetuating this viewpoint was the local newspaper. In the four vigilantism cases in the Palouse between 1882 and 1898, community newspapers, far from speaking as the public conscience, repeatedly applauded and condoned the vigilantes who, acting secretly, swiftly and decisively, could convey a popular brand of justice more efficiently—and more cheaply—than could the courts. In many cases the newspapers responded to the lynchings with editorials disapproving mob violence, but their moral stance seems pro forma. At the same time that they disapprove of illegal lynching, they usually express relief and approval that the murderers have been eradicated and the lawless element taught that crime does not pay.

Palouse newspapers were established almost as soon as the first settlers arrived in the 1870s. The earliest was the Palouse Gazette, first printed in Colfax, Washington, in 1877. By 1890 at least 19 papers were being published in such small Palouse towns as Garfield,
Washington, and Genesee, Idaho. The newspapers served not only to disseminate information but to promote and defend their new communities, to transform them from frontier outposts into stable towns with orderly institutions—churches, schools and courts— which the new townspeople had been familiar with elsewhere. By "superimposing a sense of community upon these individualists," as one observer phrased it, the newspapers helped unify the settlers into a cohesive social group. But while the local newspaper worked to build and improve the community, in some ways it was not so much a trend-setter as a mirror of the community. As their reporting of the four Palouse vigilante cases shows, the newspapermen reflected the sentiment of the community so closely that they could not see the full significance of the events they were reporting. Indeed, in some cases the newspapers went well beyond the reportorial function and, by predicting events like lynchings, probably helped bring them about.

Oldie Neal—May 26, 1882

THE FIRST VIGILANTE action in the Palouse was also the most controversial, and the facts vary according to the source. The Neal family of Rock Creek Valley, Washington Territory, had a bad reputation and "had been the subject of consternation" for many months before a group of citizens arrested 19-year-old Oldie Neal, accusing him of stealing horses. Neal steadfastly maintained his innocence. While the arresting party was conducting him to the sheriff and jail in Cheney, a group of about 20 masked and heavily armed men silently overwhelmed the first group and hanged Neal from a tree near Rockford. When the sheriff and coroner arrived at the scene, witnesses were unable to agree on what had happened. In particular, there was considerable doubt that the real horse thief was Oldie Neal and not one of his brothers or uncles. According to a later account, "There was very little doubt as to the identity of those implicated in the crime [of lynching Neal], but no charges were ever brought and no attempt seems to have been made to do so."

The newspapers' first reaction was relief that the region's long-standing problem of horse stealing had been solved. The Northwest Tribune, then published in Cheney, concluded that "this will, it is believed, put a stop to the depredations which have annoyed people in this country for some time." A week later the Tribune changed its tune, apparently because the community did not wholeheartedly approve of the lynching. The Tribune editor now pronounced the case "coldblooded murder" and commented that the "thinking portion" of the community had its doubts that Neal was guilty. Public outrage extended even to California, where the

Sacramento Record called Neal's hanging a "barbarous mob murder." The men responsible "are, in their own eyes, good citizens and think they have no reason to be ashamed," the editorial continued, "but we have little respect for men who have intelligence or morals above robbery but not above murder ...."

Clearly, public sentiment about this case was divided, and as time went on more and more people doubted Neal's guilt. The question of whether or not the vigilante group should have taken the law into its own hands was not the issue. It was simpler than that. Some citizens disapproved of the hanging of a man who was probably innocent; others may have thought that death was too severe a penalty.

Louis A. Knott—August 29, 1884

THE CASE OF Louis A. Knott two years later was less controversial. In June, Knott was tried and convicted in the district court at Colfax, Washington, of shooting and killing "in cold blood" Thomas Higgins, an elderly Pullman farmer. The judge denied the defense's motion for a new trial and sentenced Knott to hang on July 21, a date later changed to August 16. On the day scheduled for Knott's execution, Sheriff Dave Marsh received an order for a stay of proceedings until the next meeting of the territorial supreme court. "But the disposal of the case," commented the Northwest Tribune, "was in the hands of determined men, and the tardy law is cheated by the ruthless decree of 'Judge Lynch.'"

Early one morning two weeks after the second postponement of Knott's execution a group of 50 men arrived in Colfax "in carriages and on horseback," led by a man named Thomas, the only one not masked. The men forced their way into the jail and into Knott's cell,
“and in a short interval of time Knott was swinging between heaven and earth, paying the awful penalty for an awful crime . . .”

Once Knott was disposed of the mob cried out for the other prisoner in the jail, named Yates, who was being held for beating his wife. This time the vigilantes voted by a small majority not to hang him. The whole procedure was swift and tidy, the Tribune noted, and once the vote was taken “the party disappeared as quickly as they came, and no unnecessary noise or disturbance was created.” The newspaper concluded by saying that while “we deprecate the affair, as it deserves . . . there is no doubt that justice is meted out in the case and much needless expense saved to the county on account of it.” The newspapers, like the community, left it at that, satisfied that justice had been properly and fully done—with a considerable savings to county taxpayers.

George Parker and Ed Hill—June 2, 1894

About one in the morning on June 2, 1894, a mob of armed men assembled in a brickyard a mile outside Colfax and marched in almost military order to the Whitman County jail. Forcing the jailer to open up and surrender his keys, the mob took out two prisoners, George Parker and Ed Hill, and hanged them from the courthouse window. The newspapers of Washington and Idaho covered the arrests and trials of Parker and Hill more thoroughly and completely than any of the other Palouse vigilante cases, perhaps because they dragged on for so long.

Before being placed together in the Colfax jail, Ed Hill and George Parker were unacquainted. Of the two, Hill, who came from Garfield, was far more notorious and had been under public scrutiny much longer. He was one of four rowdies who, in November 1892, during a sidewalk scuffle outside a Garfield bar, were apparently responsible for the stabbing death of Langford Summers. While the other three attackers were quickly arrested, Hill escaped. Before he was recaptured the two McCown brothers were tried and convicted of assault and battery; the third suspect, Champ Paine, was convicted of manslaughter. Paine’s sentence was for only five years because of the jury’s recommendation for mercy, a recommendation which, the Garfield Enterprise commented, “occasioned considerable surprise and comment in this vicinity.”

Meanwhile, warrants went out throughout the West for the arrest of Ed Hill, the fourth defendant, still at large. Whitman County’s newspapers followed the story eagerly and with great detail. Finally captured near Phoenix, Hill managed to escape from that jail. After six months of precarious freedom he finally gave himself up near Yuma, Arizona, in March 1893, and the Colfax sheriff and ex-sheriff rode the trains down to escort Hill back.

In Colfax a large number of newspapermen were on hand for the arrival of the sheriffs and Ed Hill, “the notorious Garfield murderer,” as one newspaper called him. A large crowd of citizens filled the depot area in order to “get the best possible glimpses of the old-time Palouse cowboy whose hands were stained with blood.” Because the lawmen apparently had heard that “there would be a party waiting to rescue the prisoner, another to lynch him,” the Garfield Enterprise reported, the officers arranged to have the train run past the station so that they could safely hustle Hill into the courthouse jail. “There were 400 people at the depot waiting
for him with eager eyes, but the officers fooled them," wrote the reporters for the Colfax Commoner, obviously disappointed. But writers for the Pullman Herald somehow managed to get closer to the action, at least near enough to note that the prisoner's face was "an ashen color." They, too, sensed the mood of the crowd and recorded with ominous tone, "There were men from Garfield in the throng, and they pressed forward with the common object to feast their eyes on a manacled man they knew."

Hill came from a respectable Garfield family able to hire competent attorneys for his defense. An adequate legal defense meant delays in bringing Hill to trial. First the case was transferred to the superior court; a few days later Hill's attorneys successfully petitioned for a writ of habeas corpus. The following month they asked for additional time to prepare their successful application for change of venue. Later the attorneys succeeded in forcing the medical examiners to exhume and reexamine Langford Summers' body.

The change in the trial's location to Dayton, in Columbia County, was ordered when the judge ruled Hill probably could not get a fair trial in Whitman County. Predictably, the Pullman and Colfax papers took the stand that the judge's ruling was a black mark on their county's reputation for fairness. Despite the change in location, however, the Colfax Commoner was confident that justice would be done. The paper predicted, wrongly, that the trial would be over in ten days. It also reported that the prosecution expected a conviction on first-degree murder. Two weeks later, as the trial dragged on, prolonged by the testimony of a large number of witnesses, the Commoner changed its mind. It now speculated that the verdict would probably be second-degree murder.

As the trial progressed the Dayton Chronicle published an article disagreeing with the Colfax newspaper on the outcome of the case. The Chronicle flatly stated that only two facts had been established in the case—that there had been a fight, and that Summers had received only one knife wound that could have been fatal. Because the prosecution had failed to prove any premeditation or conspiracy on Hill's part, the paper argued, the verdict "can only be manslaughter."

Colfax, Washington, the seat of Whitman County and scene of several "hanging bees."

But on April 7 the Dayton jury finally reached a verdict and found Hill guilty only of assault and battery. The Colfax Commoner recorded the reaction of the courtroom and beyond: "Even Judge Sturdevant, on the bench, looked amazed, and his face flushed . . . there is but one sentiment on the streets of Dayton today, and that is that justice has been outraged." The newspaper expressed its surprise, indignation and anger across several front-page columns, its headlines proclaiming: "THE OUTRAGEOUS VERDICT OF THE JURY IN THE HILL MURDER CASE—THE CITIZENS ARE SHOCKED—AGAINST THE MASS OF EVIDENCE, THE COLUMBIA CO. JURY PRACTICALLY ACQUITS THE SLAYER OF LANGFORD SUMMERS."

The Commoner complained that "a mint of money was spent" to convict Hill and that, together with the Paine and McCown cases, Hill's case had cost the county "from $30,000 to $35,000."

Hill was sentenced to one year in jail and fined $7,500, the heaviest sentence
the law allowed. It had taken more than 18 months to convict Hill, the last of the four men arrested in the Summerville murder, and neither the community nor the newspapers were happy with the length of the trials or the light sentences. Three weeks after the verdict the Colfax Commoner first used the term “lynching” in connection with Hill. At that time the newspaper ominously quoted a United States Supreme Court justice who said, “Every lynching is but a protest of the community against the incapacity of the courts to punish criminals.”

George Parker, the man who was hanged with Hill, was arrested for the murder of Amos B. Cooper, a prominent Pullman businessman who was fatally shot on October 17, 1893, while sleeping in the Artesian Hotel in Pullman. During the month between Cooper’s murder and Parker’s arrest the Pullman Herald vowed vengeance:

If the dastardly assassin could be caught the people of Pullman would make short work of him, and would hang him up to one of the numerous telegraph poles that adorn our city, as a warning to others. We do not believe in lynching law, but this is one of those cases where the majesty of the law is too slow to satisfy the public.

The Herald’s words became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Parker’s trial was cut short when Whitman County’s vigilantes, masked and heavily armed, hanged Parker and Hill from the courthouse window in the early morning hours of June 2. Ironically, it was far from certain that Parker would be acquitted. The prosecution’s case, largely circumstantial, had been based primarily on Parker’s previous criminal record. The day before the hanging the Colfax Commoner had summarized all the testimony in the case under the headline “Looks Dark for Defendant.”

A few days after Parker and Hill’s execution, however, the Colfax Commoner stated, perhaps in an effort to justify the lynching, “It was thought [Parker] might be acquitted.” For the first time the Commoner now reported a plot hatched earlier in the year to lynch Hill before the trial could be moved to Columbia County. Careful not to reveal its source for this information, the Commoner wrote, “A band was organized in Pullman and Garfield. A night was appointed, and the Pullmanites came to the edge of Colfax. The Garfielders did not show up and the plan fell through.”

Whitman County residents obviously felt, as one newspaper put it, that “the lynching of Ed Hill and George Parker was morally vindicated.” Parker was morally vindicated. The People are taking such measures as that of lynching. True, justice has miscarried in several instances in Whitman county, but the remedy for future miscarriages does not lie in mob law. The tax payers have been made to suffer, time and again, in these flagrant applications of justice, the costs in each case footing up into the thousands, but how it can be remedied by lynch law we fail to see. However, no one doubts but that both Hill and Parker got their just deserts, as their crimes were most heinous. As to the statement made from Colfax that the lynching was a failure at Pullman, that is against all reason. It is more probable that the mob was recruited from all parts of the county.

In this statement the Herald was going a step further than the Graphic and condemning outright the principle which allowed people to take the law into their own hands. The two papers differed also on the cause of vigilantism. For the Graphic the root of the problem was “frivolous law”; the Herald blamed the jury system or what it termed “farcical applications of justice.” Both papers justified mob action as a means of alleviating the suffering of overburdened taxpayers. And the Herald stated explicitly what the Graphic only implied—that both Hill and Parker deserved what they got. A writer for the Genesee News best captured the hardheaded, congratulatory tone found in all the local papers:

There may be excellent reasons advanced against corporal punishment, but the News cannot help but feel that justice was meted out to Hill and Parker at Colfax last week. There was no doubt of the guilt of the former at all, yet his father’s money got him free. Everybody was convinced that Parker shot Mr. Cooper in Pullman last fall, yet he was about to be cleared. It is the common opinion that the courts are not what they ought to be for the expense they are to the public. . . . It is the delay and uncertainty that cause respectable people to use or countenance mob law . . . . An occasional hanging bee may help matters.

The local papers told the community what it wanted to hear. But not everyone agreed with their conclusion that even though lynching was deplorable justice had been done. Washington’s Governor John H. McGraw ordered that the vigilantes be traced and punished, and the Colfax sheriff considered calling a grand jury to investigate. But as usual, the Whitman County citizens closed ranks in a conspiracy of silence, and the matter of the lynching was conveniently dropped.

The farther away the newspaper was from Whitman County, the more apt it was to condemn the vigilantes. While
Palouse newspapers whitewashed the affair, those at some distance found the vigilantes contemptible. Writing from the other side of the state, the editors of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer came down firmly on the side of legally constituted justice: "The question of the innocence or guilt of the party lynched cuts no figure in the case at all. To murder a helpless prisoner who is in the hands of the legal and judicial machinery of our own deliberate devisement is an act of senseless barbarism and boyish folly...." The Post-Intelligencer concluded with the unequivocal statement, "A miscarriage of justice is deplorable enough, but lynch law is even more deplorable."

Boise's Idaho Daily Statesman also condemned the vigilante action. Recognizing that "seldom, if ever, do people in one section sympathize with lynchers in others," it argued that the matter could be solved simply by trying the Lynchers in a locale "remote from the scene." This solution, however, proved unworkable. As far as can be determined, no county, territory or state officers in Idaho or Washington ever arrested a single person suspected of lynching, much less brought one to trial. Distant newspapers and governors could pontificate about the immorality and conduct of the vigilantes, but diatribes were not enough to end the situation. It would take a grass roots change in attitude before lynching and vigilante action could be ended.

Chadwick Marshall—January 7, 1898

When compared with the sensational case of Hill and Parker, the lynching of Chadwick "Blacky" Marshall four years later seems antclimactic. On October 22, 1897, two highwaymen robbed three citizens and shot and killed Orville Hayden of Farmington, in Whitman County, within 100 yards of the Idaho line. The two highwaymen escaped. The Colfax newspaper reported, "Indignation ran high and threats of lynching were openly and repeatedly made. Had the assassins been captured retribution would have followed sharp and fast."

Law enforcement officers arrested one man but later released him. A short time later the Colfax Weekly Commoner announced that the case had been solved with the arrests of Chadwick Marshall and Robert McDonald, alias "Dakota Slim," the "Two Assassins of Orville Hayden." The state's weak case against Marshall and McDonald was bolstered when a Spokane detective, hired by the murdered man's brother, was placed in Marshall's jail cell as a stool pigeon and, reportedly, got Marshall to confess and implicate McDonald as well.

The Colfax Commoner was confident that this time the guilty men had been caught. As part of its detailed story of the men's arrest and strong evidence against them, the newspaper revealed the exact location of the two men in the Colfax jail: "One is closely confined in the women's ward on the left side of the jail, the other occupies a cell in the row with Jack Leonard." Although the paper did not include a map showing the suspects' jail cells it probably felt it had sufficiently indicated where the prisoners could be found.

Two weeks later the Commoner was forced to report that Marshall and McDonald might not be convicted. A Seattle man was ready to give McDonald an alibi and prove that his alleged confession could not be true. The Commoner's story concluded, "As they are talking seriously of lynching 'Dakota Jim' [McDonald] it may be that Foley will not have a chance to testify, but if he does he says he will take an oath that 'Dakota Jim' is innocent."

Early on the morning of January 7 a mob "visited the Colfax jail and..."
secured Blackie, the murderer of Orville Hayden," according to the Lewiston Tribune. After beating Marshall into insensibility the mob hanged his body from a courthouse window. They then tried to break into McDonald's cell, but he managed to prevent them from entering and, when shot through the cell bars, feigned death. The mob withdrew after attaching to Marshall's body a sign reading, "Notice, judge don't overrule the supreme court anymore." The note was signed simply "People of Whitman County." The next morning McDonald was moved to the Walla Walla prison for safekeeping. He was later tried and acquitted.

The hanging of Marshall resulted in the usual official reaction. Governor John R. Rogers called the Colfax Commoner "deplorable." Washington's assistant attorney general arrived to investigate. Whitman County's commissioners offered a $500 reward for information leading to the arrest of the lynchers. Predictably, there were no takers. The efforts of the superior court judge to enlist the cooperation of the county attorneys in identifying the guilty parties also failed completely.

Even though the Colfax Commoner had at least twice predicted the lynching of Marshall and McDonald and had on another occasion publicized exactly where the prisoners were being held in the jail, the newspaper appeared shocked at what had happened. Its writers spoke of the "awful work of a lynching party," of the "most gruesome and deplorable tragedy," of the body thrown from the window "to dangle and die and darkly stain the temple of justice." The Genesee News, only slightly more removed from the scene, called the hanging an "unfortunate affair" that might have the undesirable effect of persuading Easterners that Washington's citizens were not law-abiding. However, the News concluded by asserting that the lynching was really a good thing after all:

The victim was a self-confessed murderer, but the people thought the judge incompetent or too slow to deal out justice, and took the law into their own hands. Something must be wrong in Whitman County—the tough element seems to make it their habitual rendezvous. Perhaps this example may have a wholesome effect on this class. If so Judge Lynch is not so bad as now seems.

Perhaps so. Blacky Marshall was the last man reported lynched in the Palouse. There were other threats, such as that to lynch Ole Johnson of Palouse in 1901. There were other complaints about the slowness and uncertainty of justice, much like that in Stevens County, Washington, in 1914, when attorney John Slater asked for a "vacation" for all criminal cases because the jury would not return a guilty verdict even when the facts were "almost undisputed." But there were no more incidents of mob justice. The reason for the end of the vigilante period is not clear.

Perhaps it was true that the vigilante committees sufficiently discouraged the lawless element from entering, stealing horses or committing murder in the Palouse. Perhaps as its citizens became a bit older and more secure they became less anxious to wreak immediate vengeance on transgressors. Perhaps people no longer felt the amount of money spent for constitutional law and order was excessive. Perhaps they came to believe that the judges and juries were, after all, the conscience of the community. It was probably for all of these reasons that, after the advent of the 20th century, the Palouse settled down to a quieter, more legal form of justice.

Though they often defended the right of the people to act for themselves when frustrated by a malfunctioning or expensive judicial system, the Palouse newspapers were not devoid of moral scruples. They regularly condemned the principle of lynching law but were unable to repudiate the actions of their own communities, of which they were such an integral part. Newspapers published at some distance from the scene of the vigilante action were able to view the situation more dispassionately. Perhaps the Palouse newspapers best demonstrated their parochialism in the several instances when the reporters of lynchings tried to shift the blame to outsiders, proclaiming that the vigilantes came from "all parts of the county," or from some other town. Though it was probably not responsible journalism, it made good reading, and after vigilantism ceased in the Palouse about 1900, so also did one source of excitement in Palouse newspapers.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE
I am indebted to Dr. Carlos Schwantes of the University of Idaho for his encouragement and advice during my research for this article.
John Slocum (Squ-sacht-un) was a hard-working, drinking, swearing, gambling Sahewamish-Squaxin logger of about 40 years when, in 1882, he fell ill. Afterward, he claimed to have gone to heaven and returned with spiritual injunctions. His experience created a religious stir among Indians of Puget Sound who joined what became a syncretic religious movement—a religious hybrid formed from Slocum's exposure to Catholicism and Protestantism and of course the Native American religious beliefs he had grown up with. Unlike other Indian spiritual leaders of his time, Slocum's preachment was not anti-white although it was oriented toward the Indian race. His message was that of Christian spirituality, emphasizing temperance, healing and shaking, from which his church—the Indian Shaker Church—received its name.

Despite years of ridicule and suppression, especially by Indian agents, Slocum's church became organized and legally recognized: This, plus the zeal of its members, facilitated its spread from southern Puget Sound to other parts of Washington and into British Columbia, Oregon and northern California.

When Slocum lay near death, the evil spirits invaded his body, chewing at its members and leaving him weak and sickly. The incantations of five native doctors, accompanied by the rhythmic cacophonies of rattles, bells and charms, failed to drive the evil spirits from him. From the shores of Skookum Bay on Hammersley Inlet in southern Puget Sound, Slocum "journeyed to heaven and returned" to tell his story. It was recorded by Judge James Wickersham, an attorney for Slocum's Sahewamish people and the neighboring Squaxins, who described it in a letter to James Mooney (a letter which later appeared in the 14th annual report of the Bureau of American Ethnology), using Slocum's own words:

All at once I saw a shining light—great light—trying my soul. I looked and saw my body had no soul—looked at my own body—it was dead . . . . Angels told me to look back and see my body. I did, and saw it lying down. When I saw it, it was pretty poor. My soul left my body and went up to judgement place of God . . . .

Additional information about the "death" was provided by Reverend Myron Eells, a Congregationalist minister among the Skokomish Indians. Since these people lived but a short
distance from those of Slocum, Eells had ample opportunity to learn about the Shaker religion that Slocum originated after "returning" to his body. Slocum's relatives and others present at his "death" and "return" eagerly told of his miraculous experience. Many of their accounts are now in Indian Shaker Church files. One account, gathered around 1900 by Charles D. Rakestraw, supervisor of an Indian school on the nearby Chehalis Indian Reservation, tells how Slocum's last breath left his body and how, ascending on a great light into heaven, his soul was met by angels at a fence. A newspaper account stated that the angels, calling his name, "John," informed him of something of which he was well aware. "You've been a pretty bad Indian," they said.

Entering a fenced yard, he saw no one. The front door of the house opened. He entered and found it empty. Although Slocum was aware of a presence there, he again saw no one. Then a voice told him to enter another room. A door opened and he was greeted by an unidentified well-dressed man who asked if he believed in God. He was then led into yet another room where he saw a large photograph of himself. Rakestraw wrote, "This picture revealed to John all the bad deeds of his life and he saw that he had been a very wicked man." After this he was escorted down to a "furnace room," where men he recognized were burning. Then, wrote Rakestraw, Slocum talked with God. Most accounts state that he talked with angels; these conversations Slocum confirmed by his own words.

At this point of angelic confrontation he pleaded for deliverance from a netherworld doom, begging permission to return to earth and promising to do everything possible to escape the fiery furnace. The angels offered him a chance to return on condition that he preach the word of God and turn his life around. Before returning to his earthly body, he was led to an upper room and then to the housetop, from where he looked out on a bright land of beauty and comfort, the sight of which gave him a sense of deep tranquility.

Successful in his plea not to be sent to hell and damnation, he was ushered back to earth to preach the Christian life of sober and upright morality. Said Slocum, "I have understand all Christ wants us to do. Before I came alive I saw I was a sinner. Angel in heaven said to me, 'You must go back and turn alive again on earth.' I learned that I must be a good Christian man on earth, or will be punished." Slocum's message was: "There is a God—there is a Christian people. My good friends, be Christian."

Slocum wasted little time carrying out his heavenly mandate. "In the beginning of your Christian life," he exhorted, "you must confess your sins before you expect to make your home in heaven to be accepted by God, and make everything right where you make your mistakes." Slocum said that after a "good Christian man" prayed with him for four days a voice said to him, "You shall live on earth for four weeks." After this Slocum said, "My soul was told that they must build a church for me in four years later Mary Thompson recalled her husband sitting up and asking for water to cleanse his body after he regained consciousness. When children, sent to fetch the water at some distance, dallied along the way, the impatient returnee from heaven bathed in a nearby tub. Too weak to enter the house, he was helped into it and placed on the bed on which the native doctors had tried to cure him. His wish to be placed in another bed was granted. He wanted to begin with all things new—things not associated with sin and evil. Among these new things was a white robe he wished to wear to symbolize his new morality and mission. At about the same time he lapsed into unintelligible speech. Was he speaking in the tongues of angels or the language of a delirious man, or was he uttering some Christian concept unfamiliar to his family?

The experience
weeks," after which people came to worship God.

Slocum's religiosity reveals the Christian influence at work in the southern Puget Sound region. Missionaries had come there nearly a half-century before. After his recovery Slocum's exhortative words were those of Protestant clergymen, his sign of the cross that of priests of the Roman Catholic Church. These and other elements found their place in Shaker worship—bells, candles, flags, alms, holy pictures and chanting rooted in both nativist and Catholic worship.

Christian influence is shown in Slocum's words describing his heavenly sojourn. Most accounts include confrontations with white-robed angels, figures more easily represented than God as Person or Spirit. Secular influences of white men are also revealed in events surrounding his experience. Even the sheet placed over him is evidence that by 1882 material elements of Anglo-American culture had permeated that of the Indian. Since there were no coffins for sale on the Squaxin Reservation, another white institution, Slocum's brother Tom journeyed to the nearby Washington territorial capital, Olympia, to purchase one for Slocum's burial (a mission obviated by word of his recovery). The coffin itself is further evidence of the acculturation process at work in the Indian community.

Slocum's experience also reveals a new spiritual dimension and a belief differing from the nativist which held that conversion meant salvation from physical harm rather than assurance of spiritual preservation. Since natives thought that Christianity stemmed from mysterious supernatural power enhancing that of individuals, missionaries were initially welcomed in the belief that their spiritual gifts could be joined with those of a material nature. Undeniably there were negative consequences emerging from clashing cultures. Although missionaries taught love and forgiveness, Indians soon learned that what they preached was not always practiced. Equally confusing to them were the contestings between Catholics and Protestants.

Paradoxically, it had been these negative influences that brought Slocum to the point of his experience. His successor, Mud Bay Louis Yowaluch, was well aware that evil influences had rubbed off onto Slocum. As Louis told it, not only were they revealed in the body of this once half-starved person who spent every cent of his woodsman earnings on whiskey and gambling, they were also revealed in the corporate body of the Indians themselves. "We all felt blind those times," confessed Louis. "We lost by drowning—our friends drink whisky and the canoes turn over—we died out in the bay."

John Slocum is numbered among a spate of Pacific Northwest Indian religionists rising up in the latter 19th century in response to the presence of whites among them. Since force of arms had failed to dislodge them in the Puget Sound phase of the Yakima Indian War (1855-1857), many of these seers, by relating their heavenly sojourns, sought to inspire hope for their people, caught as they were in an agonizingly disruptive period of change. Notable among these were Smohalla, the Columbia River Wanapam who predicted his peoples' reinheritance of the earth in a millenial day and Skolaskin, a Sanpoil, who sought to effect his people's escape from earth to a common meeting place in heaven. Unlike these two, Slocum sought no removal or destruction of the whites nor escape from the earth which had succumbed to them.

Like other visionaries, Slocum advocated a moral code with Christian credo and ceremonial overtones to assure his people's survival in a world of white men. As he did not turn his back on earth, he did not turn it on heaven. He preached a message of personal salvation for the here and now as well as
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for the hereafter. Smohalla's religious legacy from his Washani religion as now practiced in the Seven Drum ceremony lacks the extensity if not the intensity of Slocum's religious offspring, the Indian Shaker Church. Shaking, the special hallmark of the Early-day Shakers from southern Puget Sound. Alex Teio, back row, far left, was a Yakima tribal member and head elder of the Indian Shaker Church when it was incorporated in 1910.

church, however, did not become a part of it until after he experienced a second "death" a year later.

Often scholars are more concerned with causes and consequences of events than in events themselves. Such should not be the case in John Slocum's "death" experience, because of its uniqueness and because the nature of it has eluded both students and followers of Slocum. Schooled in scientific methodology, anthropologists have explained it as a vision (Marylin Claire Richen) or a trance (Erna Gunther and Homer Barnett, both of whom have written extensively on Indian Shakerism). In the literature of Slocum's "death" there is a pervasive attitude that while in a sentient state he was guilty of "playing possum." Others attribute it to a stupor or the phantasms of a life of debauchery resulting in a drunken seizure. Other explanations include a coma resulting from tuberculosis, a broken neck sustained in a fall, and a scheming shaman. Another version attributes his "death" to theatrics in which he tried to extricate himself from the evil designs of a shaman who induced the illness in order to receive a large remuneration for his services. Slocum did receive considerable compensation for managing a logging operation, but much of it was squandered on drink and gambling.

Slocum's "death" symptoms fit a well-established though hitherto virtually unrecognized syndrome. Nearly a century later, in 1975, it was finally described by medical experts. A leading student of the syndrome, physician Raymond A. Moody Jr., explained it in his book Life After Life. Following this publication he conducted more extensive investigatory interviews with subjects whose experiences have been described in subsequent publications. Psychologist Kenneth Ring has conducted similar investigations, with findings confirming and reinforcing Moody's studies. In 1990 Seattle physician Melvin Morse published a study of children who have experienced "deaths" similar to that of Slocum. The topic has also been the recent focus of radio and television programs.

The name most commonly applied to the syndrome is "near-death experience" (NDE). Other terms used are "life after death" and "out-of-body experience." Reports indicate that subjects reach the point of death due to illness, trauma, or suicide attempts. Slocum's illness and extreme indisposition preceded his "death" experience. Those having an NDE follow a common pattern, although not all experience its every phase and individual expressions and interpretations vary in degree and detail. First, there is bodily separation in which the self ascends, looking down on what it recognizes as its own lifeless body. While present-day students of NDE make no attempt to identify the self as mind, soul, spirit or life, Slocum called his the soul. A non-reader, Slocum described his bodily separation in terms as precise as those of others now describing their own.

In the NDE a bright light is almost universally experienced. Slocum's description of the light he saw is as vivid as that of many others who have reported witnessing the same thing. Many NDE subjects describe the darkness as like being in or looking into a tunnel. It is doubtful that the word "tunnel" was in Slocum's lexicon, for there is no apparent record of his having any concept of it or of his having used words describing or referring to a tunnel. Morse states that children have told of going up or down stairs or through a hall. Possibly Slocum's movement through the numerous rooms represents a similar passage.

Slocum's taking stock of his life after viewing his self-photograph is typical of those experiencing out-of-body "life view" phenomena in which, as though looking in a mirror and seeing a panorama or collage of images of themselves, they are reminded of the bad
things they have done. For Slocum and others this phase of the experience led to self-evaluation. In NDE journeys the subjects report having seen or spoken to those they have known or were related to. While in the “furnace room” Slocum recognized the faces of people he knew who had died.

Without hesitation Slocum expressed a wish to return to earth, promising to turn his life around and preach to his people about the saving power of Christ. As he was taken to the housetop to view a serene landscape where “everything was beautiful” in a setting of spaciousness and comfort, he confirmed, as do other NDE subjects, a sense of transcendence which created in him a life-changing sense of spirituality. NDE subjects describe an awareness of a being with whom they communicate. In some instances the presence has been interpreted as an aspect of God that they could talk with but could not see. Such awareness would no doubt have stemmed from ideas or images entering the minds of subjects before their heavenly sojourns.

The Christ, whom Dr. Ring reports one person as seeing, has long been depicted in human form in Christian art and literature. Most persons experiencing similar “deaths” report seeing angels instead of the Supreme Deity.

Slocum was baptized by Roman Catholic missionaries and attended Protestant missionary services on the Skokomish Reservation before his “death.” He would have seen church representations of angels in human form with wings, flowing white robes and, perhaps, halos. After his experience, he reported in vivid terms his meeting in heaven with angelic beings who showed him about and gave him the option of returning to his body for a continued period of time.

The NDE syndrome has been experienced worldwide and is ages old. Slocum’s description of heaven contains all elements of the NDE. In what Dr. Ring terms “near-death experience” and “life after death” can be found elements matching those of John Slocum’s “death.”

From such experiences Moody states that he has yet to find one subject of the NDE who has not undergone “a very deep and positive transformation.” Ring also states that these persons have a “direct personal realization of a higher spiritual reality.” It was in this mode that Slocum not only resolved to abandon his former excesses to preach the word of God, but gave corporeal evidence of his life change by founding the Indian Shaker Church. This product of his new direction was the hybrid religion of Protestant songs, hymns and dogma combined with Roman Catholic accoutrements and the ancient Tamahnous (a term derived from Chinook jargon which embodies all religious and ceremonial activities among the tribes of the Pacific Northwest Coast). On Slocum’s “return” he also attributed to divine revelation his ability to communicate in a new profanity-free language the urgency of fulfilling his heavenly calling by persuading others to follow in his steps.

Literature is rife with reports of native prophet “deaths” that occurred in revitalization movements throughout North America, beginning on the East Coast after the arrival of Europeans and spreading west to the Pacific in the path of white immigration into these regions. These reported deaths, however, have not been studied to determine their physiological, chemical and mental characteristics. Those “dying” were not interviewed in a manner that would reveal cognizance of even primary elements of the NDE such as out-of-body sightings, dark passages, white-robed angels and brilliant lights. In his book Wovoka the Indian Messiah, Paul Bailey states that one of his subjects had a cataleptic experience that he developed and found easier to reproduce as time passed, realizing that “he now had the tools which had built Smohalla, Squ-sacht-un [Slocum], and a dozen other great Indian dreamers into fame and influence.” Although Slocum experienced a second “death” a year after his first one, he reported no additional ones to validate his official status and keep a hold on his people; in fact, he turned leadership of his church over to another with more charisma and leadership qualities than he.

In the usual NDE, states Ring, only the mind is present, weighing logically and rationally the alternatives confronting the self at the threshold separating life from death—namely,
whether to go further into the experience or return to earthly life. It was during his conversation with angels that Slocum opted to return to earth in order to prepare to enter heaven instead of hell. This decision challenged him to turn his life around so as to be an example to his people. He urged them to emulate his experience—to become Christians and to follow Christ. In so doing he walked in the footsteps of Saint Paul, the important extender of the Christian faith who likewise was taken to heaven for instruction. He also followed the path of Saint John the Revelator, who reported seeing four living beings in heaven, where he also saw a great illumination and heard voices speaking to him.

Studies have shown that among those who have had the NDE there are no appreciable differences attributable to personality type, nor are there any common characteristics such as age, race, education, marital status or religious background (including frequency of church attendance). In Slocum’s case, he had lived for a time on the Skokomish Reservation and had taken an unusual interest in religious matters. That was enough to furnish him with the visual imagery so important in his experience.

Ring reiterates, “When we come to examine the core of full NDEs we find an absolute and undeniable spiritual radiance.” “Moreover,” he writes, “this spiritual core... is so awesome and overwhelming that the person who experiences it is at once and forever thrust into an entirely new mode of being.”

Ring continues, “After the experience, the person can never again return to the former way of being—though some would like to. No longer can a person take refuge in the comfort of the conventional views and values of society.”

Dr. Ring goes on to state that the essentially spiritual experience serves to catalyze spiritual awakening and development, and that what unfolds following the NDE tends to take on particular form. This statement aptly fits Slocum’s evolution of personality, his spiritual awakening and the founding of the Indian Shaker Church. Consequently, those experiencing the NDE tend to manifest a variety of psychic abilities. Inherent in their transformation is the resolve to take up a crusade—in Slocum’s case it is the resolve to spread the word of God and bring his people into the Christian fold.

Some scholars, while not denying spiritual implications in the NDE, have explained it as less of a supernatural or parapsychological phenomenon than a neurological one, likening it to the manner in which a drug, acting on the mind, produces abnormal psychic effects. Such may be the case, but in no way does it negate the nearness to death of John Slocum’s experience.

While scholars consider explanations of the NDE, it may be truly said that Slocum followed in the wake of such great religious personages as Mohammed and others whose teachings, by Slocum’s time, had become embedded in American culture: Christian apostles like the former Saul of Tarsus; George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends; John Wesley, founder of Methodism; and Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism. Not to be overlooked are the many Native American spiritual persons who transcended the material world: the Wanapam, Smohalla; the Flat Head, Shining Shirt; the Seneca, Handsome Lake; the Paiute, Wovoka; the Shawnee, Tenskwatwa; and the Delaware, Neolin.

No more than any other man was John Slocum an island. He began his NDE journey with spiritual belongings gathered from both his native heritage and his Christian training. Had he heeded the teachings of both he might not have taken his journey. Had white men not entered his world or had he not been one to easily succumb to white men’s evil ways while ignoring their Christian words, Slocum might never have had a “death” experience. Yet, his nativist-Christian belongings, as though retrieved from a neglected closet deep in his psyche, accompanied him on his journey. Through his experience he bequeathed to Indians from British Columbia to California and beyond a life-changing legacy. From visions and voices such as he experienced have come religions that have changed the world.

John A. Brown and Robert H. Ruby have co-authored over ten works, focusing mainly on Native American history. Brown is Professor Emeritus of History at Wenatchee Valley Community College. Ruby is a physician in Moses Lake and a member of the Society’s board of trustees.
OR MANY YEARS traditional Western history focused on money-makers in specific economic frontiers: those who owned the mining claims, not the miners who dug; railroad “men” like J. J. Hill, E. H. Harriman, and the “Big Four of California,” not those who drove the spikes and lit the fuses; ranchers who were realtors, not ranch hands who did the work; and fur traders, not fur trappers or engagés. Yet a vast community of manual laborers, dependent on others for wages, serviced the exploitive industries of the West. A reservoir of workers, both unskilled and semi-skilled, followed seasonal occupations—mucking the mines for four dollars a day, harvesting wheat from California to Canada, logging in the Cascades, and constructing and maintaining the grades of the great transcontinental railroads. At the end of a working season, and just as often in the middle of it, they would drift to another job or into cities such as Seattle, Portland, San Francisco and Spokane, where the charity of soup lines and skid road missions awaited those who were down on their luck. Carleton Parker, executive secretary for California’s Immigration and Housing Commission, labeled these men “casual laborers” in his statistical portrait of 1913.

The rapid expansion of wagework in the United States and Canada occurred between the time of the California gold rush and World War II, and the role of the casual laborer cannot be discounted in the early industrial development of the American and Canadian West.

In the Pacific Northwest these casual laborers moved from one kind of temporary employment to another. A network of railways offered a new mode of transportation and lured thousands westward with pamphlets designed to appeal to the adventurous. These itinerants worked not only as miners and loggers but as ranch hands, cowboys, canners, harvesters, and fruit pickers, to mention a few. The majority of these floating western workers had no homes or families and little loyalty to an employer or occupations to keep them from shifting back and forth from one type of job to another.

Parker’s study, “The Casual Laborer,” states that in 1910 in the United States alone there were some 10,400,000 unskilled male workers and that, of these, some 3,500,000 moved about, crossing the 49th parallel indiscriminately. Parker found that the casual

Migratory labor in the harvest fields. These men were usually young and unmarried.
At this "bull pen" in an Idaho lumber camp the men lived in tents.

Casual laborers at work on the Stampede Pass Tunnel during the final stages of its construction in May 1888.

Laborers would work in lumber camps an average of 15 to 30 days, in construction 10 days, in harvesting 7 days, canning 30 days, and in mining for approximately 60 days. Although much of the work was of short duration, Parker's figures revealed that many workers left the job before the work gave out. Labor turnover in the lumber camps often reached 600 percent. One job site, called Tunnel Camp, reported that 529 men worked 7,414 days, an average of 14 days per man. Some 1913 figures revealed that two adjoining camps had employed 1,293 men who worked 15,137 days, an average of 11.7 days per man.

The itinerant labor force that wandered around the Northwest consisted mainly of men. They rarely worked alongside women, as the strenuous labor involved was judged an occupation suited for men only. The geographic mobility of these floaters discouraged most women from traveling with them, although Robert A. Bruns, in Knights of the Road, writes about "Boston Betty, a spirited sort who foiled all best efforts of railroad bulls to keep her from holding down a freight over one particularly rough stretch of road." Because of their unstable migratory existence, those in casual labor were subject to discomfort and indignity and they lost the conventional relationship to women and children. This was not helped by squalid living conditions like those at the Humbird Timber Camp near Sandpoint, Idaho, where men were required to sleep two to a bunk. Parker offered statistics showing that 90 percent of the native born casual labor force was unmarried. However, figures obtained from a study of the Dillingham Commission on the status of labor reveal a different set of figures for the newly arrived immigrant workers. Of 1,829 foreign born, 52.7 percent were married, 45.7 percent were single, and 1.6 percent widowed. The significant fact in this conjugal relationship is that 76.2 percent of the wives were still abroad.

The railroad was the fundamental link in advancement of several resource frontiers in the United States as well as Canada, also attracting casual labor for the purpose of track

Because of their unstable migratory existence, those in casual labor were subject to discomfort and indignity . . .
Workers at Coal Creek Mine in northwest King County. Casual laborers in mining stayed on the job longer than when working at occupations such as harvesting or construction.

building and maintenance. As the network of tracks supplied the means of transportation for the casual laborer to move readily from one job to another, hoboing became a common method of travel among migratory workers.

WESTERN CASUAL LABORERS often traveled in pairs for protection and companionship, but they were seduced by the siren song of a road that ignored, to some extent, the international boundary between Canada and the United States. Students of labor history in western Canada and the northwest United States are beginning to conclude that the 49th parallel was not a real barrier to the flow of people and ideas that connected events and movements in the two countries.

In British Columbia one section of the Canadian Pacific Railway was built by American contractor Andrew Onderdonk. When the heavy demand for labor could not be met in the province, Onderdonk imported 6,500 Chinese and 2,500 white workers from an employment agency in San Francisco, with no customs problems at the border. Hard rock miners at Rossland, B.C., joined in a 1901 cross-border strike with smeltermen in Northport, Washington. The union secretary of the Western Federation of Miners stated, “There is no 49th parallel of latitude in Unionism—the Canadian and American workingmen have joined hands across the boundary line for a common cause against a common enemy.”
Cross-border activity continued in 1917 when the Canadian government added 52 special agents to its immigration force and instructed them to draw at least 10,000 farmers from the United States into the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

POKANE, WITH ITS RAIL LINKS into Canada, played a special role in labor movement within the region, particularly in the form of employment agencies, which in turn played an important though predatory role in the life of the casual laborer. Spokane was attractive to thousands of workers who needed a winter home when lumbering halted due to mountain snow and agricultural harvesting stopped until the coming of spring. The Dillingham Commission uncovered several phases of exploitation practiced against the casual laborer and cited numerous examples of illegal business methods by employment agents. Often when a laborer arrived at a job site he would find the position already filled or he would be fired within a week to make room for new arrivals.

Romantic notions that the West was synonymous with great personal opportunity died as the unskilled men shuffled from place to place. The Wobblies became very strong in the Pacific Northwest; Spokane had the biggest local union, listing 6,000 members.

Why did so many workers change jobs so often? The obvious answer is that all of the principal occupations in which these men participated were cyclical in nature. However, the answer is more complex than this. These wage-workers looked at the western region as a place of individual opportunity—a place to begin anew. Herbert Gutman examined letters from Scottish immigrant workers and quotes William Latta as follows:

Among the thousands of drifting workers who had come to regard the American Dream as a cruel hoax, the conviction grew that there was hope in the union of the Industrial Workers of the World. The IWW shared their contempt for the politician and the preacher, attracting the unemployed and the discontented. The Wobblies became very strong in the Pacific Northwest; Spokane had the biggest local union, listing 6,000 members.

Romantic notions that the West was synonymous with great personal opportunity died as the unskilled men shuffled from place to place.
When we thought of leaving Old Scotland for reasons satisfactory to ourselves, we selected the States, determined to see for ourselves whether young countries were what we had often heard them represented to be... to own a house and lot is the ambition of the American workman, which may be done, if employed, with the savings of three or four years; but in the matter of constant employment I think there is less of it at home, and as fully as difficult to get.  

Historian Ronald B. Brown, in his book Hard-Rock Miners, argued that some of these men had headed west because of health concerns as it was common for 19th-century physicians to prescribe mountain air for assorted reasons. Others, repelled by the mechanical routine of the Industrial Age, turned west to escape the “tyranny of the machine,” while still others lacked the ability to make adjustments necessary for life in the complex social environment that had arisen in the East. How disappointing it must have been for men who went west for these reasons to find themselves operating levers and oiling machinery that they thought they had left behind.

All of these reasons contributed to the rootlessness which developed, but Carlos Schwantes offered additional reasons in an article entitled “The Concept of the Wageworkers’ Frontier.” He viewed anti-Chinese agitation, which intensified after the 1880s, as a contributing factor together with the great railway strikes of 1877, which brought more unemployment and irregular wages to men already disillusioned by the inability to escape from working for a master. Massive unemployment drove men from one place to another in a search for survival. Underlying all these reasons was the loss of stabilizing ties of family, neighborhood and church.

Individualism was certainly a trait that could be attributed to the casual laborers, with their ability to head into the sunset not knowing where they might rest. In Rebel of the Woods, Robert Tyler portrays coastal loggers in unflattering terms: “The ranks of the migratory workers included a disproportionate number of feeble-minded, neurotic runaways from middle-class homes, wife deserters, unattached aliens, and the variously deracinated.” Melvin Dubofsky takes a more sophisticated approach, adopting Oscar Lewis’s theory of the “culture of poverty” to describe itinerants as the “human flotsam and jetsam” of capitalism—the first-generation citizens of the industrial society. Hidy, Hill and Nevins, in Timber and Men, viewed these men as “a womanless, homeless, voteless group who carried their verminous blankets from place to place,” while Dubofsky views their mobility as an ordered, even rational response to a particularly competitive example of industrial capitalism. To be able to say “I quit” was an act of resistance; an assertion of independence.

Solidarity

Many itinerant workers looked hopefully to organized labor unions like the Industrial Workers of the World as a means of improving their lot. These solidarity stickers are a small sampling of the materials distributed by the IWW among workers in labor camps throughout the Northwest. Some local sheriffs and their deputies took particular delight in confiscating such items.
A 1924 report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics stated that these men were filled with unrest because of their low wages, long hours, unsanitary camps, lack of family life, and unsatisfactory relationships with employers. The report continued that this type of life tampered with the very instincts of man. Although the instinct of curiosity and migration would have helped to bring these men west in the first place, they were thwarted in their inclinations for acquisition, settling, mental activity, leadership and sex. Much of the time their instinct for anger had to be subordinated in order to work for the pitiful sums of money that would take them somewhere else.

Changes in technology served as a catalyst for the development of the vast numbers of itinerant workers in both the United States and Canada, and also contributed to their demise. The steam engine brought an expansion of rail networks that the workers not only built but traveled; mines and lumber camps required human labor to run equipment financed in a capitalistic economy; large haying machines developed after 1890 could not be manned by just one person. The itinerant laborer served the needs of this new technology, but later changes in technology allowed the activity of men to be replaced as improved machines multiplied man's productivity a thousandfold. The tractor replaced the beaverslide and the Jenkins stacker and allowed one man to do the work of many; the diesel donkey, using nine men, supplanted the steam donkey requiring fifteen men; it in turn was replaced by the grapple-yarder, which could be operated by only three men.

At the turn of the century many casual laborers stayed in lumber camps an average of 15 to 30 days.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries were a time of transition from exploration of the frontier to establishment of an advanced industrial society in both the United States and Canada. Within the course of a few decades following the Industrial Revolution, the economic order of the western world changed, and the itinerant worker drifted through this zone of transition, calling attention to himself and to his plight by refusing to play the game. He moved indiscriminately back and forth across the border, creating international parallels that affected both countries. Industrial violence and political insurgency spawned in the West had far-reaching impact on the pivotal development of labor history that took place in the industrial East.

The casual laborer—whether miner, cowboy, ranch hand, logger, fruit picker, or just a drifting worker—played an important role at a time when the United States and Canada were establishing an equilibrium between the frontier and the institutions that eventually developed. Their struggle is part of the story that took place throughout the West at the turn of the century as the Industrial Revolution and economic centralization transformed American and Canadian life.

Evelyne Stitt Pickett is a Ph.D. student at the University of Idaho and author of the forthcoming books Ranchwomen in the Empty Quarter and The Snow Professor: James Edward Church and the Development of Snow Surveying.
Bremerton Blooper
COLUMBIA, volume five, number four, has joined its prior fellows on my shelves. As with all the others, I read it with interest. Some items get a quick glance, others are of more interest to me. It is good to have such a variety of articles done in a scholarly manner.

In this current volume I raise a question, or rather a wonderment. On page 26, the "History Album" piece about the Lexington, I was disturbed by the statement that she "happened to be 65 miles away... in Bremerton."

Even allowing for the difference between statute and nautical miles, it seemed to be too great a distance. Looking through the various tables of distances I found it to be 28.5 nautical miles from Puget Sound Navy Yard to Tacoma in a compilation of the Washington Board of Pilotage; in a comprehensive compilation of distance tables put out some years ago by Foss Launch & Tug Company it is 28 nautical miles.

Please don't think of this as a complaint. Rather, it is the kind of thing you get when you publish such a fine journal of historical significance.

J. J. Dillon
Seattle

Diary Delights
When I read the article on Henry Carter in Winter 1991-92 issue of COLUMBIA and came to the part where the death of Professor McClure was mentioned I realized that my aunt, Carrie Hall, had also been on that trip although she did not go to the summit of Mount Rainier. She was with a party from the Seattle YMCA. This group then met up with other groups along the way. They left Seattle on the steamer Flyer and arrived in Tacoma about two hours later.

I am enclosing a couple of excerpts from aunt Carrie's journal of the trip. She took some pictures of the trip and also pressed some of the flowers found along the way. She made two booklets of the record of the trip.

Excerpts from The Flora and Journal of a Trip to Mount Rainier, July 19-31, 1897 by Carrie Hall:

July 26. We arose very early this morning and made all preparations for the climb. This meant for the ladies, bloomers, heavy shoes with spikes or screws, leggings, mittens, alpine stock, some raisons [sic] and parched corn in our pockets, and a small lunch of sandwiches. Our faces were blocked with lamp-black and vaseline or covered with veils; every precaution being used to protect ones hands and face from the sun. The gentlemen were similarly equipped, each of them taking some additional packs which could not be taken by pack horses as far as Muir Camp.

July 27. When ten o'clock came and no light was visible we were afraid some accident had happened, and all became more or less alarmed, becoming still more nervous when later the calls began to echo and re-echo from the side of the mountain. Our camp fire was kept lighted and hot food ready, should any one come in hungry and cold. About twelve, our company commenced to come in, showing that they were trying to descend by night, not in a body, but every one for himself.

July 28. About daybreak Prof. Hill reached camp and reported the death of Prof. McClure, who lost his footing on a snowfield, and was killed by striking on a moraine below. He also reported that part of our company stayed at Camp Muir during the night.

Mary H. Schultz
Missoula, MT

Kudos
COLUMBIA is a wonderful publication—almost like a book—with pictures and articles of historical value.

Marjorie G. Smith
Tokoa, WA

Davenport’s First Guests
COLUMBIA magazine just keeps getting better. The article on the Davenport Hotel (Fall 1991) was most fascinating. Keep up the good work. I thought you might be interested in this photo of the hotel’s first guests, which I am using in a forthcoming book on the railroads of the Pacific Northwest. The original is at the James Jerome Hill Library in Saint Paul. I love the “See America First” banner the Blackfeet are holding.

Carlos A. Schwantes, Director
University of Idaho Institute for Pacific Northwest Studies
On March 13, 1885, a boy was born to the wife of the village schoolmaster in Quersa, Saxony, then a part of imperial Germany. The infant, christened Kurt Friederich Johannes Kirsten, died in Roy, Washington, on November 19, 1952, where he was known as Frederick Kurt Kirsten. The metamorphosis of the German child into a once well-known American engineering educator and inventor is a story that almost might have been written by Horatio Alger.

After a rural childhood and a secondary education in nearby Grossenhain, the young Kirsten became a midshipman in the German merchant marine. At that time the training of such midshipmen commenced with a lengthy voyage aboard a square-rigged sailing vessel, and so Kirsten sailed from Hamburg late in the spring of 1902 aboard the three-masted bark *Elfrieda*. Among Kirsten’s papers were unpublished autobiographical notes describing a difficult, exciting and dangerous voyage among a rough crew. That voyage ended, for Kirsten at least, in Tacoma, Washington, almost nine months later.

While the *Elfrieda* was docked in Tacoma, Kirsten and a young shipmate went ashore, without leave, for a night on the town. After some misadventures they returned to the *Elfrieda*’s berth only to find that the ship had departed without them. The destitute youngsters tried to warm themselves in a nearby waterfront saloon where they met a German-born farmer from nearby Roy. Henry Frie offered Kirsten a job as a hired hand on his hop farm, which the frightened youngster was glad to take.

After working on the Frie farm for two and a half years, the bright and ambitious Kirsten was able to enroll as an electrical engineering student at the University of Washington in the fall of 1905. Although he held a full-time job at a power station throughout his schooling, Kirsten graduated from the university in 1909 with high honors and soon returned to Roy to marry Agatha Helen Frie, Henry’s 18-year-old daughter.

During the next decade Fred Kirsten began a successful career as an engineer that took him to the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California and to Cambridge, Massachusetts. However, the young couple missed the Puget Sound region and Kirsten was pleased to accept a position as Assistant Professor of Electrical Engineering at his alma mater in the fall of 1915. By mid 1918, academic salaries being what they were and being the father of a baby girl, Kirsten took a two-year leave of absence from the university to become chief engineer of the American Nitrogen Products Company, also in Seattle. Kirsten returned to his position at the University of Washington in late 1920. That return was not to the same comfortable niche that he had taken leave of, but rather it was to mark the beginning of a radical change in Fred Kirsten’s career.

There is no evidence that Fred Kirsten had displayed any prior interest in aviation or aeronautical engineering. However, upon his second return to the university he was asked to teach courses in aerodynamics, airplane design, and propel-
lers; apparently he accepted that new challenge with the same energy and enthusiasm that he always seemed to bring to a new task. In 1948 Kirsten's longtime colleague Dean Edgar A. Loew recalled that the start of aeronautical instruction at the University of Washington commenced with Kirsten's being “put in charge of organizing the initial program of instruction in Aeronautical Engineering ... in 1920.” Dean Loew gave no reason for that new effort then, but it is not unreasonable to infer that the growth of the Boeing Airplane Company and the presence of the Naval Air Station at Sand Point in Seattle provided the university with motivation for the commitment of ever scarce resources to the new program.

We may also assume that it was Kirsten's need to learn about aircraft propellers in the fall of 1920 that led to his lifelong efforts to perfect the “cycloidal propeller” as a viable alternative to the conventional (helical) propeller. Kirsten's invention was a device looking something like a paddle wheel on either vertical or horizontal axes, whose blades were articulated by a complicated mechanism so that they could provide a thrust force in a variety of desired directions at all times. The mechanism was bulky and heavy, accounting for its ultimate lack of success in aeronautical applications. The cycloidal propeller's ability to provide continual variation of the thrust line made it especially suitable for specialized marine applications (e.g., tug and tow boats). Nevertheless, it is evident from Kirsten's patent application of December 1, 1921, that his initial concern was to develop the device for aeronautical use. The patent (United States Patent 1,432,700) was granted on October 17, 1922, rights being assigned equally to Kirsten and William E. Boeing, the Seattle airplane manufacturer. The patent application contained more than a little hyperbole in its claims for the virtues of the device—Fred Kirsten never lacked for enthusiasm in his varied undertakings. It was claimed that the cycloidal propeller would revolutionize airplane and airship propulsion and control since the device would allow for altering the direction and amount of thrust force at will while maintaining constant engine speed. Note that this was long before the constant speed, variable pitch helical propeller had been perfected.

Not only was Kirsten's “baby” claimed to be capable of remarkable performance, but it would replace a device, the helical propeller, that was claimed to be inefficient. Apparently, then, in the early 1920s and throughout the remaining decades of his career, Fred Kirsten did not understand the aerodynamics of the conventional airplane propeller, a remarkably efficient fluid mechanical device. To be fair, at the time many other American aeronautical engineers had little theoretical understanding of airplane and propeller aerodynamics, the frequent excellence of their products being more the result of trial and error (with some luck thrown in) than of theoretical understanding. Even in 1903 the Wright brothers had achieved propeller efficiencies of 70% and by the end of World War I, efficiencies of 85% had been attained; few fluid mechanical devices have exceeded such an efficiency. A reading of his patent application of 1921 implies that Kirsten did not understand the reason why a helical propeller's advance was less than its nominal, or geometric, pitch. This difference is what he apparently took to be its supposed lack of efficiency. The explanation lies in the observation, made as early as 1884 by British aeronautical pioneer Horatio Phillips, that a conventional propeller is a twisted rotating wing and not a screw-like device, the misnomer “airscrew” notwithstanding.

Years later Fred Kirsten ascribed the inspiration for his conception of the cycloidal propeller to observations of bird flight, although he never seems to have stated explicitly what the connection was. In any event he commenced tests on a small prototype during the spring of 1921, months before he made his patent application. The tests

The young Kirsten, foreground, aboard the Elfrieda, 1902.
were conducted in the small wind tunnel that William E. Boeing had given to the University of Washington in 1917. Bill Boeing made it his business to keep tabs on work being conducted at the wind tunnel and, either on his own initiative or at the invitation of Kirsten, decided to become involved with financing the development of Kirsten's invention. On November 25, 1921, days before the patent application was filed, the Kirsten-Boeing Propeller Company was incorporated, with one O. W. Tupper as the necessary third incorporator.

Boeing, shrewd businessman that he was, put up $150,000 of his own personal funds to capitalize the new company rather than make it a division of the Boeing Airplane Company and draw upon corporate resources. This cautious approach to financing the Kirsten-Boeing Propeller Company insured that if the speculative venture failed the integrity of the Boeing Airplane Company would in no way be affected and only Bill Boeing's personal fortune would be diminished.

Tests made in late 1921 on a large 15-foot diameter cycloidal propeller, expected to be suitable for aircraft, were no more than marginally successful. Consequently, by early 1922 efforts were being directed toward developing a cycloidal propulsion system for marine use. Fred Kirsten, on his own, continued fruitless efforts to develop cycloidal propulsion for aircraft until his retirement from the University of Washington in 1951. The change in tack by the Kirsten-Boeing Propeller Company did not yet trouble Bill Boeing, who had after all made money as a boat builder in pre-war Seattle. Work proceeded rapidly on the first marine cycloidal propeller, the M-1, and by early 1922 it was installed in a 38-foot launch of six-foot beam. The trim-looking vessel, designated the M-879, was powered by a 150-horsepower gasoline engine; above the waterline the boat would hardly have attracted a second glance. However, beneath the waterline an observer would have noted the lack of a rudder and the presence of a three-foot diameter rotor of complicated appearance projecting about a foot below the hull and rotating about a vertical axis. The ability of the cycloidal propeller to rapidly alter the thrust line obviated the need for a rudder.

The M-879 was publicly launched and demonstrated on Saturday, August 14, 1922. Onlookers must have found the ability of the vessel practically to turn on the proverbial dime rather remarkable; otherwise its performance was quite conventional for a boat of its size and power. As a technically knowledgeable person might have expected, some developmental "bugs" showed up in the seal and lubrication systems. These problems were resolved by April 1923 when the improved M-1b cycloidal propeller was installed in the M-879 and tested on April 7 of that year. For a while the success of the Kirsten-Boeing Propeller Company seemed assured.

A few days later, on April 17, 1923, the company forwarded data on both the air and marine versions of the cycloidal propeller to Rear Admiral David W. Taylor in Washington, D.C. Within six months the Model Basin at the Washington Navy Yard had completed efficiency tests on the Kirsten-Boeing marine propeller. An informal report written by Admiral Taylor on October 20, 1923, was mixed in its evaluation of the device. The report noted that in most practical situations Kirsten-Boeing propellers "would show efficiencies of little or no superiority to those of screw propellers for the same vessel. For vessels of the wide, flat stern type and fairly high speed it seems possible to fit K.-B. propellers with efficiency markedly superior to that of the screw propeller."

It was on the matter of efficiency, in all circumstances, that Fred Kirsten had staked his claim for the superiority of the cycloidal propeller, and that claim seemed dubious except for quite unusual circumstances—and even then the costs and mechanical complications of the cycloidal propeller might deter all but committed "true believers" from its use. In the submission to the navy, Kirsten had ignored the fact that efficiency is not always the only criterion on which to judge the success of a device. Notably, he had not emphasized the maneuverability that cycloidal propulsion might bestow on a vessel as well as the sideways forces that a vessel so powered could exert. What he had invented would be, in modified form, successfully marketed a few years later by the German firm of Voith-Schneider for use in special-purpose vessels such as tugboats and vessels operating in shallow waters. By the start of World War II about 100 Voith-Schneider propulsion units were powering a variety of ships.
Professor Kirsten explaining a cycloplane model to students, c. 1938.

and boats around the world, whereas not a single Kirsten-Boeing unit ever operated with commercial success.

The decline and demise of the Kirsten-Boeing Propeller Company started with the receipt of Admiral Taylor's report by Bill Boeing in 1923. The company made some halfhearted efforts to develop a tugboat, but no further capital was provided by Boeing, and the company, for all practical purposes, ceased to exist on March 8, 1928, when the Kirsten-Boeing Propeller Company sold the M-879, together with the M-1b cycloidal propeller, to "F. K. Kirsten for one dollar and other valuable considerations." On July 1, 1929, the company did not pay the fee required for renewal of its incorporation, and it ceased to exist as a legal entity.

Fred Kirsten may have been discouraged during that period, but he showed no signs of it as he continued to work on and publicize the potential aeronautical applications of cycloidal propulsion in the late 1920s. In addition to lecturing on the topic to local technical and university audiences Kirsten became a popular speaker at meetings of civic and service organizations. It is likely that he was then the most well-known apostle in the Puget Sound region for the gospel that technology and science were the hope of humanity. Existing texts of some of his talks from that period present much the same views that Technocracy, Inc. would propagate during the Great Depression of the following decade.

The cycloidal propeller may not have made Fred Kirsten's fortune in the 1920s, but the device had a serendipitous effect on the development of aeronautical engineering education at the University of Washington late in that decade. By the mid 1920s the Daniel Guggenheim Fund for the Promotion of Aeronautics had begun providing capital grants to a limited number of universities to build "laboratories" that would provide high visibility to exemplary departments of aeronautical engineering on their respective campuses. In early 1926 the University of Washington, not yet having a freestanding Department of Aeronautical Engineering, decided to submit a proposal to receive one of the grants to the Guggenheim Fund in New York City. As was and is customary, the proposal was submitted over the names of the university president and the dean of engineering, although the task of drafting the proposal had been given to Fred Kirsten. On May 29, 1926, President Henry Suzzallo wrote a follow-up letter to Harry F. Guggenheim, the president of the Guggenheim Fund. Suzzallo's letter played upon Kirsten's work on the cycloidal propeller as evidence of the university's commitment to aeronautical engineering education and research; in fact, the university had little else besides Kirsten's efforts on which to base its case.

Apparently the trio of Suzzallo, Magnusson, and Kirsten played their respective roles well since the University of Washington was awarded a $290,000 grant to build a "laboratory" to house a (then nonexistent) Department of Aeronautical Engineering. Kirsten's role was remembered by Dean Edgar A. Loew in his report of 1948 where, in a brief history of the Department of Aeronautical Engineering, he wrote that "due largely to his [Kirsten's] activities in the field of Aeronautics . . . the University of Washington was selected . . . to be awarded a grant by the Daniel Guggenheim Fund for the Promotion of Aeronautics." The university was one of six institutions, and the only one then limiting aeronautics to undergraduate instruction, to receive such a grant.
The University of Washington dedicated the new Guggenheim Laboratory with the appropriate ceremonies and speeches on April 11, 1929. This left the institution with the problem of creating a Department of Aeronautical Engineering and giving the department a leader. Since Fred Kirsten apparently was not considered to have the administrative and leadership potentials required for the job, the task of organizing the new department was assigned to Professor Everett O. Eastwood, head of the Department of Mechanical Engineering since 1905.

The early 1930s found Kirsten more active than ever. In addition to his continuing efforts to apply cycloidal propulsion to aircraft he spoke before countless organizations and groups on social and political as well as technical and scientific topics. Simultaneously, his scope as an inventor was broadening. The most promising of a variety of inventions made in the early 1930s was "hi-tensity lighting," an early precursor of today's fluorescent lighting, which proved popular in the Puget Sound area as a replacement for neon display signs. Why the Kirsten Lighting Company never really succeeded is not at all clear from Kirsten's papers. I suspect that "hi-tensity lighting" suffered from Fred Kirsten's tendency not always to focus on the matter at hand.

Sometime in 1934 Kirsten approached the California Institute of Technology's Guggenheim Aeronautical Laboratory to request time in their wind tunnel to test a model "cycloplane," Kirsten's term for a cycloidally propelled aircraft. He was asked to pay the standard fee of $200 per day, and this just was not possible for Kirsten to do. It was this occurrence that led Kirsten to make his second major contribution to the Department of Aeronautical Engineering at the University of Washington. That contribution was to design, secure funds for and build an 8-foot-by-12-foot wind tunnel on campus. That tunnel, still in use today, proved to be superior to the one at Caltech.

With typical intensity, Fred Kirsten went to work to design the tunnel and raise the funds necessary to build it. As strange as it may seem, the confluence of circumstances was just right for undertaking such a project in the Depression year of 1935, and Kirsten's project went forward successfully. On August 28, 1935, the University of Washington submitted to the Public Works Administration (PWA) a proposal to build "An AeroDynamic Laboratory (Wind Tunnel) on the Campus of the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington." The sum of $120,000 was requested and awarded. Another $40,000 was provided by the Washington State Budget Emergency Relief Administration, while the Boeing Airplane Company provided an additional $26,000 as an advance on future rental fees at $15 per hour, the latter being a bargain rate.

Fred Kirsten had worked out the design for the tunnel and the building to house it in the relatively short interval between Caltech's refusal of free use of their wind tunnel in 1934 and the submission of the proposal to the PWA in August 1935. Consequently, as soon as the monies were provided for construction of the facility in the fall of 1935, contracts were let and work began on the project. Seattle's mild climate allowed work to continue throughout the winter of 1935-36 and a brief news item in the Seattle Times of September 23, 1936, announced the first test of the "cycloplane" in the new wind tunnel using a balance system designed by professor F. S. Eastman. In fact, it is unlikely that any real testing work was performed in the 250-mile per hour tunnel until early 1938. The wind tunnel logbooks, which remain housed in a facility still routinely used, start with entries numbered 100 and up and dated no earlier than June 1938. That wind tunnel, then state of the art, was to be an important facility for the West Coast aviation industry just prior to and during World War II. The
names of Boeing, Consolidated, North American and Lockheed dominate the logbook entries during that period. The irony here, one of many in Kirsten’s life, was that there was almost no time available in the tunnel for his experiments.

The ironies of life are not always without their bright aspects. For three decades, until he retired in 1951, the cycloidal propeller and its application to aircraft was the technical matter dearest to Fred Kirsten. That phantasmagoric vision provided the impetus for his great and successful effort to procure the Guggenheim Laboratory and the 250-mile-per-hour wind tunnel (since 1948 the “F. K. Kirsten Wind Tunnel”) for the University of Washington. Without those facilities, how would aeronautical engineering education and research have developed at the University of Washington? If those activities had been diminished, what would have been the effect on the Boeing Airplane Company? Did Kirsten appreciate the irony of his passage from penniless, illegal immigrant to successful and respected American? It is likely that he would have traded all the worldly success that the pipe brought him for a single successful flight of a cycloplane, even if that had brought him not a penny.

The little Saxon schoolboy Kurt Freiderich Johannes Kirsten never could have foreseen the varied life that the American professor and inventor Frederick Kurt Kirsten would lead before he died. Possibly the saddest thing about his life is that he may never have appreciated how well he had succeeded. His quixotic pursuit of the cycloplane had laid firm foundations for the development of aeronautical engineering education and research in the Pacific Northwest while his inventive, Edisonian character, by way of the Kirsten pipe, brought him that most characteristic measure of success in America—(modest) wealth.

Now that Kirsten’s papers have become available to all at the Manuscripts and Archives Division of the University of Washington Libraries, scholars and popular writers alike will find them a valuable resource. Kirsten’s life, combining elements of Don Quixote, Edison, and Horatio Alger, might best be examined in the context of how the Puget Sound region moved from its late pioneer era to modern times. Would Kirsten’s life have been significantly different had he jumped ship in Providence, Rhode Island, rather than Tacoma, Washington? “What if?” is always a futile question for a historian to ask, but it is a tantalizing one, and it may provide some insight into what actually happened.

(Note: The original text contains a typographical error where it says “COLUMBIA 45 SPRING 1992” which appears to be out of context. It seems to be a page number from a publication, but without more context, it’s difficult to integrate it into the natural text.)
Yesterday in Oregon:
A Pictorial Scrapbook

Camera Eye on Idaho:
Pioneer Photography, 1863-1913
Reviewed by Wallace G. Lewis

For those who enjoy comparing the look of the past with the look of the present, Yesterday in Oregon offers a feast of historical photographs. It is centered mostly on communities during the period from 1890 to 1910, evoking the past through photographs, numerous newspaper advertisements and front pages, as well as brief but illuminating captions. Culp's organizing purpose is to survey all of Oregon's counties in captioned pictures, but the collection is only marginally representative. The most populous areas, then and now, such as Marion and Multnomah counties, receive the most space. Of particular interest is a section devoted to photos of the Columbia River Gorge area taken by Benjamin A. Gifford, who traveled about Oregon near the turn of the century in a photo "studio" on wheels.

Arthur Hart's selection of historical photographs in Idaho has much the same appeal as Yesterday in Oregon. Most of us are curious about what towns looked like, or how people in them lived, a century ago. But Camera Eye on Idaho has additional value as a reference resource. In addition to emphasizing the role of the pioneer photographer, it lists all photographers known to have operated in Idaho between 1863 and 1913, alphabetically both by name and by town, and indicates the years during which they were active. Biographical and anecdotal material about these pioneers enlivens the substantial amount of accompanying text. Those with a taste for dramatic moments will enjoy the "Recording History" section, which includes a picture of the land rush onto the Fort Hall Reservation in 1902 and of Teddy Roosevelt's 1903 visit to Boise, as well such "disasters" as the aftermath of the Mace Avalanche in 1910 and the capsizing of the steamer Seattle on Lake Coeur d'Alene. Hart has dipped into some fascinating and relatively untouched Idaho collections of historical photographs for fresh material. Notable are C. E. Bisbee's portrayals of irrigation development in southern Idaho, and the Barnard-Stockbridge Collection at the University of Idaho Library for images of the Coeur d'Alene mining district in its heyday.

Wallace G. Lewis earned his Ph.D. at the University of Idaho and is a member of the faculty at Western State College of Colorado.

Converting the West:
A Biography of Narcissa Whitman
Reviewed by Candyce Martin

Mid-19th century America was a highly romantic and idealistic period in this country's history. While settlers emigrated to the West in pursuit of economic betterment, Protestant evangelical missionaries, driven by the same national spirit of pride and progress, were embarking on a crusade to transform the world into a Holy Utopia—an age in which Christian people were triumphant.

Raised in an evangelical household in western New York, Narcissa Prentiss longed to work among the heathen. Unable to fulfill her dream without a husband, she married Dr. Marcus Whitman, whom she hardly knew, in 1836 and rode across the continent to fulfill her goal of bringing Christianity to the "be-nighted ones." Eleven years later, when they were killed by the Cayuse Indians they had come to convert, the country turned them into martyrs. Now, nearly 150 years after their deaths, memory of the Whitmans has faded, and contemporary appraisers of the missionary movement and the events at Wai-lat-pu call the Cayuse martyrs instead.

In her perceptive and provocative biography Julie Roy Jeffrey examines Narcissa's upbringing, paying particular attention to the powerful influence of her mother, an ardent supporter of missionary work, who imbued her daughter with a calling to devote her life to the greater cause of the Lord. Jeffrey carefully traces Narcissa's enthusiasm to be a missionary as she directs evangelical activities in her hometown and reads exciting descriptions of missionary life in the Missionary Herald, her pleasure as she falls in love on the trip West, and her introduction to life on the frontier.

Though Narcissa was well educated, nothing in her personality...
or her training prepared her for dealing with a totally different culture. Like her husband, she was very much a product of her era and social class, which was reflected in her attitude towards the Indians. She operated from a religious theoretical framework whose standards for judging right and wrong, holiness and sinfulness were so rigid that it could not be widened to include other perspectives. Very quickly she grew disenchanted with the Cayuse, and the mental depression, brought on by her daughter's death led to almost complete abandonment of her missionary work to the Indians. During the several years before her death she found fulfillment as a mother to the Sager children and as a religious counselor to the white settlers who stopped at the mission.

There is little disagreement among contemporary historians that Narcissa Whitman, an attractive, vivacious, talented and complicated woman, was a complete failure as a missionary. Not one Cayuse was ever converted by the Whitmans. Still, this is a harsh portrayal of her, harsher than some readers of Jeffrey's book will think is warranted. Much emphasis is put on her weaknesses, and until the last twenty pages short shrift is given to her acts of kindness. But it corrects many of the overly uncritical portrayals done before. The Methodist missionary at The Dalles, Henry Perkins, who knew Narcissa well, wrote this to her sister after her death: "Mrs. Whitman was not adapted to savage but civilized life. She would have done honor to her sex in a polished & exalted sphere, but never in the low drudgery of Indian toil. The natives esteemed her as proud, haughty, as far above them. No doubt she really seemed so. It was her misfortune, not her fault. She was adapted to a different destiny... She kept in her original sphere to the last. She was not a missionary but a woman, a highly gifted, polished American lady. And such she died."

Candyce Martin is an independent television producer in Washington, D.C. With funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, she has just completed the scripts for a mini-series of television dramas on the Sager family and their adopted parents, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman.

Current and Noteworthy
By Robert C. Carriker, Book Review Editor

There has never been a more significant or comprehensive display of Pacific Northwest Coast Indian ceremonial art than "Chiefly Feasts: the Enduring Kwak’utl Potlatch," a visually stunning presentation of 120 artifacts that was recently shown at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Happily, after several brief venues elsewhere, the show will travel to Seattle. The exhibition catalog for "Chiefly Feasts" is at once a textbook of expert essays to read immediately, a guide book to use later, and an art book to treasure always.

Chiefly Feasts (edited by Aldona Jonaitys, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991; 300 pp. $60 cloth, $25 paper), focuses on the potlatch ceremony, a days-long, opulent banquet held to validate a chief’s status, celebrate a marriage or initiate a dancer. Eighty-six duotone photographs illustrate historical essays by Wayne Suttles and others, but the major graphic impact of the book is provided by 132 color reproductions of masks, headdresses, blankets and other ceremonial regalia used by British Columbia Indians. Outlawed by the Canadian government from 1885 to 1951, the legendary potlatch is fully treated in another new book, Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin’s An Iron Hand Upon the People (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990; 230 pp., $26.95).

Two new travel books for the summer of 1992 deserve recognition. Following the Nez Perce Trail by Cheryl Wilfong (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1991; 384 pp., $35 cloth, $19.95 paper) is a road guide to Chief Joseph’s 1877 retreat across 1,500 miles of Idaho and Montana. Routes are marked for three levels of travelers, “Mainstream,” “Adventurous,” and “Intrepid.” Another worthy road guide is The Columbia River: A Historical Travel Guide by JoAnn Roe (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum, Inc., 1992; 240 pp., $15.95 paper). Roe records every sight and sound of the river that can be seen from 1,214 miles of parallel highway in a pleasing, readable manner.

For those travelers with a botanical bent, two other new books will entice. Botanical Exploration of the Trans-Mississippi West by Susan D. McKelvey (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1991; 1,200 pp., $85), has been out of print since just after its initial publication in 1955. A definitive reference work on the life and field work of dozens of botanical explorers who operated between 1790 and 1850, the reprint has been updated with a new, annotated bibliography. Considerably less grandiose is The Great Northwest Nature Factbook by Ann Saling (Bothell: Alaska Northwest Books, 1991; 198 pp., $9.95 paper), a handy source of fascinating facts about the animals, plants and natural features of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. Saling, who lives in Edmonds, has a knack for defining an item and then elaborating about it in just the right proportion of science and whimsy.

Address all review copies and related communications to: Robert C. Carriker, Department of History, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA 99258.
Announcements

Pacific Northwest History Conference
March 26-28, 1992
Quality Inn and Willamette University
Salem, Oregon
This year's PNW History Conference will meet in Salem to commemorate Willamette University's 150th anniversary. Papers on a variety of topics, including community history, biography and oral history will be complemented with tours and special events. Featured speakers will be: William Kittredge (University of Montana), acclaimed author of Owning It All, and Barbara Allen (University of Notre Dame), author of Homesteading the High Desert.

A major conference presented by

Great River of the West: The Columbia River in Pacific Northwest History
May 1-3, 1992
Red Lion at the Quay
Vancouver, Washington
The Great River of the West Conference will present formal addresses, illustrated lectures, tours and exhibits as part of the bicentennial of Robert Gray's naming of the Columbia River. The conference features such nationally recognized scholars as James P. Renda, Eugene S. Flumm, Patricia Limetick, Richard White, Lillian Schlissel and Richard Etulain speaking on topics ranging from Native American lifeways to nuclear power.

For information on both conferences contact:
William L. Lang
CENTER FOR COLUMBIA RIVER HISTORY
WSU Vancouver
Vancouver, WA 98686
(206) 737-2044

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

Frank S. Matsura

Sailor's Scourge

Ballyhoo?

Whitman County Grit

John Slocum
Life at Death, by Kenneth Ring. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980

The Itinerant West

Frederick Kurt Kirsten
The papers of Frederick Kurt Kirsten, Manuscripts & Archives Division, University of Washington Libraries.
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