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From the Editor  2

History Commentary  3
Washington's history propels it into the future.
By David L. Nicandri

She Dared to Be Different  6
Lizzie Ordway stands out among the original "Mercer girls" as a woman who came to Seattle not for marriage but for independence.
By Donna Bergman

The Dispossessed  10
The Cowlitz tribe continues its 140-year struggle for recognition and restitution.
By Judith W. Irwin

From the Collection  16
Save that timetable—it could be a valuable research tool someday.

Shipwreck & Captivity  17
Instead of a fortune in gold, the members of the Georgiana expedition found only trouble and travail.
By Drew W. Crooks

Anders Beer Wilse  24
This Norwegian photographer's brief sojourn in Seattle left a lasting legacy.
By Carolyn J. Marr

Runways & Reclamation  30
How water and war shaped the destiny of Moses Lake.
By Marilyn F. Seedorf and Rita G. Seedorf

History Album  38
The birthday party.
By Sidney Berland

Correspondence/Additional Reading  45

Columbia Reviews  46
Recent books of interest in Northwest history.
Edited by Robert C. Carriker

FRONT COVER: Lizzie Ordway is best known as one of the original "Mercer girls" and the first woman to serve as Kitsap County's superintendent of schools. See story beginning on page 6. (Courtesy of artist Amy Burnett) BACK COVER: Edward S. Curtis portrait of 'Kitsap Girls', of the Cowlitz tribe, 1912. A related story starts on page 10. (Special Collections, Washington State Historical Society)
HEN YOU PICK UP an issue of Columbia and thumb through its pages, what you probably notice first are the pictures. Without its many and varied illustrations, this magazine would be just another dry scholarly journal. The visual element, more than any other, is what enables Columbia to do what it was meant to do—bring history to life for its readers.

Most of the illustrations you’ll find in the magazine are from materials in the Society’s own Special Collections. And the two people whose job it is to put those materials into the hands of the editors are Elaine Miller and Joy Werlink, our research librarians. They each have their areas of specialization—Joy works mainly with manuscripts, maps and print materials, while Elaine’s focus is on the photographic collections. Between them they have an almost encyclopedic knowledge of our Special Collections holdings. Though they have many other demands on their time, Elaine and Joy patiently comb the indexes and card catalogs and search through the stacks, storage boxes and filing cabinets in the archives on the WSHS Museum’s fourth floor to find likely illustrations for Columbia articles. Without their expertise and dedication, the magazine would be much less than it is.

I’m pleased to introduce in this issue of Columbia Dave Nicandri’s “History Commentary,” excerpted from a talk originally given last fall at the Center for Columbia River History’s Oregon Trail conference. Our cover feature is Donna Bergman’s biographical account of Lizzie Ordway, one of the famous “Mercer girls.” Carolyn Marr’s essay on turn-of-the-century Seattle photographer Anders Wilse appears in conjunction with the Wilse exhibition now on view in Seattle at the Museum of History and Industry.

Two articles this quarter focus on encounters between native inhabitants and Euro-Americans. Judith Irwin’s essay discusses the Lower Cowlitz Indians’ efforts to be recognized by the federal government and receive compensation for the loss of their lands, a struggle that is still ongoing; and the crew of the steamer Georgiana is taken hostage by Haida Indians in Drew Crooks’s account of gold seekers in the Queen Charlotte Islands.

We take up the thread of “Home Front Washington” with Martin and Rita Seedorf’s article on Moses Lake. This eastern Washington community was shaped by forces outside itself, not the least of which was the advent of World War II.

Completing our list of offerings is a story by Sidney Berland about the notorious Harry Tracy, a charismatic though murderous outlaw who led law enforcement officers on the biggest manhunt in Pacific Northwest history. Enjoy.

—Christina Orange, Managing Editor
The Burden and the Promise of Washington's History

The question of Washington's identity has interested me for years. What does it mean to be a Washingtonian? Are we different from Oregonians? Does it matter?

I have long felt that the very name of Washington is a burdensome appellation as it relates to the issue of identity. "Washington" fails to evoke a sense of place within or affinity to the American West, which names like Montana, Idaho, Nevada, and all the other states in the region do because they have an indigenous, or at least pre-Anglo, flavor. Conversely, the name Washington is most frequently associated with the nation's first president and its capital, both eastern in character.

I would argue that Washington's name has separated it from the American West, a region of mythic stature in the minds of the region's residents, the nation as a whole, and around the world. Nominally and in reality we are divorced from several salient components of the Western myth—principally soldier, settler and cowboy. When thinking of Washington one does not imagine Dodge City, Last Chance Gulch, Custer Battlefield or even the Oregon Trail.

Simply put, "Washington" does not resonate with the spirit of western locale. The railroads were keenly aware of this phenomenon, and as part of their early efforts at tourism promotion they rechristened towns all over the Northwest in order to give them a more romantic appeal. A railroad agent quipped in 1900: "The West is purely a railroad enterprise. We started it in our own publicity department."

Toponymically handicapped, Washington suffers from a peculiar sense of historical amnesia. The term "Washingtonian" is rarely used, in fact. Northwesterner, a more reliable geographical determinant, is preferred. Again, the railroads played a major role in this. The term Pacific Northwest was introduced and popularized by the railroads to designate not merely a place but an idea fully revealed in the enlarged term—"the Great Pacific Northwest."

More to the point, compounding the question of place-name is yet another burden Washington carries, one that is almost poignant in these days of the Oregon Trail celebration: Washington was a failure as a pioneer territory, and conspicuously so in comparison to the development and pre-Civil War statehood of Oregon and California. In retrospect this seems evident, but of equal importance is the fact that many of the pioneers themselves carried this sense of failure.

Take the case of Edmund Sylvester, the founder of Olympia. Sylvester came to Oregon via Cape Horn in 1843, arriving before the epic migration commemorated last year. (He remarked, incidentally, about finding an "Oregon people . . . mostly from New England" soon joined by the overland migrants who were "western people, frontiersman mostly.") Interviewed by pioneer historian H. H. Bancroft in 1878, Sylvester wistfully and prophetically noted:

"I have been here for 32 years waiting for something to turn, . . . the growth . . . has been very slow . . . When they start to build that railroad across the Cascade Mountains to tap the interior then this Sound country will go ahead. And here is where the main shipping point is going to be—some place on the Sound. I was thirty years too soon."

Sylvester was right. He was 30 years too soon. Washington's development—population growth, industrial output, the establishment of towns and cities, the founding of institutions, ultimately statehood itself—was directly tied to the completion of the Northern Pacific and Great Northern railroads in the 1880s and '90s, respectively.

Between 1880 and 1890 Washington's population grew by 380 percent, compared to Oregon's 80 percent growth. The cumulative effect of the transcontinental railroads was to end Washington's economic and social isolation, and they wrought significant demographic changes. The wageworker's frontier supplanted the yeoman farmer's, and it was, accordingly, a culturally unsettling period for the old-timers. Single male, foreign, itinerant workers overwhelmed the cultural system of the founders. By adding the seasoning of new or radical political theories to this social stew, one can see the origin of the stereotypical view of "the Soviet of Washington."

Thus, where the icon of Oregon's destiny is the covered...
wagon, Washington's could be the boxcar, with a worker riding the rods, to boot. I believe there is great significance in this real and symbolic disjunction.

The temporal environment does as much to shape the character of a community as it does that of an individual. Oregon's distinctive stamp was emplaced in the new Oregon springs up. Indeed it did—a new Oregon called Washington.

The culminating event in Washington's coming of age occurred on July 17, 1897, when the (ironically-named) steamer Portland arrived in Seattle with news of the Klondike gold discovery. Thereupon, the recently completed Northern Pacific and Great Northern brought thousands of gold-seekers to the state, ended the depression of 1893 and inaugurated the second great wave of railroad building.

The period between 1900 and 1910 was an era of unprecedented growth and prosperity. In that period Oregon's population increased by 66 percent; Montana's by 50 percent. Washington's doubled. As Ray Stannard Baker observed in 1903 while speaking about Seattle, "everything seems to have happened in the last ten years."
By 1910 Seattle had pushed ahead of Portland as the premier city of the Northwest, much as Sylvester had predicted. As Carl Abbott has pointed out, Seattle began to outpace Portland yet again in the 1950s and has continued to do so. In 1967 Dorothy Johansen wrote that Seattle saw itself as a “go-ahead” city, evoking the 19th-century boomer metaphor, whereas Portland seemed more intent on keeping things the same.

As Abbott put it, Portland was “process-centered, cautious, localized. Seattle was project-centered, entrepreneurial and expansive.” He compared the concurrent planning and implementation of the Oregon State Centennial of 1959 with the Seattle World’s Fair of 1962. The latter, significantly titled “Century 21,” was, and remains, the most successful American Seattle World’s Fair of 1962. The latter, significantly titled Needle became the very embodiment of modernity. The fair ever, leaving a legacy of museums and other civic facilities. Conversely, the Oregon Centennial, though it had more time to plan, constantly lowered its vision until it emerged as a “pioneer days” celebration, and left little in its wake. Seattle’s Space Needle became the very embodiment of modernity. The Oregon Centennial became, in Abbott’s words, a country fair writ large.

We are now amidst the era celebrating the 150th anniversary of the great Oregon Trail migrations, a seminal event in the history of Oregon. Washington and Oregon, though sharing much in common, including the Oregon Trail, have widely different views of themselves as historical places. In fact, I would suggest that frequently Washington doesn’t think of itself as having a history.

A columnist for the Bellevue Journal American, on the eve of the Washington Centennial, criticizing the very notion of that observance, wrote,

Our history is boring. Even our principal landmarks (Rainier, St. Helens, etc.) are named after people who had little to do with the place, and would have died before agreeing to spend the rest of their lives here. I’m not suggesting that we forget about our history, but that we be realistic about it. As histories go, it’s pallid stuff . . . . History has its place, but we should strive in our centennial to look at our other needs.

Why should this be?

I think the roots of this circumstance, as intimated earlier, lay in Oregon’s having had a continuous, self-perpetuating culture, established by the pioneering generation in the 1840s and never supplanted.

Washington, by contrast, started as a failure. Much like the tale of the ugly duckling, it matured into not a graceful swan but an economic giant, thanks initially to the integrative links brought by the railroads. Compared to Oregon, Washington’s deprivation and then success created a different political economy, a different political culture, a different state character and a different historical consciousness.

The practical differences between Oregon and Washington take many shapes, some substantive, others merely suggestive. As Carl Abbott noted, Oregonians see government as a barrier against impetuosity, not a vehicle for action. A moralistic fervor dictates an emphasis on public process and careful planning. Debt is a flaw. Oregon is risk-averse. Washington’s politics have always been more rough and tumble, wackier, and maybe even more corrupt than Oregon’s, as even Oregonian Dick Neuberger noted more than 50 years ago. In Washington, government is viewed as a wealth-creating instrument, not a mere enforcer of rules. Characteristically, Washington was the home of the WPPSS fiasco, yet another “go ahead” type of scheme.

Compare Portland’s ill-fated attempts at building a sports stadium to the development of the Kingdome. The latter, clearly constructed in the spirit of “build it and they will come,” was a purely speculative endeavor that successfully attracted the Seahawks and the Mariners.

Even the naming of the region’s two professional basketball teams, which entered the NBA within two years of each other, reflects this pattern. The Portland Trailblazers evoke the legacy of Thomas Jefferson’s Corps of Discovery; the Seattle Supersonics aspired to reflect an innovative if unfulfilled future, the supersonic transport (SST).

In short, the Washington world view is forward-looking, futuristic, “go ahead.” That’s our culture. Washington is always reinventing itself, overturning the establishment, tweaking gentility. (Unlike the Oregonian, the large daily newspapers in the Puget Sound area do not have a gallery of the betrothed each weekend.)

In Oregon a sense of preservation, keeping things the way they are, is a vital element of its culture. One need only compare the respective postures of Oregon and Washington regarding the preservation of the Columbia River Gorge to see how different are the characters of the two states. Or perhaps closer to home, Oregon’s preservation ethic can be seen as a controlling factor in the vitality and comparative importance of the Oregon Historical Society; this versus WSHS, a poor sister for many years. In a sense, looking back is a more conventional thing to do in Oregon.

But on balance, I would rather be in Washington, even if it is sometimes more difficult terrain, culturally speaking, for a historian. In the best contrarian spirit, let me assert that Washington is a better place for not having a great pioneering history. Our epic migrations in the 1880s and ’90s, during the Dust Bowl exodus, and by numerous African Americans, women and Hispanics during World War II have made us a diverse, resilient and opportunistic lot. Observer and critic Ray Stannard Baker noted that “the West was inevitable but the railroad was the instrument of its fate.” Nowhere was this more true than in Washington. So let us salute the rail as much as the trail.

—David L. Nicandri

AUTHOR’S NOTE
I wish to thank former WSHS board member Bob Wilson, Clark County Museum director Gus Norwood, and historian/author Carlos Schwantes for many of the insights contained in this essay.
Lizzie Ordway—Mercer Girl

She Dared to be Different
Elizabeth M. Ordway of Lowell, Massachusetts, stepped off the boat and onto Seattle soil at midnight in May 1864. With her decision to come west Miss Ordway, well-educated, well-traveled, single and of the highest moral standards, surrendered the security of her family and teaching job to join Asa Mercer, a smooth-talking gentleman from the Pacific Northwest. Miss Ordway—Lizzie to her friends—made her decision knowing that, more than likely, it was irreversible and that in the East, at least, the project was widely claimed to be "verging on the immoral." But her courage and curiosity drove her to become one of the original "Mercer girls."

By the late 1850s only one out of ten white adults in the Puget Sound area was female. The newspapers had taken up the cause of an increasingly distraught bachelor population. "We must devise ways and means to secure the much-needed feminine immigration to our shores," wrote Charles Prosch, editor and publisher of Steilacoom's Puget Sound Herald. Later he advertised, "Here is the market to bring your charms to, girls. Don't be backward, but, come right along, all who want good homes in the most beautiful country and the finest climate in the world."

Mr. Prosch's articles and advertisements led nowhere. The problem persisted. Even girls of 14 were either spoken for or married, which left unmarried men with choices many found unacceptable. They could employ the services of the professionals at "Pennell's Madhouse," they could take an Indian wife or they could ignore their natural urges. The latter solution created an explosive atmosphere in Seattle on Saturday nights.

The problem was not only the men's loneliness, but also their need to have a helpmate to carry on the tasks of everyday living. A man could not work 12 to 14 hours a day at back-breaking jobs and then come home to take on cooking, mending, soap-making and the hundreds of other chores required to sustain life in the wilderness. The Donation Land Act generated even more pressure to marry by providing additional acres to married couples.

Responding to the bachelors' need for good wives, Judge Thomas Mercer declared, "In the interests of posterity, the territorial government should appropriate public funds to bring west a party of acceptable young ladies." However, no funds were forthcoming to alleviate the situation.

In time Asa Mercer, the enthusiastic though somewhat naive unmarried younger brother of Judge Mercer, took on the men's cause. He came up with the idea of collecting from individual men, in advance, the price of a woman's passage to Puget Sound from the East. Operating as a private entrepreneur, he presented his sales pitch to the men: "Give me the money and chances are the girl will be grateful and marry you when she gets here." The men were skeptical, but they were also desperate.

Mercer, with his polished manners and fine clothes, went east. Eleven women, mostly from Lowell, Massachusetts, responded to the Puget Sound messenger's complaint—too many men, too few women. Mercer convinced them that life in the West would

Lizzie Ordway and the other ten original "Mercer girls" left New York in March 1864. They traveled by steamer through the Isthmus of Panama and on to San Francisco, making the last leg of their journey to Puget Sound aboard lumber boats. A year later Asa Mercer brought out several hundred more women, depicted here leaving New England bound for Seattle.
Asa Mercer, a private entrepreneur, collected money from bachelors in the Puget Sound area to bring marriageable women out from New England.

provide them with an opportunity to make their fortunes. He told them there was a need for schoolteachers, music teachers and dressmakers. Though he may have mentioned the statistics regarding the male-female ratio, he did not mention the bachelors' need for wives.

Lizzie Ordway listened to the hard-selling Mr. Mercer. Perhaps as he spoke of the abundant fish and game, wild berries, fertile land and the glorious vistas made all the more inviting by the region's mild climate, visions of a Northwest paradise scrolled through her mind's eye.

But certainly another vision—a very real and harsh vision of life for a 35-year-old unmarried woman in the East, particularly in Lowell—came into Lizzie's thoughts. The Civil War was upending customs, canceling hopes and crippling Lowell's economic base. All through the East the war had produced many widows and orphans—over 30,000, it was said. The unattached women often had no means of supporting themselves and in Lowell the situation was complicated by the closing of cotton mills, which normally provided jobs for many women. With the advent of war, the supply of southern cotton to northern mills had stopped. The Northwest, when compared to the East, must have appeared healthy and vigorous to Lizzie.

Clearly, when Asa came to Lowell he was in the right place at the right time. All he needed to do was draw from the surplus of women and escort them out West to com-

B y summer's end the new arrivals had secured teaching positions or other jobs. Most were settled in their own residences throughout the region and some, though not yet married, had found their future husbands. Lizzie traveled to Port Gamble where she had been hired as a teacher. She later taught at the mill settlement of Port Madison. Records from that district show she worked two terms—a total of six months—for a salary of $350. When Josie Pearson, one of the Mercer girls, died, Lizzie took her teaching position in what is now Coupeville on Whidbey Island. From there Lizzie moved to Port Blakely.

The fact that Lizzie, a tiny woman, survived as a teacher in the schools of these rough-and-tumble mill towns surrounded by logging camps says much about her character. She was a strict disciplinarian, always firm in her decisions, consistent in her disciplinary techniques and more than willing to express her opinions. Her students never doubted she was prepared to meet their challenges.

In 1870 Lizzie returned to Seattle to become its first public schoolteacher. Although the town was home to a university even before Mercer left for the East, it did not have a single free common school—only private elementary schools. At a meeting in the spring of 1867 the community passed a tax measure to create a public school. Five hundred dollars purchased a site at Third and Marion streets where by September 1870 Lizzie Ordway stood greeting the first students as they entered the new two-story building.

Eight years after assuming the Seattle teaching position, Lizzie resigned and returned to Kitsap County where she again taught at Port Madison. By now it was clear to all who knew her that Miss Ordway was not the least interested in cooking, cleaning or fussing with matters of dress. Domesticity was immaterial. For instance, during her 38-week term at Port Madison for a salary of $50 per month, she took most of her meals at the Port Madison Hotel because, as she admitted, she was a terrible cook.
Often when parents of Lizzie’s students stopped by to visit they came toting nourishing meals. Once, during a heavy snow, one mother was so worried that Lizzie wouldn’t be able to get out for a good breakfast that she sent her son over with something to eat.

Lizzie’s inattention to food was matched by her disinterest in clothes. Though handsome and poised, she often wore clothes dreadfully out of style, even to the point of appearing ridiculous. In the summer she amused onlookers by constantly wearing her favorite hat—even in the classroom. A sailor-style hat with two long ribbons streaming down the back, it bobbed up and down as she bounded around the classroom.

While domestic matters were of little consequence to Lizzie, all aspects of teaching fascinated her. Her concern for teaching improvements led to her appointment as superintendent of the Kitsap County schools, a job for which she received an additional $58 a year and which she carried out in addition to her Port Madison teaching duties.

As superintendent she initiated in Washington the practice of formally observing teachers and following the observations with written evaluations. Her review of a Miss Lombard reads as follows: “She is making improvements in the right direction—toning down a lawless element with a measure of success. This teacher proves to be a scholar abundantly qualified to be a teacher.”

When things were not right in a classroom Lizzie never hesitated to call the problem to the attention of the offending teacher. On the evaluation of one such luckless individual she wrote, “He seems to have a reprehensible habit of keeping about a half a line ahead of the pupils in reading and reciting, so that no pupil feels obliged to study... This I never encountered before and devoutly hope I never shall again.”

Lizzie believed that, along with good teaching, an orderly classroom encouraged learning. She said students could not concentrate in a disorderly room. Therefore, failing to keep order was a “heinous crime.” While evaluating a Port Madison teacher Lizzie noted, “His inability or negligence in the matter of order in the schoolroom should disqualify him. Order is heaven’s first law, and why it should be ignored in the management of classroom affairs seems a mystery.”

Lizzie continued as county school superintendent for the next eight years. During that time she not only helped established teachers improve their skills but also encouraged young people to become teachers. While her life was dedicated to teaching, education was not her only interest. Politics, in particular the woman suffrage movement, also intrigued her.

When Susan B. Anthony came to Seattle to speak in 1871 Lizzie was very impressed with her. Lizzie, along with Mrs. Henry Yesler, became prominent in the Female Suffrage Society that formed soon after Anthony’s lecture. For a time Lizzie even acted as Anthony’s secretary, traveling with her throughout Washington Territory.

Unlike the other Mercer girls, Lizzie never married. Several male historians pay undue attention to her remaining “permanently a spinster.” Bill Speidel, in Sons of the Profits, suggests that she was unattractive. A photograph of Lizzie Ordway shows a striking woman “with a gentle expression. Thus, Speidel’s judgment must be questioned. Lizzie’s looks were not the reason for her remaining single. It seems she simply preferred to direct her devotion to young people rather than a husband. Married women were not allowed to teach; Lizzie Ordway loved teaching. And in the newly settled region around Puget Sound, she gave herself permission to be different.

A resident of Seattle, Donna Bergman is a retired teacher and an award-winning author of short stories and children’s books.
The Cowlitz Indians were originally considered to be “a large and powerful Salishan tribe.” Because they were an interior tribe (that is, their territory did not open onto a large body of water), they were more cohesive than other Salish groups on the coast and Columbia River, said anthropologist Verne Ray, who has intensively studied the tribe. Conscious of social stratification, they valued cooperation and had a desire for smooth relations with neighbors. They have been called the blue bloods of southwest Washington, yet they were also known as warlike. One of the earliest accounts describes their swoop downriver to attack a Chinookan village at the mouth of the Cowlitz. Another account describes the unsuccessful effort of war chief Wieno and others to take slaves from a village on Vancouver Island.

Today, though the Cowlitz are scattered, many still remain. Relatively few actually live near the Cowlitz River (perhaps 30 or so families). Most of the 1,400 who belong to the tribe live within the radius of a two-hour drive, a recent poll shows. The tribe’s business office, presently in Longview, keeps track of the network of Cowlitz individuals and families living, for the most part, in western Washington. Biennial meetings in June and November on Cowlitz Prairie, the tribal heartland, bring them together to renew themselves as Cowlitz as well as to carry on the important business of fighting for their fishing rights, federal recognition and for their own reservation and a Cowlitz tribal center.

Who, then, are the Cowlitz Indians? Why has the Cowlitz tribe not been federally recognized? Who were the Cowlitz people in the 1800s? How did they live? What resources of the Cowlitz Corridor did they utilize? How have they changed under the impact of explorers, settlers, war, roads, railroads and logging?

Although ethnically unified as a tribal unit by geography, intermarriage and customs, the Cowlitz people are divided into two main groups—the Taidnapam, or Upper Cowlitz, and the Lower Cowlitz. Speaking Salishan like many of their neighbors in the 1800s, the more populous Lower Cowlitz occupied 30 villages dotting the Cowlitz River from present-day Mossyrock southward to within a mile or two of the Columbia River.

Gradually, through intermarriage, the Upper Cowlitz/Taidnapam adopted the Sahaptan language from plateau peoples east of the Cascades. Known for their hunting prowess, the Taidnapam occupied villages east of Mossyrock, camping, as weather permitted, at higher elevations of the Cascade Crest and then a few miles east of the divide on the Tieton River. In addition, the Taidnapam people used trails from the Cascade Crest and Mount Adams to connect with relatives who lived along the Lewis River.

The name Cowlitz means “seeker” in a spiritual sense, according to some Cowlitz living today. Place Names of Washington also spells the name as “Tawallitch,” which meant “capturing the medicine spirit,” referring to the Cowlitz practice of sending their youths to the river’s prairies to seek their tomanawas, or spirit power.

The earliest historical accounts of the Lower Cowlitz, whose villages began a short distance up the Cowlitz River from the Chinookan villages on the Columbia River, do not begin with Lewis and Clark, but rather with the Astorians of the Pacific Fur Company, who arrived in 1811. One of their first excursions up the Columbia River from Fort Astoria brought them to the 150-foot-high Mount Coffin, the Chinook burial rock studded with canoes outfitted with funeral offerings of clothing and baskets of food. As Alexander
Henry Cheholtz (far right), son of Chief Cheholtz, with family and friends, c. 1884. Chief Cheholtz was among the Cowlitz people who took advantage of the Indian Homestead Act to claim land in the Cowlitz Corridor.

McKay, Ovid Montigny and three Indian paddlers headed up the Cowlitz River, they were confronted with 20 canoes of Cowlitz Indians intent on war with the village of Chinookan Skilloots at the mouth of the river. The battle was averted by negotiations.

The second engagement between the Cowlitz and non-Indians took place after the North West Company, which had bought out the Pacific Fur Company in 1813, sent trappers and hunters, including Iroquois Indians, up the Cowlitz River. Problems began in 1818 after the Iroquois forced themselves on Cowlitz women. In the ensuing conflict one Iroquois died and two others were wounded. Not realizing that his men were the aggressors, James Keith, the chief trader, sent Peter Skene Ogden to punish the Cowlitz.

Only with some persuasion did Ogden convince his Cowlitz guide, Chief How How, to lead him to the right village. Once there, the Iroquois, acting against orders, massacred 13 men, women and children, scalping three before they could be stopped. The incident temporarily halted the company’s hunting and trapping on the Cowlitz River.

SIMON PLAMONDON, a young French Canadian whose boyhood friends had been Indians, was working for the North West Company. He traveled up the Cowlitz River and was captured by the influential Chief Schanewa, whose village was on Cowlitz Prairie. Plamondon married the chief’s daughter Veronica, who gave birth to four children. It is from this family that many Cowlitz today trace their lineage.

This opening into Cowlitz country provided the Hudson’s Bay Company, once merged with the North West Company, an opportunity to trade with Chief Schanewa, who controlled fur traffic through the Cowlitz Corridor.

Something of the Cowlitz’s economic and political organization before the tragic epidemic can be learned from the life of Chief Schanewa, reputed to be one of the most powerful chiefs in the lower Columbia District. Six feet tall and an excellent hunter, the chief had seven wives through whom he made alliances with many other villages and tribes. Evidence indicates that he possessed exemplary portions of determination, persuasiveness, courage and benevolence—characteristics expected in headmen whose influence among peers stemmed from good judgment more than from power.

Pacific Northwest Indians grouped themselves more by family networks and villages than by tribe. Chief Schanewa’s strategically placed village at the big bend in the Cowlitz River made it possible for him to become a “man of authority among the Chehalis,
Simon Plamondon's life spanned 1800 to 1900. He was the local Indian agent for the Cowlitz during the Indian Wars. Some of his many descendants, bearing Cowlitz blood, have served in the 20th century as tribal leaders.

Chinook, Multnomah, White River, Lummi, Skagit, Tulalip and Quinault, among others,” noted Del McBride, a Schanewa descendant and curator emeritus of the State Capital Museum.

The epidemic of 1829-30, called the “gray” or “intermittent” fever and thought to be a virulent Asian flu, was brought in by the American ship Owyhee under Captain John Domines. The traditional native treatment for illnesses—the sweat bath followed by a plunge into a cold stream—doomed most Indians. Hudson’s Bay Company Governor George Simpson said three-fourths of those in the Fort Vancouver vicinity died. Dr. John McLoughlin of the HBC thought the number to be more like seven-eighths after several summers of the fever’s recurrence. Many of the Cowlitz fled toward the coast, according to Simon Plamondon, “abandoning the dead and dying to the birds and beasts of prey.” Villages had become a harrowing sight. Joseph Meck estimated that 500 Indians remained on the Cowlitz River. These were “warlike, but friendly to whites,” he said.

In 1832-33 the HBC laid out the Nisqually Farm, where the Cowlitz came to trade. The company gave Simon Plamondon permission to develop a farm on Cowlitz Prairie and in 1838 initiated a company farm nearby, which employed many Cowlitz Indians in production and river transportation. The inauguration of the Catholic Mission was in small part stimulated by the Cowlitz people’s interest. Although soon disillusioned, Father Blanchet was at first impressed by these “poor people [who] showed him a great desire to be enlightened.”

Estimates of the Cowlitz people’s character in these years varied with the point of view. Governor Simpson saw them as inoffensive and industrious agricultural workers. The Catholic priests condemned them for laziness and unwillingness to plant their own potatoes as well as for their superstitions and reluctance to abandon traditional beliefs. American navy lieutenant Charles Wilkes admired their “free and easy carriage on horseback” and their air of freedom, betokened by

“[a] few ribbons and cock’s feathers that . . . gave them a flaunting kind of air, . . . a species of self-esteem that was not unpleasing, and betokened independence and want of care, in good keeping with their mode of life.

Ethnographic and anthropological studies on the Cowlitz in the 1800s are in short supply. Beyond the casual accounts of travelers and observers, John Dunn’s history, published in 1844, offers some observations of their habits and customs. Usually reliable in his studies of Northwest tribes, pioneer ethnographer George Gibbs limited his 1855 ethnographic report on the

To transport their dead to the spirit world, the Cowlitz people placed decorated burial canoes or boxes on platforms or in trees. The Cowlitz bored holes in items added for the deceased spirit to make them useless to the living.
Cowlitz to very misleading second- and third-hand opinions.

In this century Edward Curtis interviewed Ka'ktsama' (Esther Millit), who provided useful detail about Cowlitz villages on the lower Cowlitz River, while Melville Jacobs and Thelma Adamson (1934) separately recorded Cowlitz myths. Jacobs also included detailed information from William Yoke and others on how the Upper Cowlitz utilized their river habitat—fishing, hunting, root digging and berrying.

Trading or visiting, both the Lower and Upper Cowlitz used the rivers and trails to reach other tribes. Trade goods included slaves, horses, dried camas and wapato roots, dried berries and meats, hides and furs, including the highly valued mountain goat hair that was woven into blankets, and wool dog hair used for the same purpose. Also prized were the Cowlitz women's water-tight baskets, thought by some specialists to be the most “perfect imbricated baskets with more stitches in the same space and also more beautiful designs” than baskets anywhere else. Among the best known basket-makers, Mary Kiona, daughter of William Yoke, reportedly lived to be well over 100 years old, from about 1855 to 1970. A niece of Chief Schanewa, she “was like an empress. She knew who she was” and knew the importance of her work, said author Martha Hardy.

In addition to trading, the Cowlitz avidly exchanged goods through games such as bone gambling, horse racing and “fairs or expositions,” as Thomas Nelson Strong described their great competitive gatherings. The Cowlitz would race horses anywhere, said old-timer Melvin Core. Gambling games were an important and ancient social institution, explained Schanewa descendant Tanna Beebe. Gambling was a trial of superiority as well as an investment opportunity. Fairs and races were held near present-day Longview as well as on Cowlitz Prairie.

An important means of transportation was their blunt-nosed canoe, designed to go over rapids. The Cowlitz were experts in felling the red cedar with fire and stone tools, and in shaping the dugout to about a three-quarter-inch thickness. They then steamed it to widen the sides. These dugouts were used to traverse the dangerous and often tree-blocked Cowlitz River, which in its old bed was much faster and deeper than now. Early settler Ezra Meeker described how easily Cowlitz boatmen skimmed the water “with astonishing rapidity.”

Canoes or rectangular boxes set on platforms or into trees were also transport for the dead into the afterworld. In 1847 artist Paul Kane sketched several burial canoes with the deceased’s valuables therein: shell money, coins, beads, rings, colorful cloth strips, blankets, baskets, kettles, horn bowls and spoons, bows and arrows, paddles, spears and horn picks. Such was the equipment souls would need on their journey to the spirit world.

Before leaving Chief Kiscox’s hospitable village on Cowlitz Prairie, Kane painted Caw-wacham holding her infant in its head-flattening skirt, or cradle board. He was well aware that her reluctance to sit for him arose from the Cowlitz belief that such a portrait stole the soul. When he returned to the village two and a half months later and mentioned her name, no one would speak to him. He soon came to understand that she had died and in pronouncing her name he had been disrespectful and broken a taboo. He also knew that her relatives might seek vengeance, believing him to be the cause of her death. By canoe, he traveled all night toward Fort Vancouver.

In search of tomanawas, or spirit power, Cowlitz youths reaching adolescence went on fasting quests...
the tomanawas ceremony, said James Swan, was religious. Participants sought to avert evil and assure a supply of food for ongoing life. Through all their senses they also “tuned in” for physical and spiritual survival.

In winter the Cowlitz lived near the fishing streams in well-built cedar plank longhouses with gabled roofs. Five to fifteen families shared a longhouse and the warmth of the small fires that glowed at intervals near bunk-style beds spread with furs along the walls. Mat or board partitions separated family units. The windowless lodges had roof slots that allowed smoke to escape.

Story-telling and ceremonials occupied their winter evenings. Days were spent carving, making baskets and mats, dressing skins, sewing clothing and weaving blankets.

In the springtime families moved to the prairies to dig camas bulbs and wapato, taken from lakes and ponds, which provided their “flour” and “potatoes.” As the different berries ripened Cowlitz families trekked toward the mountains. While men hunted small and large game, women picked and dried blackberries, blueberries and huckleberries. Camping was equally a social institution and a food-gathering expedition. Lower Cowlitz and Taidnapam families met in the mountains and camped in a circle with relatives and friends from other tribes until fall fish runs called them back to set fish traps and weirs in the streams below.

The blunt bow of the Cowlitz river canoe permitted boatmen to maneuver in shallow water or over gravel bars.

Upon returning to their homes the Cowlitz people found that their possessions had been destroyed.

A more Euro-American families arrived looking for productive land, the settlers asked Congress to authorize a territorial government. During the treaty session with territorial governor Isaac Stevens in 1855, the Cowlitz declined to sign away their rights to their village sites, prairies, fishing places and burial grounds, only to be shunted over to the inhospitable Quinault reservation on the coast. The Cowlitz remained on their land but had no reservation of their own.

When war erupted in 1855 between the Indians and the whites, Chief Atwin Stockam, son of Chief Schanewa, was given to understand that the Cowlitz tribe would be given a reservation if the restive Cowlitz warriors remained peaceful. So, instead of joining the militant Yakimas and Klickitats, 300 Cowlitz people were held in a detention camp on the Cowlitz Prairie under Indian agent Simon Plamondon’s care. Their men were conscripted into building blockhouses and roads, transporting supplies and scouting, all of which they did with honor.

Despite the settlers’ fears, there was not a single depredation or death in the Cowlitz Corridor due to the war. If these Cowlitz—excellent horsemen and riflemen, “intimately acquainted with all the roads, trails and fastnesses of the country”—had become militant, they could have closed the Cowlitz Corridor. This passage between the Coast Range and the Cascades proved to be the only viable supply and information route connecting military headquarters at Olympia and Fort Steilacoom with troops up the Columbia in eastern Washington.

After the fighting was over the roads, bridges and ferries built during the war to expedite communication and supply transportation through the corridor began to replace Cowlitz boatmen. Upon returning to their homes the Cowlitz people found that their possessions had been destroyed. Some were reduced to trading with the “worst possible class of whites that can infest any country,” commented historians Ruby and Brown. The promise made to Chief Atwin Stockam of a Cowlitz reservation in return for cooperation was apparently forgotten.

Settlers assumed that at the war’s end all Indians lost their rights, particularly title to the land. One settler wrote:

As the successful culmination of the Indian Wars ... the question of land titles was settled in this area and the government was recognized as legally owning the land.

Actually, the Cowlitz had not lost their rights to the land, nor had they treated their land away or been subdue. After the war they returned to feeding themselves and making a living. Families once again returned to the mountains to hunt, pick berries and socialize with relatives and friends before winter.

In the decades following the war the Cowlitz were pressured by settlers to be monogamous in their marriages; to forego using sweat houses and flattening their newborns’ heads; and to quit relying on medicine men, going on spirit quests, holding pow-wows and speaking their own language. Some married and moved to reservations: Quinault, Steilacoom, Skokomish, Snohomish and Warm Springs, among others. Many, however, remained in Cowlitz country. They were described in 1870 by the Secretary of Interior as “the most thrifty and industrious” of the tribes he reported on. Yet, that very success was the reason given by the government to deny them recognition and compensation for lands taken.

In the early 1870s, about the time the railroad was being completed through Cowlitz Corridor, many Cowlitz converted to the Indian Shaker church as a way to retain Indian values.
This 1916 photo is believed to be of Cowlitz basket-maker Mary Kiona's brother and sister-in-law, possibly with some of Kiona's basketry, for which she was famous.

When the Indian Homestead Act passed in 1884 a number of Upper and Lower Cowlitz took out papers for homesteads—Willie Youckton, John Kimpus, Katie Tillikish, Chief Cheholtz and John Ike Kinswa, for example. Many found jobs: the women doing housecleaning and laundry, the men working on farms and log drives, and in the woods and sawmills. Most continued using traditional skills—making baskets, picking berries, hunting, trapping and fishing.

When the hop fields opened near Olequa, whole families worked and played in that country-fair atmosphere on the Cowlitz River. As in the past, they intermarried with members of other tribes and with whites. Around the turn of the century special incentives of land and tribal membership on the Yakima reservation enticed many Cowlitz to join kin and friends there.

Those who remained in Cowlitz country maintained tribal ties under their aging Chief Atwin Stockam. Before he died in 1912 at more than 100 years of age, he looked across Cowlitz Prairie and boomed out his frustration to a settler friend:

Long ago all this land belonged to Indians—salmon in the chuck [river], mowich [deer] and moolok [elk] in the hills. Then white men come. Atwin their friend. Now all this land belong to white man.

The tribe reorganized in 1912 and selected a chairman, instead of a chief, to head an elected tribal council. At that time they began patiently and systematically seeking compensation and recognition.

They collected money and sent Frank Iyall to Washington, D.C. to lobby for them. When their bill finally passed both houses of Congress in 1928, it was vetoed by President Coolidge because they had become successful farmers and formed no distinct class as they lived among the non-Indians, were voting citizens and were “industrious, self-supporting and reasonably intelligent.” It was as if the officials thought the Cowlitz were asking for a handout instead of the right to be justly acknowledged as an enduring tribal entity and compensated for lands taken.

They have persisted in their efforts by helping to organize the Small Tribes of Western Washington. After World War II they presented a land compensation claim. The Indian Claims Commission offered a sum that was a fraction of the land’s worth: $1,550,000 for 1,790,000 acres, or about 90 cents an acre. Tribal members knew the timberland alone was worth about $30,000 an acre. Despite their anger and frustration the majority agreed to accept the settlement, which earns interest until a plan for distribution and use of the award can be developed.

Today the 1,400 enrolled members of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe continue Indian observances related to child-rearing, religion and food, especially salmon. Many still fish and hunt. Some follow Indian practices in rituals, weddings and burials. They maintain kinship networks and meet semiannually on Cowlitz Prairie to learn more about their own heritage and decide how to promote their case for acknowledgment before the federal government.

As a tribe they look forward to owning a place on which to build their own tribal center and become more visible as descendants of the original people of the Cowlitz River.

Once recognized, the Cowlitz tribe, now largely absorbed in trying to meet ever-shifting federal acknowledgment guidelines, can turn its energies to the no-less-arduous business of retrieving their culture and displaying their pride in being what they are—a modern Indian tribe successfully integrated with the white culture but still very Cowlitz Indian in heart and tribal life. When the Cowlitz Indians gain that federal recognition, southwest Washington will regain a part of its heritage.

Judith W. Irwin, a retired English teacher at Lower Columbia College, is completing a book on the Cowlitz Indians. This essay was originally commissioned by the Cowlitz County Historical Society for part of an exhibit on the Cowlitz Corridor.
Timetables are a valuable research resource in the Society's Special Collections. They document the growth, flowering and decline of various modes of transportation—ocean-going ships, river and lake steamers, ferries, railroads, street railways, stages, bus lines and airlines. They reflect popular advertising styles of every period, and they certainly show the competition between the various companies and modes.

Timetables are one method by which researchers can study changes in routing, improvement or deterioration in service, and the techniques used to lure passenger traffic. They are among the most ephemeral of items because they were issued and were valid for a specific length of time after which they were to be discarded. Why save a timetable after it was outdated? And that is why older timetables are so difficult to find. The Society is interested in adding to its collection so that these useful tools will be saved for future generations of researchers.
Great Britain and the United States signed a treaty in 1846 that divided the Oregon Country between them at the 49th parallel of latitude. Gold was discovered on the Queen Charlotte Islands, part of the region assigned to Great Britain, less than five years later; the resulting excitement affected both sides of the new international boundary. In the American settlement of Olympia, for example, a prospecting party was organized and sent north to the Queen Charlottes on the ship Georgiana. This expedition of 1851-52 led not to gold, but to shipwreck and captivity.

On September 18, 1851, the 25-ton sloop Georgiana arrived at Olympia from the Hudson’s Bay Company’s post of Fort Victoria on Vancouver Island. With the ship came information that shook the community. A letter sent by Alonzo M. Poe of Olympia to the Oregon Spectator of Oregon City and printed October 14, 1851, told the story:

Dear Sir: By the arrival this morning of the sloop “Geo. Anna” [Georgiana], Captain Rowland, from Vancouver’s Island, we have very interesting news from the Gold Mines on Queen Charlotte’s Island. Captain Rowland brings some beautiful specimens of virgin gold and gold-bearing quartz, the latter being of the richest quality that I ever saw. According to the accounts of Capt. Roulald, who is a gentleman of veracity and experience, the mines on Queen Charlotte’s Island are equal if not superior to any thing of the kind yet discovered. The gold is found on the surface of the ground near the beach, and is dug by the natives in great quantities, without any thing like a pick or shovel—having nothing but such tools as they can make themselves—they manage to get from 2 to 8 ounces per day to the hand. They are very friendly to the whites, and are anxious to have them come and trade and dig with them. Queen Charlotte’s Island can be reached from here with ordinary weather in about seven days.

This was sensational news during an era of important gold discoveries such as the one in California. The gold and quartz brought by Captain Rowland to Olympia originated at Englefield Bay on the west coast of Moresby Island, the southern major island of the Queen Charlottes. The specific locality of the metallic find came to be called both “Mitchell Harbor” after Captain William Mitchell of the Hudson’s Bay Company, and, more descriptively, “Gold Harbor.”

The crewmembers of the Georgiana were not the first Euro-Americans to know of gold from the Queen Charlottes. Specimens from there appeared as early as August 1850 at Fort Victoria. The enterprising Hudson's Bay Company responded with a series of expeditions to the archipelago starting that same year. In 1851 HBC prospectors found an 80-foot-long gold-bearing quartz vein about seven inches wide at Gold Harbor.

For a short time during the autumn of 1851 the Georgiana participated in regional Puget Sound trade with Fort Victoria. However, gold excitement remained high in Olympia, and a prospecting party was formed there. Around November 3 a group of 27 men sailed on the Georgiana from Olympia for the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Numbered among the ship’s crew were Captain William Rowland, Mate Duncan McEwen, Sailors Benjamin and Richard Gibbs, and Cook Tamaree (who was a Hawaiian). Passengers consisted of Isaac M. Browne, Ignatius Colvin, Jesse Ferguson, Sidney S. Ford, Jr., Solomon S. Gideon, Charles Hendricks, Samuel D. Howe, James K. Hurd, Ambrose Jewell, James McAllister, B. F. McDonald, William Mahard, George Moore, George A. Paige, John Remley, Asher Sargent, E. Nelson Sargent, Seidner, Daniel Show, John Thornton, Samuel H. Williams, and Charles E. Weed. Many of these individuals were prominent members of the American frontier society then forming in northern Oregon Territory.

Years later Weed reminisced about the expedition’s beginnings in an unpublished manuscript:
We provisioned the vessel with such provisions as we could muster about here, using ships stores, & one thing & another that we got together, potatoes &c that we bought of the Indians. We started out with such tools as we could find expecting to make a fortune.

A chance encounter in the course of the Georgiana's trip to the Queen Charlotte Islands later had great significance for the fate of its party. Stormy weather forced the sloop to anchor at Neah Bay for several days. While there, on November 9, she met the American schooner Damariscove, which was trading with the Indians for oil. The schooner's captain, Lafayette Balch had established Port Steilacoom in southern Puget Sound in 1851. Captain Balch boarded the Georgiana and learned of the gold discovery. He declared his intentions of following the sloop northward after a rendezvous with the brig George Emery, another ship that he owned.

The meeting between Captain Balch's two vessels soon took place at Neah Bay. Afterwards Balch headed north to the gold fields aboard the Damariscove as promised. The George Emery continued on her way to southern Puget Sound.

Among the passengers aboard the George Emery was presidential appointee Simpson P. Moses, United States Collector of Customs for the newly created Puget Sound District, traveling with his family to the district's port of entry at Olympia. Moses subsequently became deeply involved in the Georgiana affair.

Meanwhile, as the Georgiana approached the Queen Charlotte Islands, winds drove her to the eastern coastline of the archipelago. Captain Rowland decided to sail the schooner westward to Gold Harbor through Skidegate Channel, a narrow waterway between Moresby and Graham Islands.

On November 18, the Georgiana arrived at Cumshewa (Kom-she-wah) Inlet, situated south of Skidegate...
At 8 A.M., cut away the mast—the ship bilged and filled immediately.

Channel. Captain Rowland, against the advice of an Indian pilot and chief named John, anchored offshore in a depth of two and a half fathoms. The weather was threatening.

George Moore, a passenger aboard the sloop, recorded in his log the disaster that followed:

Nov. 18. . . . heavy hail storms—midnight gale increasing with heavy hail storms.

19th—1st hour 30 min. A.M.—the vessel broke adrift—the crew exerted themselves to the utmost to try and get sail on the vessel, but of no avail; everything blowing away as fast as it was set; the ship striking heavily at the same time; the well carefully attended all the time, but making no water; the sea making a complete break over her, and finding it impossible to do anything, we went below, to save ourselves from exposure. The greatest order and coolness was observed by all on board, and I can safely say I did not hear a murmur throughout the trying occasion, but all seemed determined to do their duty like men. The ship continued to strike heavily throughout the night, as she beat upon the rocks, the sea breaking over her, and making it very dangerous to be on deck. At day break, went on deck, and got Tamarac [Tamarac], one of the crew, to take a rope on shore—the Indians beginning to collect on the beach. At 8 A.M., cut away the mast—the ship bilged and filled immediately. The captain and part of the passengers went on shore by the wreck of the mast, being followed by others. At 10 A.M., the vessel drifted along the rocks a short distance, and seeing all hopes of saving the vessel gone, I advised the remainder of the passengers and crew to get on shore immediately, which they commenced to do. At noon, all had landed.

Numerous Haida Indians, the native inhabitants of the Queen Charlotte Islands, gathered on shore near the ship-wrecked Georgiana. Since the late 18th century the Haidas had dealt with Euro-American ships and traders. On that day in 1851 they quickly recognized their own strength as opposed to the vulnerability of the gold prospectors. In a narrative published in the May 16, 1868, issue of Olympia’s Washington Standard, Charles E. Weed described the encounter between the Indians and the whites:

Nearly abreast of where she [Georgiana] was grounded was another [Haida] camp, and on the beach Indians were assembling from all quarters. . . . At first they received us with great show of friendship, and several of us remarked they were not only the best looking but the best Indians we had ever met, but we soon learned that those demonstrations of kindness were but affected to induce all our party to abandon the wreck, which they indicated to us unmistakably was now their plunder. As the wind was very fresh, the bay rough and the surf very heavy, it so happened that but few of the people from John [who earlier served as the Georgiana pilot] and Charley’s band (our companions on the sloop of the night previous) could reach the wreck, and it was already evident there was a jealousy about their first having made our acquaintance. Nor had we failed to improve the opportunity to convince the Indians named that we were friendly and any kind offices to us would be remunerated. At one time we found ourselves in an improvised line of battle, expecting momentarily an attack. Such, however, was not the plan, for already a contention had started between the two camps as to the distribution of the plunder. . . . We gave our sympathy to John’s party, and by assuring them that if good care was taken of us, and we were carried over to Fort Simpson [a mainland post of the Hudson’s Bay Company], a large ransom would be paid, a compromise was effected by which the beach party received the sloop and we became the prisoners of John’s camp.

The scene now changed. The Indians flocked aboard the ill-fated sloop, stripping her completely. . . . On the shore we were deprived of our blankets and extra clothing. They would attempt to take off our close-fitting garments.
since the men's blankets and extra clothing were taken by the Haida after the shipwreck. However, the Indians were persuaded to return a blanket for the use of two elderly captives, Asher Sargent and Captain Rowland.

As captives the men of the Georgiana were fearful. Haida threats and actions harassed them and emphasized the precariousness of their position. During this period the Americans collected water and firewood for the house where they stayed. Charles Weed in his published narrative commented on the situation:

*We could bear it for a limited time, humiliating as was the idea of being their hewers of wood and drawers of water, but there was no certainty as to our future and we dreaded lest we might be distributed amongst them, rendering our release so much more difficult. . . . It was a hard winter, on that cold, inhospitable Island, and there was but little to cheer us in that 54 days of captivity.*

A cultural chasm separated the Haida captors and American captives. Accounts by the latter often showed the strong ethnic prejudices common in the 19th century. Still, on occasion a grudging admiration of the rich native culture would surface. In his narrative Charles Weed favorably discussed Haida matting, canoes, woodworking and other crafts. He was particularly intrigued with their bentwood boxes:

*"The most curious and remarkable of their labor is the construction of a square wooden box including top and bottom being but three pieces." These storage containers were produced by cutting, steam-bending, and pegging or sewing cedar wood.*

Gold hunting was impossible for the men of the Georgiana. Charles Weed in his unpublished reminiscence stated:

*We never saw any gold at all, not a color; we never tried to find any. We were close prisoners all the time. It was mid winter & we were obliged to house up for protection. We relied entirely on the Indians for something to eat, & had no opportunity to prospect.*

Survival and rescue became the top priorities of the captives. The would-be gold prospectors did not wait passively for deliverance, but sent notes containing pleas for help with Haida parties on November 25 and December 6, 1851, to Gold Harbor and southwards, respectively.

In addition, a group of captives and Haidas left the village on December 6 for the Hudson's Bay Company station of Fort Simpson on the mainland. One of the Americans, Samuel D. Howe, later wrote about this trip in a statement printed in the May 23, 1863, issue of the Washington Standard:

*After the lapse of eighteen days and after much evasion the Indians consented to send a canoe with one of our number and three of the crew to [Fort] Simpson to negotiate for our release. I was selected for the mission, and authorized to make all necessary terms and conditions with Capt. McEwen [Chief Trader William H. McNeill, Sr.], then in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company's post (Fort Simpson). Accompanied by Capt. McEwen, late first mate of the sloop, Ben Gibbs a sailor, Tamaree [Tamaree] the Kanaka [Hawaiian] cook, and a crew of seven Hydah [sic] Indians, [we] set out for that post and safely reached it after a voyage of five days in the dead of winter and without blankets. The arrival of such a party, at such a time, in such condition, created quite an excitement among both whites and natives.*

*We were at once furnished something to eat and a change of clothing, and felt that our suffering companions were soon to be relieved, but in this we were sadly disappointed.*

Chief Trader McNeill, of American origin, refused the Georgiana delegation's request for the immediate launching of a rescue expedition. His reasons for delay probably included the hazards of winter canoe travel, the limited number of HBC employees at Fort Simpson, and an attempt to assure safe passage for the remaining crew.
"I had difficulty in protecting my vessel and avoiding a conflict with the Indians."

Simpson, and the reluctance of Tsimshian Indians, who lived near the post, to enter the Haida homeland. The captives were also angered by McNeill's treatment of them. The fort's commander required the men to do night guard duty as payment for food and blankets. However, Howe noted in his published statement that "With the exception of Capt. McNeil [sic], all the servants and employees of the company treated us with great kindness and attention...." Help for the remaining captives would have to come from another source.

As he had earlier promised aboard the Georgiana at Neah Bay, Captain Lafayette Balch brought the Damariscove to Gold Harbor in late November 1851. His plans for prospecting there were foiled by Haida opposition, which prevented the Americans from landing. Furthermore, the absence of the Georgiana surprised Balch. This mystery was soon explained, however, with the delivery by native emissaries of the captives' November 25 note.

The written request for assistance moved Captain Balch, but he was unable to directly respond. The American sea captain commented upon his situation and actions in a December 11, 1851, letter to Collector of Customs Simpson P. Moses:

"During my stay at Gold Harbor, which is on the west side of the island, I had great difficulty in protecting my vessel and avoiding a conflict with the Haidas, without being able to negotiate a trade for the unfortunate sufferers, they at the time being on the opposite side of the island, about three days' journey. As you are well aware, I had not a sufficient number of persons on board to deal with them successfully; and having had my vessel previously injured in her sails and rigging, and several attempts having been made to plunder us, I gladly availed myself of a favorable wind and left the inhospitable coast, sincerely hoping that I might not again be placed in a similar condition, and exceedingly regretting that necessity compelled me to leave my fellow-citizens in such a deplorable condition, without having the power to assist them.

The Damariscove departed from Gold Harbor on December 1 and headed back to Puget Sound. Nine days later the schooner reached Port Steilacoom where Balch reported the captivity of the Georgiana party to the Collector of Customs in Olympia and the commander of the United States Army post at nearby Fort Steilacoom. Both authorities, Moses and Captain Bennett H. Hill, quickly involved themselves in the affair.

In mid December 1851 Chief Factor John Work, a veteran Hudson's Bay Company officer, happened to be visiting Fort Nisqually. Captain Hill took advantage of the coincidence and wrote Work concerning rescue possibilities for the Georgiana captives. In his December 12 response Work stated, "The only plan I see of furnishing immediate relief to the sufferers would be to send some of the vessels now in the Sound, well manned and armed; and if such a person could be got, some person acquainted with the coast on board."

Simpson Moses concurred with Work's advice when he learned of it. Moses felt that prompt action was needed to save the captives from death. Assuming control of the American response to the crisis, he sought a vessel to deliver the Georgiana men. Since no United States government ship was closer than San Francisco, Moses charted a private craft—the Damariscove—for the rescue expedition on December 16.

Moses was no procrastinator. "After incessant toil for day and night to hasten her departure," he wrote Secretary of the Treasury Thomas Corwin in a letter dated December 22, 1851, "the vessel sailed on her destined voyage on the 19th instant, fully provisioned and equipped, having on board twenty-five men, including the crew, and a surgeon, with sufficient stock of medical stores."

The Damariscove transported a mixed party of civilians and soldiers. Lafayette Balch again served as captain of the ship. Other civilians in the group included Hugh Crockett, Theodore...
Dubosq, Abraham B. Moses (brother of Simpson), Alonzo M. Poe and Edmund Sylvester, although the last two individuals left the expedition shortly after it started. In answer to a request by Moses, Captain Hill of Fort Steilacoom provided soldiers from the First Artillery Regiment for the trip. They were Lieutenant John Dement, a corporal and five men.

On the voyage to the Queen Charlotte Islands the schooner stopped at Fort Victoria and Fort Simpson. In Victoria the Americans used a government letter of credit to purchase blankets and other supplies for ransoming the captives. The visit to Fort Simpson brought the rescue party and the small Georgiana delegation together, but proved troublesome to Chief Trader McNeill. Some of the rescuers, through unruly talk and action, aroused discord during their three-day stay at the fort. A disgruntled McNeill wrote the following on January 7, 1851, in the post journal:

Raven Chief of Skidegate, a Haida headman in ceremonial regalia, photographed by Edward S. Curtis in 1915.

of their people bringing Rum on shore and on bringing it out among the Indians etc. which is against the Regulations of the Post and will give us trouble with our Indians.

Understandably, Chief Trader McNeill was pleased to see the Damariscove (with the four Georgiana men) depart on January 9 for the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Soon the schooner sailed into Cumshewa Inlet where the rest of the Georgiana captives were being held. Early in the morning on January 11 the captives saw the ship. In his reminiscences Charles Weed described the ensuing events:

When the vessel came in sight it was all excitement for a whole day. They [the Haida] did not know what she came for; & we did not know but the Indians would not allow any one to go aboard, nor any one to go ashore for a long time. Finally we succeeded in getting one of the Indians to go aboard; & then we had a runner from the vessel to the shore & the bargain was made.

After the Chief was satisfied with the amount he was to receive he came on shore & ordered canoes enough to take us on board; & we all got into the canoes, & went off. The Chief took the goods in the same canoes back to his village. In parting he did not seem to be well satisfied; he wanted more, but he stood a little in fear. The vessel was well armed, there were a good many men on board, the guns were shotted & pointed to the village, & he had to be satisfied with what he got. He was made rich by it, what an Indian would consider very wealthy. He had an immense ammount [sic] of property for an Indian.

There were 27 of us. The Indians were paid 5 blankets, 4-point blankets,
one shirt, one bolt of muslin, & two pounds of tobacco for each man.

With the entire Georgiana party safely rescued, the Damariscove returned to Puget Sound. The schooner arrived at Port Stilacoom on January 31, 1852. Both rescuers and ex-captives dispersed to their homes amid general rejoicing. Though the expedition failed to locate gold, no one died or suffered serious injury.

A major question concerning the affair was left unanswered. Who would pay the sizable expenses of the rescue expedition? Simpson Moses assumed that the federal government would cover the costs, and he sent the bill of over $11,000 to the Treasury Department. Thomas Corwin, Secretary of the Treasury at the time, rejected the request for funds on the basis that Moses' unauthorized rescue efforts fell outside his official duties as Collector of Customs. Most likely another factor behind the refusal was northern Oregon's lack of importance to the American government.

Moses' correspondence and a public meeting in Olympia on February 7, 1852, supported the idea of federal reimbursement. Neither changed the position of the federal government on the issue. In June 1853 Moses was removed from the Collector of Customs position. His successor was Isaac Ebey.

On March 2, 1853, Congress incorporated northern Oregon into Washington Territory. During the spring of 1854 the Washington Territorial Legislature held its first session in Olympia and on March 21 approved a "Memorial [to Congress] Relative to claims of Lafayette Balch, and others, on account of the Expedition to Queen Charlotte’s Island." This document concluded with the following:

Your memorialists respectfully and earnestly pray your honorable body to appropriate the sum of fifteen thousand dollars, to meet the indebtedness and interest thereon, on account of this transaction, and that direction may be given to cause said appropriation to be disbursed by the Governor or Secretary of this Territory; and your memorialists, as in duty bound, will ever pray. &c.

Two of the legislators backing the memorial were prominent participants of the Georgiana expedition and rescue: Samuel D. Howe and Lafayette Balch.

The reimbursement question was resolved later in 1854. Congress received the memorial from the Washington Territorial Legislature and on August 4 appropriated money for the State Department to pay up to $15,000 for rescue expedition debts. Perhaps this action showed the increased political importance of the new Washington Territory. In any case, the bills were finally paid.

The fate of the Georgiana expedition did not end with the gold rush in the Queen Charlotte Islands. Numerous American and British ships came to Gold Harbor in the early 1850s to prospect. Even the Damariscove in 1852 returned to the archipelago with men hoping to strike it rich.

Many British authorities were concerned about American activity in the Queen Charlottes, islands nominally under the rule of Great Britain. Governor James Douglas of Vancouver Island, for example, expressed his fears in a January 29, 1852, dispatch to Colonial Secretary Henry Grey:

In my communication of the 16th December . . . I informed your Lordship that several vessels had sailed, and that others were reported to be fitting out, in the American Ports of Oregon and California, for the coast of Queen Charlotte's Island.

These vessels are chartered by large bodies of American adventurers, who are proceeding thither for the purpose of digging gold; and if they succeed in that object, it is said to be their intention to colonise [sic] the island, and establish an independent government, until, by force or fraud, they become annexed to the United States.

Douglas clearly recognized the expansionist tendency of mid-19th-century Americans. Consequently, the British government acted to control the situation. Steps taken included sending the H.M.S. Thesis, a British frigate, to the archipelago (summer 1852); commissioning James Douglas as Lieutenant-Governor of the Queen Charlotte Islands (September 1852); instructing Douglas to make a proclamation of Crown rights regarding discovered gold (March 1853); and establishing regulations setting up license fees for miners (April 1853). These measures created a system to handle prospecting on the islands.

Gold hunting on the Queen Charlotte Islands, however, faded away before 1860. Hampered by continued Haida resistance, miners gave up when little of the precious metal was actually found. The American threat to Great Britain's sovereignty over the region disappeared simultaneously. Even so, the experience helped prepare the British for the larger (and more lucrative) Fraser River gold rush of 1858.

From a modern perspective, the failure of the island's gold prospectors proved beneficial in the long run. The area was spared the ecological destruction and cultural dislocation that normally accompany extensive mining. The islands are now recognized worldwide for their natural beauty and magnificent Haida culture. Seen in this light, it appears to have turned out for the best that the Georgiana party and other gold seekers did not find an El Dorado on the archipelago.
As Norway moved toward its final separation from Sweden in 1905, a photographer who had launched his career in Seattle was establishing a reputation as the preeminent documentarian of the emerging nation. A wave of nationalism that had been present in Norwegian literature and art for some time reached a peak in the first few years of the 20th century and infused the field of photography. The desire to establish a strong national identity provided encouragement and support for Anders Beer Wilse who, more than any other photographer, documented the total breadth of the Norwegian landscape and people. His images provided visual evidence for a Norwegian national identity during the formative years after the country's independence.

How did Wilse's experiences as an immigrant in America influence his life's work in his homeland? The key to answering this question lies in a set of 250 glass plate negatives that survive in the collections of the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle and scattered prints at other regional archives. The subject matter and the photographic qualities of these early examples show...
certain characteristics that continued in his work in Norway. They also illustrate stages in the life history of an individual who represents many thousands of new immigrants who arrived in the Pacific Northwest during the later part of the 19th century.

Most of what we know about Wilse's life in North America comes from his autobiography published in 1936. He was born in 1865 at Flekkefjord, on the southern coast of Norway, the son of an infantry captain and engineer. He grew up in the nearby town of Kragerø and took his examinations at the Horten Technical College in 1882. Two years later, at age 19, Wilse joined the flood of Norwegians leaving for America in search of a better economic future. The 1880s witnessed the second and largest mass departure of Norwegians. Ten out of every thousand inhabitants left annually, most of them single men attracted by land ownership and employment opportunities in America. Wilse went first to Minneapolis, where one of his aunts lived, and found work as a surveyor for railroad lines in the Midwest. It was there that he purchased his first camera.

In April 1890 Wilse arrived in Seattle, lured by the prospects of new railroads being built in the Pacific Northwest with capital supplied by magnates such as fellow Minnesotan James J. Hill. Seattle was rebuilding from the disastrous fire of the previous June, and the whole region was buzzing with rumors of additional railroad lines to connect its growing cities. Wilse's first job was surveying for a line between Seattle and Tacoma. In 1892 he married Helen Hutchinson, whom he had courted on a visit to Norway a few years earlier.

Working as a civil engineer, Wilse must have found his camera of considerable practical use in surveying and cartography. The partnership between engineering and photography was nothing new in the Pacific Northwest. The first known albumen prints made with the collodion-on-glass process were produced by the Royal Engineers in 1860-61 while surveying the boundaries of Washington Territory and Canada. Earlier still, in the Pacific Railroad Survey of 1853, artist John Mix Stanley took daguerreotypes that he used in making his drawings.

Wilse's earliest known Pacific Northwest photographs document the construction of the Great Northern line across the Cascade Mountains in 1892-93. James J. Hill had assigned to John F. Stevens the task of locating a suitable route through the Cascade Mountains. Wilse was hired to work with Stevens and his crew to build the western approach from Everett to the summit. This section is the longest and steepest climb of the entire line, and a series of eight switchbacks had to be built to negotiate the slopes. A magnificent detailed map, drawn by Wilse, was recently used to construct the Iron Goat Trail, which follows a portion of the Great Northern route just east of Skykomish.

The photographs Wilse took during the Great Northern construction project were carefully labeled as to exact location and date, and signed "A.B.W." He built a darkroom out of fallen cedar trees to process his photos of track-laying crews shoveling in the deep snow, tunnels under construction, and portraits of various personalities in the railroad camps. The images show that, despite primitive conditions, the engineer was developing some photographic skill.

Ironically, the same railroads that had spurred such rapid growth in the Pacific Northwest now contributed to a regional economic collapse. Overextended by years with-
Wilse Photos on Exhibit


Three major aspects of Wilse’s work are showcased. Describing himself as a “scenic fotografer,” Wilse was influenced by the style of 19th-century Swedish photographer Axel Lindahl. His striking portraits of Northwest Native Americans and Norway’s Sami and Lofoten Islands fishermen capture a passing way of life. Wilse’s photographs of roads, railroads, bridges and other structures embody his faith and optimism in technology and reflect his training as an engineer.

“En Norsk Fotograf” is designed to appeal to both children and adults, as well as photography enthusiasts and members of the Northwest Scandinavian-American Community. The exhibit is on view in Seattle at MOHAI, 2700 24th Avenue East, from July 2 through September 18, 1994. For more information call 206/324-1126.

out a sign of profit, thousands of railroad investors were ruined when credit dried up in the Panic of 1893. Anders Wilse and more than two million other men across the nation were out of work. With construction coming to a halt, the demand for Washington’s timber diminished, businesses failed and banks closed. Many left the area in search of jobs elsewhere. Wilse moved his family to a remote part of British Columbia, but returned in 1896 to Seattle where he eventually found work as a cartographer for the state government. In 1897 he was employed by King County to assess taxes on land parcels in the Seattle tidelands. It was this experience that drove him to become a commercial photographer. In Wilse’s own words, “I got so overworked from all this estimating I saw numbers in the streets and talked numbers in my sleep. I decided I could not take it anymore. I quit my job.”

When the Norwegian embarked on his new career, he first joined in partnership with Daniel W. Kirk, an established photographer, but took over the business after six months. It was a fortuitous time to begin a commercial enterprise in Seattle. The Klondike gold rush had brought a stampede of fortune seekers to the city. Seattle advertised itself as the “Gateway to Gold,” and soon every northbound ship was booked full. Tickets sold at vastly inflated prices. The streets were filled with gold seekers feverishly preparing for their trips, and Wilse found much to photograph. His images became iconic emblems of the rush: overburdened steamships departing from the docks, and the arrival of millions of dollars worth of gold to be deposited in local banks.

The gold rush launched Wilse’s career, but soon he branched out to cover a wide variety of subjects. Between 1897 and 1900 Wilse was busy on numerous projects in Seattle and elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest. He documented the departure and return of soldiers sent to the Philippines during the Spanish American War, and evidently had considerable success in securing contracts from major public agencies such as the fire department, electric company and local schools.

From the beginning Wilse preferred outdoor work and advertised himself as a “scenic fotografer.” Among the negatives that sur-
Vive are numerous views of mountains, rivers and boats on the water. The presence of mankind is most often dominant in his landscapes. Human intervention in the natural world is obvious but does not damage an essentially harmonious relationship. It is perhaps the precise composition and the placement of human subjects within the grander scope of the environment that best characterizes his work.

On an assignment to photograph and make maps of the uncharted territory bordering Yellowstone Park in 1898 Wilse again had an opportunity to spend months in the wilderness, packing around his big camera and glass plates. Two years earlier he had made a successful ascent of Mount Rainier, and this time he scaled numerous peaks, even discovering one that was given his name.

While landscapes were an important facet of Wilse's work, he also demonstrated a fascination with manmade structures. Beginning with railroad construction, he continued to document such major projects as the building of Seattle's water system from the Cedar River basin. The city's population had nearly doubled during the 1890s, and City Engineer Reginald H. Thomson foresaw the need to bring sufficient water to supply a growing populace. Wilse carefully recorded each step involved in the project—the laying and riveting of pipes and the building of dams and reservoirs.

Most people at this time regarded rapid urban growth as a positive development, but at least some recognized that urbanization should not disregard the need to commune with nature. This feeling is expressed in Wilse's photographs of campers and cyclists along Lake Washington and of the city's parks and beaches. Besides documenting Seattle's evolution from a frontier town to a refined and beautiful city,
Wilse launched his photography career during the Klondike gold rush, a time when Seattle's streets were crowded with gold seekers outfitting themselves for their journey north.

Careful composition and a keen eye impart an sense of relaxing in nature's surroundings to this Lake Washington campsite.

these images demonstrate the photographer's faith in technology and love of nature. A similar philosophy guided J. C. Olmsted in his plans for spacious boulevards to connect existing and proposed greenbelts—civilization should not replace nature but rather tame and redirect it.

Wilse did not do formal portraiture and never used a studio, but he produced many pictures of people placed within the context of their way of life, their occupation or surrounded by objects symbolic of their lives. Although the subjects were clearly posed by the photographer, they appear less stiff and formal than most 19th-century portraits. In Wilse's earliest people pictures we begin to see his playful sense of humor, which undoubtedly served him well in relating to his subjects. A photograph of four men (including himself) playing cards at the railroad camp with pistol and horseshoe laid on the table is titled, "A Merry Christmas."

With Native American subjects Wilse demonstrates a genuine proclivity for environmental portraits. Photography of Indians was a popular and profitable undertaking during this era. From the earliest cartes de visite to the more modern postcards, these images sold well to an American public that looked nostalgically upon the "noble savage" and regarded the American Indian as a vanishing race. No doubt Wilse, too, felt that a commercial interest could be served by photographing the various tribal groups in the Pacific Northwest, but one can also sense in his work a genuine appreciation for certain aspects of their cultures. In his photographs of the Makah Indians Wilse focused especially on their cedar dugout canoes.
Having grown up in a coastal community, perhaps he could relate to the superb craftsmanship and expert seamanship of this coastal people.

By 1900 Wilse had three assistants working for him, and he listed his business as the Seattle Photographic Company, situated in the McDonald Building at 811 Second Avenue. Two of the assistants, Ira Webster and Nelson Stevens, later began one of the most successful and long-lived commercial studios in the city. The third, William Duckering, continued as manager of the Seattle Photographic Company until 1913.

Wilse decided to take advantage of his relative prosperity to make a trip back to the homeland. His wife Helen and their three children had left for a visit in April 1900. During the summer Helen had written letters to her husband telling him how lovely the countryside was and how he must come back to share it with her.

On a bleak October night he departed from New York on board a ship for Kristiania (Oslo), fully expecting to return the following spring. He left the bulk of his negative files and photographic equipment behind. Wilse never did return to Seattle, simply because his wife refused to leave Norway. He regretted this for some years but meanwhile put his experience to work in establishing a studio in Kristiania. During his three years in Seattle he had learned much about running a successful photographic company and had had several of his photographs published in books and on postcards.

Wilse immediately linked himself to Norway's growing tourist industry. The period prior to World War I brought an increase in tourism, and methods of promotion became more widespread. A popular way for foreigners to tour the mountainous country was by steamship, often beginning at one of the southwest ports and traveling to the far north, above the Arctic Circle. Wilse was solidly booked as a photographer on the tourist ships and visited Nordkapp 36 times. He traveled throughout the countryside as well, to remote villages and up mountain peaks, covering in greater breadth the variety of Norwegian landscapes and peoples. During a photographic career spanning nearly a half century, Wilse was incredibly productive. When he died in 1949 he left an archive of 200,000 negatives, including a set by Swedish photographer Axel Lindahl made during the 1890s.

One does not have to look far to find similarities between Wilse's images of the Pacific Northwest and Norway. Both project a strong sense of human-kind's place embedded in nature, together with an ability to conquer and change natural forces. Particularly apparent is Wilse's recurring interest in documenting a variety of people and lifestyle, including rural and aboriginal societies. It is possible in his photographs to visually compare the culture of the Makah Indians with that of the Sami reindeer herders, both peoples maintaining some of their ancient traditions while making a transition to modern ways.

Recognizing that society was undergoing a process of change, Wilse chose to focus on the smaller, more subtle developments. In his second autobiographical book, *Norsk Landskap og Norske Men*, he wrote:

"During a long life in back of a camera, I have sought to capture for eternity the beauty of Norway's landscape, if only a brief impression. ... But I have also seen the slow changes both in appearance and in character that have taken place, not in the bigger picture but in the details. Therefore my photographs hold fast to what is changing in the Norwegian landscape, which is something I believe can be of meaning to our descendants."

Today we can echo Wilse's thoughts insofar as they apply also to the small but valuable legacy he left for us in the Pacific Northwest.

Carolyn J. Marr is a librarian and curator for the Museum of History and Industry, and author of *Portrait in Time: Photographs of the Makah by Samuel G. Morse, 1896-1903* and numerous articles on photography and Native Americans.
RUNWAYS & RECLAMATION

The Influence of the Federal Government on Moses Lake
THE HISTORY OF Moses Lake is the story of a town affected by its geographic location and the impact of the federal government. Situated in the rainshadow of the Cascade Mountains, Moses Lake did not live up to the promise of the railroads that advertised it as "the Last Best West." Its eight-inch annual rainfall was far below the amount needed for dry land farming. Schemes for irrigating with lake water marked the town's earlier years and the actions of the federal government influenced its growth after 1940. Construction of an air base and the development of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project brought growth to the town, allowing it to escape the fate of other farm service communities such as Batum, Schragg, Ruff and Wheeler.

The settlement of Moses Lake began in 1911 when little land was still available for homesteading. Optimistic newcomers to the Columbia Basin were lured into Grant County by the railroads and the government. Part of the area had been made available under the provisions of the Homestead and Desert Land Acts, and other land was offered for sale by the Northern Pacific Railroad.

The Brunder Family Blunder
Moses Lake, first known as Neppel, was founded by the Brunder family of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Brunders intended to create a planned community beside the lake. They hired German immigrant F. H. Nagle to develop the community and start the Grant Realty Company. Nagle laid out the streets, installed an electric generator, set up plants to pump fresh water from the lake, and constructed a hotel and wooden sidewalks.

The planned community envisioned by the Brunders did not materialize. One reason was the failure of the town planners to keep the Scandinavian immigrants they had recruited to operate dairy farms near the town. These farms were to have furnished milk for the cheese factory that had been built across the street from the train depot. So optimistic were the Brunders about the success of their plan that they built and fully equipped the factory before the dairy farmers arrived. The cheese factory never opened because the recruited dairy farmers quickly moved from the area when they discovered the high price they would have to pay for pumping water from the lake. Another reason for the failure of the planned community was the fact that a battle over water rights left the Brunders high and dry when they tried to sell lots in the town.

A long legal struggle for water rights was waged among the Grant County Realty Company; the Brunder family's business in Neppel, and Ham, Yearsley and Ririe, the law firm representing Stade Orchard Tracts. This long-lived battle peaked during the land sale that the Brunders had planned for Neppel in 1913. Prior to the sale flyers had been sent to all parts of the United States to advertise this "promised land" of irrigated farming. Prospective buyers had already begun to arrive in Neppel when signs appeared all over the town claiming that the water rights belonged to Ham, Yearsley and Ririe. As a result, not a single parcel of land was sold. The failure of the land sale did not stop the
An aerial view of the struggling town of Neppel on Moses Lake in the 1920s.

legal entanglement that lasted until the last partner, Wilbur Yearsley, died in 1929. The Moses Lake Irrigation District was formed in 1927 to regulate the distribution of lake water.

Despite the Brunder family's failure to create a planned community, the town of Neppel grew into a small service community for nearby farmers. By the 1920s there were approximately 350 acres of irrigated orchards along Moses Lake in the Cascade Valley. The large number of people pumping water out of Moses Lake led to other struggles over land claims and riparian rights.

I F THE LAKE was an asset to those who settled its shores, it was a barrier to those attempting overland travel. By 1905 a bridge allowed travelers to cross the lake, and in 1913 a high wooden bridge spanned two miles southwest of Neppel. Each spring floods threatened to wash out the bridges, a dam and a road that crossed the lake on a dirt fill. Roads were also a problem for the early settlers around Moses Lake. Deep ruts became dry dust beds during the summer and mud holes in spring and fall. Tire repair kits and a spare tire or two were essential for any journey.

Electric power began to flow into Neppel in 1912 from a generator owned by the Grant Realty Company. It serviced about 50 customers plus the ten street lights along its five blocks of power lines. Until 1922 the plant operated only from sunset to midnight. It was then sold to the Washington Water Power Company, which converted it to 24-hour electric service.

Neppel's Struggle to Survive

THE GREAT DEPRESSION ended two of Neppel's earliest industries. Apple orchards flourished on irrigation water from the lake, and carp were seined and shipped by railroad ice cars to New York where they were considered a delicacy. When prices plummeted, the orchards and fishing operations were forced to shut down. When the depression hit the rest of the nation in 1929, the Columbia Basin had already been experiencing it for ten years. Settlers who came to the area in the 1900s had been deceived by the land. Subsoil moisture had supported grazing and the first few years of farming, but when the moisture that had accumulated underneath the bunch grass evaporated, the settlers realized that they had penetrated too far into the semi-arid desert. The wind picked up the dry soil, causing severe dust storms. The summer and winter winds that whistled continuously through the flimsy homestead shacks ended the early dreams of area settlers much as the Dust Bowl of the 1930s ended the hopes of farmers in the southern plains.

By 1920 a large number of farmers had left the area, and Grant County's population had dropped 10 percent from its 1910 high of 8,700. During the 1920s the population fell by an additional 30 percent to around 5,600.

For those who remained, cash hardly existed in the area. Many families survived on as little as three dollars a week. The desperate situation is illustrated by the following letter written to Red Cross Headquarters in Ephrata, the Grant County seat.

Dear Sir:

We are in need of groceries and clothing. The bank foreclosed on us and took my cows, my horses, and car and machinery so please try to do something. Everybody says the Red Cross is going to help us again. So please try and let us know this time because we need it. No kidding! Does a person have to come to Ephrata or will they bring it to us? Let us know soon because we are in need please.

P.S.—Please let us know as soon as possible.

The dream of a federally funded irrigation plan helped some persevere through the drought and depression.
The failure of earlier small-scale irrigation schemes led farmers around Moses Lake to look toward a large and improbable solution, the building of a dam at Grand Coulee on the Columbia River. During the 1920s and 1930s Neppel and Moses Lake citizens joined with those from the rest of the Columbia Basin in the struggle to promote construction of Grand Coulee Dam.

**Social Institutions**

Despite the drought, depression and difficult years that Neppel faced from 1910 through the 1930s, schools and other social institutions continued to function. Schooling was conducted in homestead cabins, and teachers were paid with funds generated from Washington’s “Barefoot Schoolboy Law.” This act, which originated with John Rogers and became law in 1895, the year before he was elected governor, provided funds for each child who attended a public school.

Homestead schools were eventually replaced with one-room schoolhouses. When Grant County was formed from a portion of Douglas County in 1909 it contained 96 school districts, 96 female teachers, 30 male teachers and 2,658 schoolchildren. Male teachers received $69.84 monthly, while their female counterparts were paid $64.10. Neppel school records date from 1913 when it was labeled School District No. 116. At that time the district included the Plainview, Liberty, Moses Lake and Neppel schools, totaling 32 students and four teachers. The Neppel school had two rooms until 1921 when a two-room annex was added.

**Newspapers Chronicled the Social Life of Neppel**

Newspapers chronicled the social life of towns and created a sense of community. The Neppel Record was published between 1912 and 1918 by the Whitman-Humphrey Press, which also printed newspapers in nearby Wheeler, Warden, Ruff and Beverly. All five of the papers carried the same news but were printed with individual mastheads. The Neppel paper actively promoted the “famous Moses Valley.” Newspapers of neighboring towns, such as the Ritzville Journal-Times and Ephrata’s Grant County Journal, also covered Moses Lake area news.

The social life of Neppel, like that of others towns of the era, included church and club activities. Homespun events such as country dances provided recreation for the pioneers. Dances...
held in the schoolhouse were popular Saturday evening diversions. Student desks were pushed back to make space for the dancers, and the teacher's desk was moved into a corner and loaded with pies and cakes. Entire families attended the dances, and as the children tired they fell asleep on the desks and were covered up with coats. At midnight the home-baked desserts were served, and dancing continued until dawn. The music was provided by community members playing fiddle, piano and drums.

In Neppel and the surrounding Moses Lake area the entertainment center was the local auditorium owned by Jack White. Dances there resembled those in the country, except that the midnight lunches were cooked and sold by the Women's Club. Annual celebrations included Neppel Harvest Festival and Rodeo and the Independence Day Picnic held each Fourth of July.

Literary societies, another form of entertainment, usually met in schoolhouses. On literary nights various members would read poetry, conduct dramatic readings or perform plays. One example of a favorite literary activity was a mock wedding where the shortest woman played the part of the groom and the tallest man was cast as the bride.

The Fight for Grand Coulee Dam

With the failure of most private irrigation schemes and the advent of drought and depression, the people of Moses Lake and the surrounding Columbia Basin began their desperate fight for Grand Coulee Dam. Known as the “pumpers,” their struggle was spearheaded in 1919-20 and after 1929 by James O’Sullivan, the single most important individual in the local battle to secure the dam. An opposing irrigation scheme, the Pend Oreille “gravity” plan, provided the pumpers with a healthy opposition. Reflecting on the fight for Grand Coulee Dam, O’Sullivan later commented:

You know, I kind of enjoyed fighting those fellows. They were so smart and so powerful and they had so much money, but basically they just didn’t have a good project. A little bunch of pumpers down there in the sagebrush, with no money and no influence but with a really good project to promote, licked them to a frazzle.

The “REALLY GOOD project” O’Sullivan referred to was the plan to build a dam at Grand Coulee and pump water into the upper Grand Coulee, now known as Banks Lake, where it would flow by gravity through a series of canals and laterals to irrigate the arid lands of the dry Big Bend Desert.

The dreams of local residents began to come true on July 16, 1933, when United States Senator C. C. Dill lifted the first shovelful of earth for the construction of Grand Coulee Dam.

Transformation of Grant County

On September 9, 1938, the people of Neppel officially voted to incorporate the town and name it Moses Lake. The election established the mayor-council form of government, which remained in force until 1959 when a change was made to a council-manager system. At the time of incorporation the town’s population was listed at 370; yet, by 1940 it had fallen to 326. That number remained stable until outside forces such as World War II and the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project brought newcomers into the area. The population grew rapidly, from 2,679 in 1950 to 11,299 in 1960. Growth slowed and leveled off in the next two decades. The population of Moses Lake in 1970 was 10,310 and 10,629 in 1980.

The transformation of Columbia Basin and Grant County agriculture began gradually in the 1930s and 1940s as “combined harvesters” replaced threshing machines and bulk grain handling replaced individually sewn sacks. The huge crews that once followed the threshing machines were no longer necessary.

In the mid 1930s a diesel tractor came on the market that was economical enough to replace the horses that had pulled the combines. Many Grant County farmers switched to the new tractors during the ‘30s and ‘40s. The move to mechanized farming eliminated the need for working farm animals, and many were sold at auction.

In the late 1940s self-propelled combines began to appear in Grant County fields. In 30 years the combine had evolved from a huge contraption requiring the power of up to 40 horses and seven men to a machine driven by a lone farmer who could adjust the height of the cutter, control direction of the combine and dump the grain unassisted. Their improved equipment did not diminish the farmers’ need for more moisture, and they continued fighting for irrigation as they struggled to make a living.

The town of Moses Lake was affected only indirectly as dam building began. Workers who came through the town on their way north did not stay. Glenn Arnold, one of five publishers who had rushed to establish a newspaper in the mushrooming town of Grand Coulee, moved his operation to Moses Lake in 1941 to get away from the competition. Anticipating the development of the Columbia Basin project, including construction of the main canals and laterals, he began publishing the Moses Lake Herald on July 31, 1941. The newspaper, which became the Columbia Basin Herald the following year, was a source of great encouragement to businessmen who had not seen a local paper since the Neppel Record ceased publication in 1918.

A New Era of Farming

Construction of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project began immediately following the end of World War II. Its completion in 1952 was marked by the “Farm-in-a-Day” event that began at 12:01 A.M. and continued until 11:30 P.M. on May 29. During that period 300 people worked to clear and level the land, build a house and outbuildings, and plant crops. The day became a full-blown media event covered by all major wire services, magazines, newspapers and newsmasts of the day.

The completed farm was presented to Donald D. Dunn, “the nation’s most worthy World War II veteran,” who had been selected in a Veterans of Foreign Wars drawing.

Most of the land that eventually came under irrigation through the Columbia Basin Project was privately owned. The publicly owned acreage was distributed by lottery and intended for World War II veterans. In order to participate in the lottery veterans were required to fill out a five-page application, have farm experience, be physically and mentally fit, and have good character references and a net worth of at least $3,700. The first drawing in which veterans had priority took place on November 15, 1948. Before the last lottery was held in 1967, 1,157 units had been sold for settlement.

Twentieth-century homesteaders in the Columbia Basin began by clearing the sagebrush and leveling the land to support rill or furrow irrigation. Rill irrigation was augmented by line sprinkler and circle irrigation as technology developed. Over 70 different crops were planted in the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, including sugar beets, potatoes, wheat, alfalfa and seed crops.

The opening of the U & I Sugar company in Moses Lake in 1953, shortly after water began pouring through the irrigation canals, influenced farmers to plant sugar beet crops. The sugar crop brought a substantial migration of Mexican-American workers to toil in the sugar beet and other fields of the irrigated Columbia Basin Project. When the U & I plant closed in the 1970s large numbers of Mexican-Americans stayed on to make the Columbia Basin their home and to work in other sectors of the economy.

The Army Arrives

Before the Columbia Basin Irrigation project was completed, World War II had brought population growth to Grant County. Because of its sparse population the area had plenty of acreage available for the war effort. In 1940 the 2,680-square-mile county was home to only 14,668 people. When the United States entered World War II after the bombing at Pearl Harbor, the army suddenly viewed Grant County, with its treeless, flat land, as a good place to land planes, train pilots and conduct practice bombing runs.

Grant County’s relationship to the Department of the Army began on April 10, 1940, when two lieutenants appeared in Ephrata to arrange quarters for troops building a bombing range in the south-central part of the county. Moses Lake Army Air Base, which was officially activated on November 24, 1942, began slowly, with 211 enlisted men and 10 officers on the site by the end of 1943. The first contingent of troops arrived in April 1944, and by June 21 the manpower of the Moses Lake base had expanded to 2,834.

The mission of the Moses Lake Army Air Base was to train 124 pilots each month to replace those lost in war. The official history of the base describes the chaotic beginning. The air base was short on supplies, civilians and repair services. The commander, personnel officer, air inspector and other key officers arrived late.
Nothing arrived on time. The instructors came before the trainees and had no one to train. The mechanics arrived before the airplanes and had nothing to fix. When troops arrived they found a shortage of more than just officers.

Another report read:

Field tables were more common than desks, chairs were a luxury, and a typewriter was a treasure to be kept under lock and key with such rarities as staplers, erasers, clips, scissors and thumbtacks.

Morale problems were compounded by the air base’s isolation. Moses Lake, with its tiny population, offered little in the way of entertainment, and Spokane was a three-and-a-half-hour trip by road. It took seven hours to reach Seattle and twice as long to reach Portland. One of the airmen stationed at Moses Lake in 1944 wrote the following poem, “A GI’s Impression,” describing his feelings.

Vast, bleak, empty craters of the moon—
claybaked, desolate of life or vegetation,
unless the scrawny sagebrush
groping its roots between the glacial scab rock can be called vegetation.
Such is Moses Lake Army Air base
situated in a shallow crater-like depression,
the rim meeting the sky vast
distance away.
Between man and the horizon:

Moses Lake Air Base was officially named Larson Air Force Base on May 17, 1950, in honor of Major Donald A. Larson, a World War II flying ace from Yakima who had been killed in action.

On April 1, 1952, control of the base passed to the Tactical Air Command (TAC), and the C-124 transports moved in. While it was a TAC base Larson became the scene of an aviation disaster. A Globemaster transport crashed during takeoff on December 20, 1952. Most of the airmen on board the early morning flight were on their way home for Christmas leave with luggage full of gifts for family and friends. The airplane was still on the ground when it reached the end of the 10,000-foot runway. When the pavement ran out, the plane lifted sharply and then settled. It hit the ground the high-octane gasoline ignited, killing 87 of the 116 people on board.

During its time as a TAC base, Larson underwent its largest growth spurt. The runway was extended from 10,000 to 12,000 feet, and 1,330 housing units were built for married servicemen and their families. The Boeing Company constructed a flight center with huge hangars to house the B-52s it was testing.

On July 1, 1957, Larson Air Force Base was taken over by yet another command. The Military Air Transport Service (MATS) gained jurisdiction of the base and used it as a launching point for supplies and men headed for all parts of the globe. A task force of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) came two years later to prepare for one more transfer of the base command. SAC took formal control of the base on January 1, 1960. Two years after that Boeing shut down its Moses Lake operations.

On April 1, 1961, the 568th Strategic Missile Squadron was activated at Larson. Three Titan I Missile complexes were begun that year at the nearby towns of Batum and Warden, and on the Royal Slope. The Titan I, the Air Force’s first two-stage liquid propellant-fueled intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) had a range of 6,000 miles. ICBMs had been operational for only a short while when the Department of Defense discontinued the project and deactivated the 568th Squadron on March 23, 1965.

Moses Lake Army Air Force Base barracks and housing, 1947.
Boeing tested its B-52 bomber from the flight center it built at Larson Air Force Base in the 1950s.

Upon hearing that the new complexes were to be abandoned, residents of the Moses Lake area generated a flood of local schemes to make use of the silos. One suggestion was to utilize them for propane storage. However, not one of the proposals was implemented, and the complexes were stripped and sold for scrap.

Life After Larson

LARSON ITSELF SAW its fate in 1964 when the Defense Department scheduled it for shut-down in 1966. This concerned residents of the Moses Lake community, which had literally grown up around the air base. Along with the Columbia Basin Project, the presence of the Air Force had turned Moses Lake into the marketing center of the area. During that time its population had grown from 326 to over 10,000.

The gloomy projections that accompanied Larson's closing did not materialize. In 1965 voters approved creation of a port district to make use of 4,500 acres on the former base and bring new industry to the area. They mounted an aggressive campaign to attract industrial development into Grant County. Early success resulted in 1968 when Japan Air Lines was lured to train pilots on runways that had been built long enough to launch fully loaded bombers.

The availability of cheap electric power from the Grant County Public Utility District (PUD) and its location along Interstate 5 fostered the development of the area and the growth of the port district. Formed in 1938, the PUD took possession of the Washington Water Power Company's lines and equipment four years later. This takeover was made possible by passage of the 1930 PUD Act, which allowed the formation of public utility districts in Washington.

The presence of the air base had been a crucial factor in the decision to establish a community college at Moses Lake in 1962. When chosen for the site of Big Bend Community College, Moses Lake was a town of 10,000 people with a booming economy and a rosy future. At that time Larson Air Force Base was flourishing with approximately 4,000 airmen and a base population of over 10,000; the Titan missile silos were being constructed; Boeing was operating its flight test facility; the Wanapum and Priest Rapids dams were being constructed; and the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project had turned Moses Lake into the primary farm service center of the area. The boom town also boasted a 50-bed hospital, built in 1955 to replace an 11-bed clinic constructed out of old army barracks.

Moses Lake profited from its connection with the federal government. Prior to that the town served solely as a supply center for the surrounding farmers. The arrival of the Army Air Corps in Grant County and the development of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project linked the town with events occurring at the national level. The sale of the closed air base to the Port of Moses Lake and the subsequent use of its housing and runways allowed the city to remain economically viable. The Columbia Basin's agricultural productivity, along with the business attracted by the port, confirmed the City of Moses Lake's connections with the national and international economies. The relationship with Japan Air Lines may foreshadow a link with the Pacific Rim that could define the future of Moses Lake, a town that has survived the challenges of drought and depression, military base and plant closures, and Washington's fluctuating economy.

Rita G. Seedorf is Associate Professor of Education and Director of Graduate Programs in Education at Eastern Washington University in Cheney. Martin F. Seedorf is Professor of History at Eastern Washington University. Both have conducted extensive research on Columbia Basin history.
Why does Maynard Griffith (behind table, sixth from left) wear a frown for his birthday party? It could be that the table, with its lavish array of silverware and linen so elegantly arranged and laden with cakes and other goodies, is more fitting for a wedding reception than a little boy's birthday bash. Or Maynard might rather be wearing a pair of overalls than the fancy ruffled shirt and bow tie. Could he have wished for a pony instead of the picture books and drum? Planked on his left and right by cousins Laura and Ray Hale, who seem more pleased with the proceedings, Maynard appears ready to burst into tears.

In later years Maynard, only son of influential Seattle real estate tycoon Luther H. Griffith, joined the Merchant Marine and went on to become the youngest man to attain the rank of captain for the Dollar Steamship Lines. His last command was the luxury liner President Cleveland, aboard which he once again stood, we can safely assume, at the head of extravagant tables for many an elegant party.

The Historical Society gladly accepts donations of prints or negatives of regional historical interest to add to its photograph collection. (Please contact the Society before making donations.) Readers are invited to submit historical photographs for History Album. If a photograph is to be returned, it must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.
By Sidney Berland

In the Pacific Northwest the summer of 1902 belonged to Harry Tracy. Biographer Lloyd Jones, in The Life and Adventures of Harry Tracy, the Modern Dick Turpin, wrote that Tracy exceeded all other men in history in "daring, fortitude and desperation." In Tracy, the Outlaw, King of Bandits, published in 1908, Harry Hawkeye described him as "the king of all the renowned outlaws in the history of the world." W. N. Carter's account, Harry Tracy, the Desperate Western Outlaw; the Most Thrilling Manhunt on Record, is the only one of the three biographies that is credible. Carter described Tracy as having the speech and manners of a man of some education . . . some signs of refinement in action, . . . could be courteous, . . . [had] the general appearance of murderous brutality, . . . iron nerve, [and was] strong physically, quick mentally, resourceful as Napoleon, gay as Robin Hood, brutal as an Apache Indian, elusive and cunning as a coyote, and as deadly in encounter as a cobra.

Harry Tracy and his partner David Merrill started out together as petty thieves, highway robbers and horse stealers. Trolleys, horse-drawn buggies, saloons, drug stores, butcher shops—all were fair game to them. Although neither man was known to have attempted a bank or train robbery, some writers compared Tracy to Jesse James, the Dalton Brothers and other classic desperadoes.

This 1902 bloodhound-led posse was on the prowl for Harry Tracy (inset) in Salem shortly after his escape from the Oregon Penitentiary.
In Lloyd Jones's treatment of Tracy, the outlaw is depicted as a friend and peer of Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid and Soapy Smith, and admired by Bat Masterson. Soapy Smith was a notorious 19th-century gangster and politician. He left a trail of robbery and murder from the mainland United States to Alaska, where he died in a dramatic shootout while defending his hold on the city of Skagway. Glorifying Tracy beyond the notoriety he attained in the Northwest pursuit, Jones declared him a virtual sidekick of Smith's sometime between Tracy's alleged birth in Dodge City and Smith's death in 1898. However, it is unlikely that the two men ever met.

Other sources variously list Tracy's birthplace as: Redfern, Wisconsin, in 1875; Louisville, Kentucky, in 1871; and somewhere in New York State. His fame stemmed from numerous jailbreaks and murders in Utah and Colorado. Tracy had also been a member and leader of the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang, which operated near the Utah-Wyoming border.

In Olympia in 1899 Tracy and Merrill evaded arrest for some petty robberies, then fled to Portland where they were arrested for yet more petty robberies, but not before Tracy was introduced to Merrill's sister Molly and married her. Tracy and Merrill were sentenced to the Oregon Penitentiary, Merrill for 13 years and Tracy for 20 years. Tracy received the stiffer sentence for trying to escape from the courthouse during his trial.

On June 9, 1902, he and Merrill escaped from the Oregon Penitentiary in Salem, killing three guards and wounding a convict who tried to restrain them. Salem citizens immediately armed themselves while several posses were raised by sheriffs F. W. Durbin and B. B. Colbath.

The press predicted the convicts' recapture within a day, but 24 hours later the audacity of the pair began to alarm—and perhaps also entertain—the populace. Tracy and Merrill robbed two posse members of their horse and buggy in Gervais, Oregon, stole a meal and backtracked to Salem where they then stole some clothes.

Merrill was initially characterized as being as vicious and murderous as Tracy, but it was soon evident that he lacked his partner's drive and boldness. Having been miscast in the drama, Merrill would emerge eventually from the ordeal as a tragic figure.

On June 12 the two convicts set a trap for the posse. According to the Morning Oregonian, “The pursuing posse narrowly escaped ... a carefully planned ambush.” The legend was born.

On June 15 the outlaws crossed the Columbia River into Washington where a Clark County posse led by Sheriff J. L. Marsh took up the chase. Sheriff Marsh and Merrill had been classmates. Merrill, having grown up in Vancouver, Washington, was very familiar with the terrain in both states. Mistaken for Tracy, one member of the Clark County posse was shot and killed by another.

On June 15 the outlaws crossed the Columbia River into Washington where a Clark County posse led by Sheriff J. L. Marsh took up the chase. Sheriff Marsh and Merrill had been classmates. Merrill, having grown up in Vancouver, Washington, was very familiar with the terrain in both states. Mistaken for Tracy, one member of the Clark County posse was shot and killed by another. When a farmer was robbed of food and clothing, more bloodhounds and the Washington militia were called out. After discovering that they had been struggling through a forest of low hills, deep gullies, shrubs and undergrowth on the basis of unfounded rumors, the posses and sheriffs gave up in disgust.
In turn, other sheriffs and posses took up the hunt, only to give up in frustration. Throughout the pursuit the convicts robbed farmers of food, money, clothing and horses—sometimes treating their victims courteously and other times terrifying and brutalizing them. Some of Tracy’s victims, usually women, openly praised him—adding sugar to the legend—while others denounced him.

He ordered farmers or their sons to bring him weapons from nearby towns, vowing to kill their families if they failed or informed the posses. He threatened to kill anyone who informed on him, even after he departed their homes. For all his threats, Tracy killed no civilians in either state.

Their frequent clothing changes made the fugitives unrecognizable to posses and dogs. By backtracking and occasionally sprinkling pepper on their tracks they managed to elude the dogs. The Seattle Times reported that the convicts also rubbed soap and onions on their trousers.

On June 27 in Lewis County near Winlock another posse member, mistaken for Tracy, was wounded. It appeared that each new posse lost confidence by attacking one of its own or being otherwise humiliated.

Tracy was on stage from the moment he and Merrill broke out of the penitentiary in Salem. During two months of pursuit, only five days passed without mention of him in the press. He enjoyed the notoriety and was observed tearing out photos and clippings about himself from newspapers. To some of his victims he expressed outrage that news reports gave Merrill equal credit for deeds that he alone had committed. He may have cherished the attention more than his freedom. When his robbery victims failed to recognize him despite his oft-printed photo, he made sure to tell them, “I’m Tracy!” The phrase became his oral trademark. During and after the pursuit other robbers intimidated their victims by claiming to be Tracy. Three escaped juvenile delinquents even copied his style.

No one knows if Tracy was aware that his exploits were being reported throughout the United States. The Seattle Times had a field day with an article it reprinted from the New York Journal:

> Here is the woolliest of all the wild tales which have appeared in the eastern papers regarding the marvelous Tracy. According to the New York Journal, a regiment of regulars, all the state militia, the revenue cutters and two battleships were ordered out to assist in the chase. . . . The paper gives the impression that the loss of life on Martinique was trivial when compared with Tracy’s list of victims.

About 20 days into the chase Merrill told Tracy he thought they should surrender and seek a good attorney. Tracy construed that as a plot to betray him for the reward and for a lighter sentence. Some sources claimed Tracy read in a newspaper that his cohort had betrayed him to the police before their arrest in Portland and reported, mistakenly, that he then strangled Merrill.

But Tracy boasted to several of his victims that he challenged his partner to a ten-pace shoot-out. Expecting Merrill to turn on the count of nine, he turned on eight, shot him in the back, then went over to him and shot him twice more. Tracy said he left Merrill’s body to rot in the forest, reasoning that Merrill would have done the same to him.

According to Tracy’s own account, given while bragging to the four-man crew of a Puget Sound launch he hijacked to Seattle, the shoot-out took place in a forest near Chehalis. Merrill could only agree to the duel, the crewmen reported...
being told, because Tracy would otherwise have murdered him outright.

The *Morning Oregonian* reported that Tracy told the crew of the launch *N* and *S* that he decided to kill Merrill because he had "played him [Tracy] false" by informing on him in February 1899, and when Merrill "was careless and made too much noise in the woods ... Tracy resolved to pick a quarrel with him."

Tracy took a liking to Frank Scott, one of the launch's crewmen, and told him the location of the body, hoping that Scott would collect the reward for finding it. But no body was found. On July 3 the *Oregonian*, pondering the launch crew's story, wondered if Tracy had truly killed his partner.

Merrill's death was not confirmed until July 15 when Tracy told Mary Waggoner, one of his robbery victims, where the body could be found. Once in the vicinity in the Chehalis forest, Mrs. Waggoner and her son were able to locate the body by its odor of decay. The posse, arriving later, agreed that Merrill had been shot three times. The position of the bullets seemed to indicate that Merrill had turned as Tracy alleged. The *Washington Standard* expressed mock chagrin that Tracy, having a valid claim to the $2,750 reward on Merrill, did not personally deliver the body to receive it.

Accounts of the criminals' 1899 arrest in Portland are inconclusive on the question of Merrill's alleged betrayal. W. N. Carter wrote in his account that Merrill was "tight-lipped" when questioned by police about Tracy. Later, Carter wrote, Merrill blamed his partner for his arrest and told the police when Tracy was expected. Stories in other papers suggesting that Merrill had informed on his friend may have been a ruse to alienate the two.

Tracy's skill as a marksman was something the posses soon learned to dread. It was he who had killed the three penitentiary guards. Pursuers knew that Tracy had also murdered others in Utah and Colorado. Jones claimed that in the Skagway shoot-out Soapy Smith, Tracy and his brother Jim had killed 26 men before Smith died.

The press was not oblivious to Tracy's corruption, but it seemed to regard him as a carry-over from the recent past when swashbuckling, heroic mass murderers mesmerized the nation: John Wesley Hardin of Texas, who died in 1894 at age 32 after killing 20 men; Ben Thompson, who died in 1884 after murdering more than 10; Dave Mather of Dodge City, another prolific killer, who disappeared in 1884; Billy the Kid of New Mexico, who died in 1881 at age 22 (the number of notches in his gun are unknown); Clay Allison, who killed more than 15 before his death in 1877 at age 37;
and Wyoming's "Big Nosed George," who murdered 15 to 30 people. Washington and Oregon now had one of their own.

Tracy painted an indelible trail with nearly daily robberies of farmers and ranchers. When Tracy hit Seattle, Sheriff Edward Cudihee of King County joined the chase, as did the sheriff of Pierce County.

On July 3, the day the hijacked N and S delivered him to Seattle, Tracy killed two policemen near Woodland Park. Sheriff Cudihee personally fired two shots at him. Although posses stretched from Lake Union west to Ballard, with others at Yesler and Lake Washington, no one set eyes on Tracy after the sheriff's two shots. Washington Governor Henry McBride ordered out the militia and offered a reward of $2,500 in addition to the $3,100 already in the till.

Rain impeded the search. On July 4 University of Washington students celebrating Independence Day began firing pistols indiscriminately, attracting posse members and confusing the hunt. Other students rang a school bell, which the posse believed was a signal that Tracy had been cornered. Another innocent man was mistaken for the outlaw and nearly killed.

The militia was dismissed, largely because Cudihee wanted no assistance. On July 5 Tracy killed another deputy in Bothell. Throughout the area farmers slept with weapons at their sides; many did not sleep at all. Harry Tracy had single-handedly laid siege to the city of Seattle.

At Port Madison on July 7 Tracy invaded a home and stole watches and money from the family. He ordered them to supply six days' worth of food and provisions, and also ordered John Anderson, a handyman, to bind and gag the family, carry the provisions to the beach, then to row him back to Seattle. According to author Jones, Anderson challenged Tracy to a fist fight, whereupon the convict beat him savagely and for three days virtually enslaved him.

Anderson was "in a state of physical and nervous collapse" when he was questioned by authorities in Seattle. He had been "treated like a beast of burden [and] terrorized," largely because Tracy hated Swedes. The public regarded Anderson as both a hero and a curiosity. He was exhibited "in a show window on a prominent street, and crowds gathered to see him and toss money into his hat." He was paid for repeatedly telling his story.

On July 10 the Oregonian began to question Tracy's sanity. He was making himself unnecessarily conspicuous. On the 11th he was known to be in the vicinity of Auburn, then Kent, Tacoma and Covington. Only his "wonderful luck" rescued him from the inevitable "death trap."

On July 13 the fugitive was believed wounded and Merrill was "seen" with him. His capture seemed imminent. The next day, however, the Seattle Times reported that Tracy had taken the train from Enumclaw to Palmer and was planning to cross the Cascades despite his wound. "[Tracy] moves quickly for one who is a physical wreck—keeps Jim Woolery's posse on the jump in all directions—no one seems to know just where the outlaw is." A day after Merrill's death was confirmed, Tracy was reportedly "surrounded," only to escape once again.

From July 18 to August 1 there was little new information about Tracy, but news of imitators, mistaken identities and "fishing stories" dominated the press. On August 1 he was known to be in eastern Washington making plans to rob a bank or an express car and then head back to Idaho and the Hole-in-the-Wall gang hideout in Wyoming. This information was garnered from his victims, and generally proved to be true. He pledged to repay most of the money he stole from them, once even promising to use the proceeds from the bank robbery for that purpose. Tracy's ethics bewildered many.

On August 5 the Seattle Times reported that Tracy had introduced himself the previous day to a 19-year-old boy, Tracy kept 18-year-old May Baker and others captive for a day in Renton. Miss Baker was reportedly quite fond of her captor.

COLUMBIA 43 SUMMER 1994
G. E. Goldfinch, whom he took to the home and ranch of L. B. Eddy near Creston. Tracy told the boy to go home and say nothing about him until the next day, but Goldfinch immediately telephoned Lincoln County's Sheriff Gardner from the town.

In Creston five men overheard Goldfinch's conversation. They went to the Eddy home and chased Tracy into a wheat field where they shot him twice. Rather than be taken and hanged Tracy shot himself through the head. This was the tenth of his Pacific Northwest murders.

Tracy's intuition for knowing when to trust his victims had failed him. His body was taken to Davenport where spectators flocked to see it. Governor McBride ordered Tracy's body transported to the Oregon Penitentiary for identification. Cudihee made sure it went via Seattle where the casket was sealed to the "morbidly curious" public. To them it did not seem possible that the little pine box could contain the remains of the man who had been a household terror for nearly two months. At the Oregon Penitentiary the body was identified and the convicts were "allowed to see it." Vitriol was then "poured on his face to prevent attempts to steal it and put it on" display.

That same day a man claiming to be Tracy robbed farmers near Spokane. The Seattle Post-Intelligencer concluded that the Tracy story was "the strangest and most wonderful of modern tragedies." When John Dillinger became Public Enemy No. 1 in 1934, Tracy's name was frequently raised to highlight the former's infamy.

The Seattle Mail and Herald's coverage of the Tracy story epitomizes the love-hate mania that afflicted all of the Pacific Northwest press of the day. On July 12 it called Tracy an extraordinary man: "He possesses courage, great activity, executive ability and skill." The writer wondered why he had made his presence known in Port Madison, Seattle and Renton when escape was virtually always within his reach. Tracy is "the most cunning and ingenious criminal that ever existed." While denouncing other papers for "aiding and abetting" Tracy's escape by publishing Cudihee's plans and the locations of the posses, the Seattle Mail and Herald praised Tracy as "the most courageous, the most daring, the most aggressive, the most resourceful, the most desperate man who ever ran at large. . . ."

On August 2 this same paper associated Tracy with "audacious, cruel and depraved outlaws"—i.e., the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang. It denounced a stage dramatization that "held him up to public admiration," and on August 16 reduced him to "a coward" for his suicide.

He never fought a fair fight. He was cowardly. . . . [His] deeds occupy the bloodiest page in the history of the Northwest. . . . [He was] the fiend incarnate.

Harry Hawkeye's biography glorified Tracy as much as the others. To make good his portrayal of the convict as "king of bandits," Hawkeye cooked up a soup of fact and fantasy, using the latter where there was no documented evidence to contradict him. These obvious dime-novelish fantasies differed from those of Lloyd Jones.

In Thirteen Years in the Oregon Penitentiary, published in 1908, ex-convict Joseph (Bunko) Kelley gave a bird's-eye view of the Tracy-Merrill escape and the circumstances that prompted it. While bitterly denouncing the "floggings, graft and brutality" characteristic of the prison during his incarceration from 1895 to 1908, Kelley also denounced the two breaks he had witnessed. He blamed Tracy and the cowardly and drunken guards for the escape, maintaining that the entire prison population could have gone with him if it had wished. Not even Merrill had wanted to go, Kelley said, but there was no one to stop him.

More modern accounts of Harry Tracy shower him with contempt. Writing in the Oregonian's magazine section of Sunday, July 27, 1947, Stewart Holbrook described Tracy as "the moronic, yet crafty killer." He never robbed a train, his highway robberies netted him $50, and he never worked alone. In Portland he and Merrill stole $3.85 from a streetcar conductor. Tracy was "perhaps the most unsuccessful robber of record," Holbrook said. He "stole small change from honest bartenders. . . ." He "was a half-wit, . . . forever getting caught and thrown into this or that jail."

Holbrook concluded, "Neither Mr. Lewis nor Mr. Clark achieved such distinction. Thus passed the King of Oregon Outlaws, who spent nearly all of his life behind bars and whose chief business was the robbing of lone bartenders."

Sidney Berland is an archivist and writer for the Seattle Parks and Recreation Department and a free-lance writer on Washington history.
Thanks

Thanks for sending me the Columbia magazine with the article on Daniel Bigelow. I enjoyed it very much. I also enjoyed the article on the juvenile justice system. Columbia is an excellent magazine.

Sandra Romero
Representative, 22nd District

Columbia Hits Home

The Winter '93/94 issue of Columbia hit home. I laughed uproariously over David Chapman's account of the Columbia County Courthouse dedication. If this is an example of his forthcoming book, it will be more than a dreary account of men with green celluloid eyeshades copying deeds and mortgages, and will show the drama and excitement that is truly present in county courthouse histories.

"The Panic of 1893" also hit me. We who survived the Great Depression often assume that no one must have suffered as we did. Reading that article, I can feel that their pain was what we felt 30 years later—experiences that have a lifelong and mordant effect upon additudes.

Virginia Urrutia
Kelso

OIC Records Available

I enjoyed the article entitled "Company Coal Town," but I offer a correction on your suggested readings. The William Thorndale item is an unpublished thesis done at the University of Washington.

Also, readers would want to know that the Oregon Improvement Company records are in the University of Washington Manuscript Collection and that they are available on microfilm through interlibrary loan. Readers may obtain a copy of the published OIC records inventory by writing to Karyl Winn, Head of the Archives and Manuscripts Division. The records were microfilmed under a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Richard C. Berner
Seattle

CORRECTION

IN THE SPRING 1994 issue, the text on page 38 should have stated that C. K. Hamilton died attended by his second wife, not his first.
With this book Carlos Schwantes, well-known for his work in labor history and other regional studies, will transcend the limits of academe and reach a huge popular audience. Only a few topics—Native Americans, the Civil War, the history of the American West—have wider public appeal than the history of American railroading. Railroad Signatures is meticulously researched and well-written, and the University of Washington Press tendered great care to the book's production.

I knew I would like this book as soon as I broke the cover and saw a marvelous map of the “railroad signatures” (in the author’s parlance) written across Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, circa 1916. The map is indicative of Schwantes’ approach: he writes about where the railroads went, as opposed to how they got there in the literal sense. Only the most rarefied of rail historians can fathom the arcana of motive power evolution—the typical format for most rail histories. But this book is not like that.

Railroad Signatures is organized into three principal divisions. The first covers the period 1868 to 1893—what might be called the “heroic age.” Starting with the first primitive attempts to circumvent the whirlpools of the Columbia, Schwantes weaves a fascinating narrative of encounters between the “giants” of industry—men like Henry Villard and James J. Hill—and the Pacific Northwest landscape. The “golden age” of Northwest railroading, 1897 to 1917, features the epic battles between Hill and his northern roads (including the usurped Northern Pacific) and Edward Harriman’s lines, the Southern Pacific and Union Pacific combine. The impact of the transcontinental railroads on the creation and popularization of the region’s national parks is particularly well told here. Part three tells of the slow diminution of the carriers’ fortunes brought on by such developments as the Panama Canal, automobiles and airplanes.

To say that this book is amply illustrated does not do justice to the publication. With 245 illustrations, readers are never more than a page away from colorful replications of railroad ephemera or stunning documentary photographs. In other respects the book is an adventure; imaginings of a rail region that some dreamed, but could not build a prosperous community in the Garden of Eden and we could not run a railroad if there was nobody but Adam and Eve to use it.” Now, late in the 20th century, railroads are just as fervently divesting themselves of branch lines, pulling up track, lapsing rights of way and concentrating on their through-traffic trunk lines from the Pacific Coast to the Midwest. Geographers Frank and Deborah Popper’s thesis that vast stretches of the West are depopulating to pre-1890 levels is reflected in the contemporary practice of the transcontinental railroads where stack trains carry finished cargoes from coast to coast with nary a cattle car in sight and precious few passenger accommodations. As ably written as this book is, it still leaves room for further development on this theme.

Reading Railroad Signatures, one is confirmed in the belief that it is impossible to underestimate railroad influences on this region’s pattern of trade, travel and settlement. The author’s provocative hints on how railroads shaped the region’s character set the stage for further rumination and exploration.

David L. Nicandri, in addition to being director of the Washington State Historical Society, is an author and a railroad historian.

More substantially, Schwantes’ book reflects a fundamental pattern in the modern history of the West. In the 19th and early 20th centuries railroad magnates rushed madly to build or acquire numerous feeder lines, stimulated settlement and effectively ended “the frontier,” as that phrase was once understood. James J. Hill, speaking at the completion of the Oregon Trunk Railroad at Bend, Oregon, in 1911, said that his new line would “get people into this country. You could not build a prosperous community in the Garden of Eden and we could not run a railroad if there was nobody but Adam and Eve to use it.” Now, late in the 20th century, railroads are just as fervently divesting themselves of branch lines, pulling up track, lapsing rights of way and concentrating on their through-traffic trunk lines from the Pacific Coast to the Midwest. Geographers Frank and Deborah Popper’s thesis that vast stretches of the West are depopulating to pre-1890 levels is reflected in the contemporary practice of the transcontinental railroads where stack trains carry finished cargoes from coast to coast with nary a cattle car in sight and precious few passenger accommodations. As ably written as this book is, it still leaves room for further development on this theme.

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Washington State Place Names
From Alki to Yelm
Reviewed by Sharon Prendergast.

“This is a book in which to browse. Absorb it slowly and it should enhance your appreciation of the region.” With these words Doug Brokenshire introduces Washington State Place Names from Alki to Yelm, and his intentions are clear from the outset. His book is not a dictionary of place-names in Washington, but a synopsis—and sometimes more—of the history of places, including their lore and legends.

Many places in Washington were explored and named by fur traders and overland explorers. It is surprising, though, how many places in the state first felt the imprint of Spanish explorers. It was customary for Spanish naval ships to carry a Catholic Church calendar that each day honored a particular saint. As a result, a large number of place-names on Washington’s coast reflect this influence.

Brokenshire includes an impressive bibliography and a cross-referenced index. The frontal fold-out map is also good, and entries sometimes include quotes from pertinent sources.

The book tends to concentrate on the Puget Sound area, overlooking several noteworthy eastern Washington names. One of the more memorable entries is Latah Creek, which begins in Idaho and
Astorian Adventure
The Journal of Alfred Seton, 1811-1815
Reviewed by David M. Corlett.

A storian Adventure is a prime source for historians of the Pacific Northwest’s competitive fur trade era as well as an interesting story in itself. In its detailed pages Alfred Seton recounts tensions with natives, the ongoing competition between Americans and the British North West Company, and the eventual collapse of John Jacob Astor’s Pacific Fur Company.

Seton joined Astor’s Pacific Fur Company as a clerk and sailed to the Pacific Northwest in 1811 on the Beaver. The prospect of war between the United States and Great Britain made the voyage tense, but the cruise actually proved uneventful, except for a stop in Hawaii. After the vessel docked at Fort Astoria, Seton remained in the Oregon Country for three years. During this time he journeyed up the Columbia River on several occasions to find new trapping grounds, assist in transporting furs and goods, or obtain food supplies. Seton also went to the Willamette Valley, which he correctly predicted would be the future center of any settlement in Oregon.

On several occasions Seton, or others of his party, had violent encounters with the Native Americans of the region. These incidents often arose over the theft of trade goods. One such affair led the company’s men to conduct a lodge-by-lodge search at gunpoint of an entire Indian village in order to recover stolen property. At other times relations were peaceful enough to allow Seton to winter with the Nez Perce. Seton witnessed the collapse of the Pacific Fur Company in 1814. Pressures of the War of 1812 permitted the British-owned North West Company to assume ownership of Fort Astoria and the trapping grounds of Astor’s men. Out of a job, Seton drifted along with the British company until he obtained passage to Alaska, California and, finally, home to New York. In the process, Seton drank with the Russian governor of Alaska, contemplated marriage to a Spanish girl and nearly died of malaria.

Professor Jones of Fordham University has done an excellent job of editing the journals of Seton. He provides abundant and detailed notes that contribute much to the text and our understanding of the global aspects of this turbulent period in fur trade history. His introduction is concise and informative. In fact, thanks to Jones’s consider-
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by Joseph A. King

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