WHERE NATURE
AND HISTORY MEET

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Forest Nightmares
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Foreword by William Cronon

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shows that men conquered fish not
with 'ingenuity' but with brute force,
ignorance, and greed. ... Neither
sentimental nor simple, [this book]
is a model of ecological history."
—New York Times Book Review

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FRONT COVER: Postcard view of Grand Coulee Dam. Though early proponents of the dam promised that irrigation water for the Columbia Basin Project would cost the farmers nothing, the federal government eventually required disgruntled growers to contribute financial support. See related story beginning on page 6.
BACK COVER: Edward Curtis photographed this Wshtahnom woman on the rocks above The Dullies in 1910. True to his ethnographic vision, he removed the background and retouched the lines of her dress, bringing the focus of the photograph to the subject's features and clothing. See related story beginning on page 17. (Special Collections, Washington State Historical Society)
Every issue of COLUMBIA is a success story. We are now in our tenth year of production, perhaps to the surprise of many who doubted John McClelland's vision when the Society launched this enterprise back in 1987. I feel that COLUMBIA has set a new standard for the literary presentation of history in the Northwest, much like the new Washington State History Museum will revolutionize the three-dimensional view of our state's past.

Readers may be interested to know, since we get many questions about it, that a ten-year index to COLUMBIA is in production. Our principal compilers are Robert C. Carriker and Mary Petty of Gonzaga University.

The issue before you contains the usual interesting mix of topics. The debate over the "new western history," previously covered in these pages by the exchanges of Michael Allen and Richard White, is continued via Michael Green's "History Commentary."

We try to make sure that articles on the history of eastern Washington appear in each issue of COLUMBIA, and this time we have two. Past contributor and award-winning author Paul Pitzer delivers an interesting piece of political history on Floyd Dominy's clash with Columbia Basin farmers. Additionally, the roadways of eastern Washington are featured in Yvonne Prater's entertaining account of the origins of the Yellowstone Trail.

Few topics have as wide an appeal as the fur trade (evidenced most recently by the tremendous turnout that the Center for Columbia River History had for its conference in Vancouver last fall). Steve Anderson, former curator for the restoration of Fort Nisqually, writes about the agricultural side of the Hudson's Bay Company's operations at Cowlitz Farm.

Additionally, Rolland Dewing provides a meaningful memoir on the pivotal period of the Dust Bowl migration to Washington, and Stuart MacVeigh offers an innovative twist on local military history. Lastly, our own Stephanie Lile presents a vivid interpretation on Washington's two great artist/photographer brothers: Asahel and Edward Curtis.

See you in the summer (at the new museum)!

—David L. Nicandri, Executive Editor
Making Canada Disappear

Pacific Northwest history is incomprehensible without an understanding of the Canadian-American relationship. This interconnection is prominent in every era of Northwest history from the age of exploration to the present. Yet Patricia Limerick and Richard White, two advocates of the “new” western history, have purged western history of its Canadian content. Limerick’s book, The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West (1987), is considered the first salvo of a revisionist assault on the “old” western history. Hailed as a “centerpiece” of the “new” western history, White’s text, It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West, appeared in 1991. Canada is not mentioned in the index of either work, though terms like Mexico, Mexican-American, Chicano and Hispanic appear dozens of times. Their failure to consider the Canadian perspective cripples the “new” western historians in two ways: their history is incomplete, and they miss an opportunity for comparative analysis.

Beyond overlooking Canada and emphasizing Mexico, the “new” western historians see the trans-Mississippi West as a region, not a process, categorically rejecting the frontier thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner. They stress race, gender and class conflicts as well as environmental destruction. Much of the blame for the negative consequences of western history is assigned to a bungling federal government and a rapacious business community.

White’s Your Misfortune exemplifies the strengths and weaknesses of this new scholarship. A synthesis of recent monographic and journal literature, this work runs to over 600 pages of text. White deliberately truncated the 19th century, where he could have paraded a considerable expertise, to devote more space to the 20th century, a field greatly in need of analysis. The book is a wealth of information on a wide range of topics. Urban growth, the role of Mexican-Americans, the “imagined West” and the interaction of the federal government and corporate America are subjects particularly well done.

Still, Your Misfortune is conspicuously weak in its treatment of our region. White’s credentials as an environmental historian are not in evidence here, as he slights or ignores every major environmental issue in Northwest history. The Endangered Species Act is not mentioned. The timber management crisis is scarcely touched, and there is nothing on Hanford’s troubled legacy. Except for a cryptic comment that Grand Coulee Dam blocked salmon migration, White completely overlooks the fish management issue. No other environmental subject is as defining in the region’s recent history as this complex and controversial topic. The decline of salmon and steelhead runs has been blamed on dams, pollution, habitat destruction, and overfishing. It involves Indian rights, court decisions, congressional mandates, international treaties, and the most passionate involvement of dozens of interest groups.

The anadromous fish crisis is only one area of regional history requiring inclusion of the Canadian role. The “new” western history’s failure to include Canada is certainly not for lack of information, for there is a large literature on the Canadian-American West going back to Turner and beyond. Perhaps because most of this work was done by “old” western historians, it is easier to ignore.

But how can one ignore Canada? It shares a 5,000-plus-mile border with the United States, including the line between Alaska and Canada. Geographically, Canada is much more a part of the North American West than is Mexico, which has neither a West nor a westward movement. The northwest corner of North America, including the vast Yukon and Columbia river systems, is shared by the United States and Canada. The number of ecosystems and a greater bio-diversity (from tundra willow and polar bears to cactus and rattlesnakes) also help to distinguish the northern border from the boundary with Mexico. In fact, the greater bio-diversity of the northern border is one of the reasons for so much Canadian-American cooperation involving wilderness and wildlife management. A significant recent example is the transplantation of wolves from Alberta into Yellowstone National Park and the Frank Church Wilderness Area of central Idaho.

Northwest Indians have been affected adversely by the northern border. Over a dozen tribes (notably the interior Salish) were divided into Canadian and American factions, thus creating a range of problems for both governments and the splintered tribes (and a range of topics for scholars willing to consider the utility of comparative analysis).

We also share an ocean shoreline and a waterway with Canada. This feature of Northwest geography is a basic trade and transportation route as well as the arena for contentious fisheries and pollution
issues. Vancouver, British Columbia, emerged by 1984 as the second-busiest port in North America, while American use of Canada’s inside passage to Alaska continued to increase dramatically.

One of the few scholars to even comment on the omission of Canada in the “new” western history, William Robbins suggests that the northern border lacks the social tensions and conflict that make the southern border “a more attractive arena of research.” Indeed, social tensions, environmental exploitation and destruction seem to preoccupy the “new” western historians. This narrow view helps to explain the failure to recognize the relevance of the Canadian-American West.

Economic ties to Canada, for example, have been far more important across much of the American West than any connection to Mexico. Consider the deficiencies of the “new” western history revealed in White’s description of Denver’s building boom:

When . . . local banks refused to finance Denver’s downtown expansion, the money came in from outside capitalists such as William Zechendorf and the Mackinson brothers of Dallas. The real decisions about Denver’s future were being made outside of Denver. (Your Misfortune, p. 544).

Actually, a good part of Denver’s future was being shaped by Canadians, as Andrew Malcolm noted in his 1985 study: “During Denver’s downtown construction boom fully half of the eighty-six new buildings under way were owned by Canadians . . . .” (The Canadians, p. 200).

Americans have long demonstrated a benevolent ignorance about Canada and Canadian history. “New” western historians are no different. Perhaps they see only American domination of Canada. Certainly the United States exerted a powerful influence on Canada’s western expansion. Pierre Berton described an “American invasion” of the western provinces during the great “wheat boom,” and he noted that “in both Alberta and Saskatchewan, the American-born soon outnumbered the English by a ratio of two to one.” These Americans helped create the western personality that looms so large in Canada’s political ferment today. Now the descendents of those American immigrants, thoroughly Canadianized, are prowling the American West looking for business opportunities.

Besides their extensive real estate ventures, Canadians have moved aggressively into western gold mining. The archaic 1872 mining law has been exploited by Canadian companies that have patented thousands of acres of public land for their controversial cyanide leaching process. Canadian-owned American Barrick Resources recently paid $9,765 for 1,149 acres in Nevada containing gold with a gross value of $10 billion, prompting Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt to call the transaction “the biggest gold heist since the days of Butch Cassidy.”

A dramatic demonstration of Canadian-American connections was provided by the Northridge, California, earthquake on January 17, 1994. The quake knocked out electric power to Calgary, Alberta, for 30 minutes. Most students of Northwest history recognized the cause. The Northwest/Southwest Intertie went down, sending shock waves through the grid as far north as Calgary. The Intertie, which allows large amounts of surplus power to be wheeled back and forth between the Northwest and the Southwest, was a major consequence of the Columbia River Treaty between Canada and the United States, ratified in 1964. This agreement provided for American financing of additional upstream storage dams on the Columbia River in Canada. The resulting power surplus was marketed in California.

Electric power, natural gas, oil, cattle, wheat and lumber are some of the Canadian products coming into the United States. But this is a two-way exchange. In fact, it is the largest bilateral trading relationship in the world. United States merchandise exports to Canada in 1993 were more than twice those to Japan and nearly equaled United States exports to the 12 countries of the European Union. This booming trade has been expanding rapidly since the Canadian-American Free Trade Agreement of 1988. However, this mutually beneficial exchange is not without controversy. The two countries are in constant disagreement over trade-related matters, with Canadian lumber imports and the 1985 salmon treaty currently heading the list.

North American free trade has stimulated the development of “Cascadia,” an informal alliance of British Columbia and the states of Oregon and Washington. The Economist (May 21, 1994) characterizes the alliance as a growing “array of cooperative links through state-to-province accords, business councils, regional-governmental bodies, policy institutes and task forces.” Western Washington University recently hosted a cross-border conference, “Nature Has No Borders,” at which joint management issues of the northern Cascades ecosystem were examined. Boosters in both countries use such natural attractions as this shared wilderness to promote Cascadia for trade and tourism.

Perhaps the tempo of Cascadia is best measured at Blaine, Washington, where 11 million vehicle crossings annually make this the busiest stretch of the Canadian-American border. While this activity has increased significantly in the past decade, its root run deep into the last century. By overlooking such an important perspective, the “new” western history has not lived up to Limerick’s boast that it has produced a “more balanced view of the western past.”

The use of Canada for comparative analysis would help Limerick meet her objective. A common geography and a shared western experience offer dozens of topics for cross-border study. There is now, for example, a rich literature on Canadian Indian policy that invites such an effort. Western separatism, immigration, settlement patterns, forest management policies and environmental movements are just a few of the other subjects that can be studied comparatively. These opportunities are more numerous and certainly more relevant for our region than are similar topics across the southern border. Seymour Martin Lipset argues that “those who know only one country know no country well. Countries can be best understood in comparative perspective…. ” Robin Winks makes the same point: “The historian of the United States who is ignorant of Canadian history is ignorant of his own history… .”

Important cross-border studies have been done by John Fahey, Robin Fisher, Max Geier, Norbert MacDonald, Carlos Schwantes, Paul Sharp, Donald Warner, Melody Webb and Robert Wynne. But the best example of this genre is William J. Trimble’s The Mining
The Peach Arch at Blaine, Washington, on the United States-Canadian border, was built in 1921 as a symbol of the cordial relationship between the two neighboring countries.

Advance into the Inland Empire (1914), a superb comparative study of the northwestern United States and British Columbia’s mineral frontiers in the 1850s and '60s, done as a dissertation under Turner.

Unfortunately, overlooking Canada is not the only lapse that plagues the "new" western history. There are other deficiencies in scholarship resulting from revisionist zeal and a heavy reliance on secondary works. A preoccupation with the Southwest and a strained effort to demonstrate the uniqueness of the West in the 20th century add to the confusion.

Particularly puzzling is the insistence that federal defense spending in the Cold War years was an exceptional western feature. Donald Worster repeats this shopworn myth by stating that the post-World War II West was "dominated by the military-industrial complex," and "its economic health would rise and fall with the prospects of the Pentagon and the Cold War." More cautiously, White writes that "the military-industrial complex, so ubiquitous in the West, was only slightly less so in the East." A trip to the sources confirms that both are in error.

The South, not the East or the West, has been the major beneficiary of Cold War spending. This should surprise no one familiar with the role of southern congressmen and their command of key congressional committees well into the 1970s. Senator Richard Russell and Congressman Carl Vinson of Georgia teamed up to stuff 20 military installations into their state. Clark Clifford said, "The combination of Russell and Vinson was the most powerful legislative team in my entire experience in Washington." Praise indeed, but their efforts were exceeded by Mendel Rivers, who followed Vinson as chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. Rivers won so many military installations and defense contracts for his South Carolina district that Vinson warned, "You put anything else down there in your district, Mendel, it's gonna sink!" Southern states and the South as a region head the list when defense spending is broken down by state and compared on a per capita basis.

The shortcomings of the "new" western history should not obscure its significance. If nothing else, these iconoclasts have provoked a useful scholarly exchange between generations. Many "old" western historians, including this writer, have been jolted out of their complacency and forced to rethink the nature and meaning of western history. Despite its omissions and slips, White's Your Misfortune is the most important "new" western history contribution to date, a baseline study for historians of the 20th-century West.

Ironically, White and his colleagues have actually strengthened the case for Pacific Northwest history. By slighting the northern border in favor of the southern, they have inadvertently demonstrated how exceptional our region really is. Much of this regional identity derives from a common geography and an interlocked economy—the foundations of the Canadian-American Northwest (or the American-Canadian Southwest from a British Columbian point of view). Fortunately for scholars wishing to "get up to speed" in this area, there are Canadian Studies centers at the University of Oregon, University of Washington and Western Washington University where bibliographic and research assistance are available.

-Michael K. Green

Michael K. Green is a Professor of History at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, where he teaches Pacific Northwest history and the history of Canada.
It was another battle in the ongoing conflict between farmers and irrigation water providers that erupted occasionally in the arid West during the 20th century. In this case, on one side there was Floyd Elgin Dominy. Of all the men who served as commissioner for the Bureau of Reclamation during the 20th century, he was unquestionably the most colorful and flamboyant. Journalist-historian Marc Reisner described him as a "two-fisted drinker" and gambler with a "scabrous vocabulary," "a self-destructive impulse, a violent temper, and a compulsion to tempt fate." He rose rapidly through the ranks in the Bureau of Reclamation, reaching the top by unseating the popular Wilbur A. Dexheimer. Dominy manipulated Congress, held grudges, and gave rather than took orders. Where Floyd Dominy presided, he was in charge and few dared challenge him.

On the other side stood the farmers of eastern Washington's Columbia Basin Project. They depended on the irrigation water provided by the Bureau of Reclamation, and collectively they had committed themselves to pay thousands of dollars for that water over a number of decades. Historian Donald Worster, following the theme of Karl Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism*, argued that "large-scale irrigation was possible only in a tightly ordered and hierarchical society whose members surrendered control of their labor, and much of their political and personal freedom, to a centralized authority." In other words, farmers on large federally-built and regulated irrigation projects, such as the Columbia Basin Project, would be so indebted to and dependent on the government agency that provided their water that in return for that water they sacrificed their political power and independence. Such, however, was clearly not the case with the Columbia Basin farmers.
By Paul C. Pitzer

asin Project

They Called Floyd Dominy a “Four-Flusher”

In his recent book, *The Great Thirst*, historian Norris Hundley comments that “Wittfogel’s theory does not seem to find support in the experiences of California’s aboriginal irrigationists.” He could have added that the considerably more contemporary farmers of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, a truly large-scale development, also do not fit the Wittfogel-Worster model. They eloquently demonstrated that fact one February 1960 night in Pasco when 200 of them, angry and resolute about their relationship with the Bureau or Reclamation, shouted at Floyd Dominy. Some added the charge that the commissioner was nothing more than a “four-flusher” (a term for a poker player who is bluffing with only four cards of a five-card flush). It was not abuse that Dominy suffered easily, but that night he took it. It brought to a climax a problem that had escalated since the early 1950s when irrigation began on the large project.

Envisioned in the late 19th century, and quickened by food shortages during World War I, the scheme was viewed by promoters of the Columbia Basin Project—men like Wenatchee Daily World editor Rufus Woods and Spokane Chamber of Commerce members Roy Gill and Fred Adams—as a way to put water onto the arid land of the Big Bend. Enthusiasts like James O’Sullivan, who proposed what became Grand Coulee Dam as the best way to do the job, incessantly promised that selling electricity would pay all the bills and that the water would be free to the farmers who used it. In 1930 Rufus Woods had stated that power would pay for the entire project. In 1932 he claimed that the project would pay itself off in 30 years through power revenues. The Bureau of Reclamation undertook the project during the halcyon days of the New Deal, and it emerged as the largest single irrigation project in the nation.

Landowners within project boundaries showed their independence immediately. When the Bureau of Reclamation demanded that they form one large irrigation district they refused and created three independent entities. In the wake of land ownership limitations they withdrew over 300,000 of the 1,029,000-acre total, almost a third of the project, mostly on the east side where sufficient rainfall can usually support dry-land wheat farming. Remembering the promises that the water would be free, the farmers belabored negotiations over the required government repayment contract for five years. Finally, in 1945, they agreed to reimburse $85 per acre over forty years, after a free ten-year adjustment period.

In 1952 the Bureau of Reclamation delivered the first water from behind Grand Coulee Dam. Over the next decade it enlarged the project, but unexpected drainage problems left thousands of acres soggy and unusable. Costs soared as the bureau struggled to deliver water and remove it at the same time. Farmers complained that they had to pay increasingly higher operation and maintenance charges while their incomes dropped due to agricultural overproduction and falling prices. And the 40-year repayment period had not yet started.

In 1953, one year after the first water delivery, the manager of the Columbia Basin Project submitted a statement to the three irrigation boards proposing upward revision of the repayment contracts. Those proposals, based on estimates that drainage would eventually cost not the allocated $8 million but perhaps $40 million or more, also included increases in the repayment fees that farmers would later pay. But project farmers showed no enthusiasm for the discussions, especially those not yet receiving water, and they flatly rejected any contract changes.

The repayment contracts of 1945 had formalized the idea that farmers would return to the government fixed amounts
and not a set percentage of project costs. In 1945 the $85 per acre charge would have covered only about 25 percent of the estimated project cost, down from 50 percent in 1935. By 1952 inflation had further reduced that to around 16 percent, and by 1959 some said it was as low as 11 percent. Ignoring this, settlers instead focused on loosening or removing the limits on land ownership. While they saw no problem with changing the rules to allow themselves more acreage, they bitterly opposed increasing their financial obligation.

When discussions turned to the mounting drainage costs, the farmers argued that they should not have to pay for Bureau miscalculations. They pointed to dry drainage ditches in some areas while hundreds of acres stood ruined by rising water tables elsewhere, citing this situation as evidence that the bureau used money unwisely and charging that it had done so deliberately to provide itself with a stronger negotiating position. Farmers argued that they had already paid all they could. Reclamation precedent mandated that charges to water users be based on their financial standing and not on the costs of the project. But in 1958 a study requested by the bureau and conducted by the Farmer's Home Administration indicated that average income on the project had risen nearly $2,000 per farm between 1955 and 1957. The farmers replied that crop returns in 1958 were only 60 percent of those in 1952, and so their ability to repay had actually declined.

A second study, done directly by the bureau and finished late in January 1959, reported that the farmers' ability to repay had increased by three dollars an acre annually when compared to conditions in 1945. Consequently, when negotiations began that January, the Bureau of Reclamation refused to discuss Grand Coulee power revenues and Harold Nelson, the bureau's regional director, stated that the talks had to center entirely on the water users' "reasonable ability to pay." Both sides used statistics to their advantage. The $85 repayment cost was based on 1940 dollars, and had that cost been adjusted for inflation, something not allowed in the contract, the farmers would have been obligated to pay considerably more per acre. Without higher repayments, the bureau announced, project expansion would stop in 1963. At the same time, the irrigation district boards approached the Columbia Basin Commission and asked it to support their contention that the project should be finished without any change in the current contracts. The commission agreed.

In May 1959, to break the deadlock, the bureau submitted three formulas to the irrigation district boards. They ranged from charges of $133.50 per acre over 50 years to $125 per acre over 50 years with limits on expenditures for drainage. The three boards recommended $125 per acre over 50 years, allowing $44,500,000 for drainage works. While reclamation officials would not guarantee that this would be enough, both sides were reasonably comfortable with the figure.

On July 29 the East-Columbia Basin Irrigation District, the first of the three districts to vote, turned down the new contract by 897 to 327. In an editorial on the defeat, the Tri-City Herald commented:

In our opinion renegotiation isn't really dead because it never was alive. When you looked into the subject you discovered two worlds—one the hazy world of the Bureau of Reclamation and the Irrigation District commissioners, and the other the grim world of the farmer.

How the feelings of the farmers could have been so badly misjudged is . . . beyond us. It was even circulated that opposition to the new contract was confined to a "small vocal group in the South District." That myth was exploded yesterday.

Caught off guard by the overwhelming rejection and seeing that it had misjudged the farmers, the bureau canceled the other elections.

Immediately after the East District rejected the new contract, the Bureau of Reclamation took action that further soured relations with the districts. Operation and management charges, estimated by the bureau at around $2.60 an acre in 1953, already averaged $5.75 in 1957. This, added to quadrupled state and federal tax increases over the first ten years of water delivery, outraged project farmers. Now the bureau projected an additional $1.65 per acre in 1960. The farmers saw this as direct intimidation. They met with Senator Warren Magnuson, who backed their decision to organize a "water users' strike," and they resolved not to pay the higher operation and maintenance charges. The Bureau of Reclamation announced that if the farmers withheld payments, no water would be delivered during the 1960 irrigation season.

In December 1959, 125 water users met in Othello and demanded that power revenues pay the drainage assessment. They insisted that they would not pay the fees, and they asked Congress to investigate the project. From February 9 to 11, 1960, Commissioner Dominy traveled across the Columbia Basin, meeting in Pasco, Mesa, Warden and Quincy with the district boards and farmers. In a three-hour meeting in Pasco, with about 200 present, Dominy responded to angry questions. When one farmer shouted, "Don't try to get money out of us because we haven't got it," the others cheered. Withstanding a level of abuse that he seldom tolerated, the commissioner remained pleasant despite the repeated cries of "four-flusher" and in the end calmly told the farmers to take their case directly to Congress.

Over 300 farmers attended the Mesa meeting. They kept Dominy until almost midnight, and during that time none of the farmers spoke kindly about the Bureau of Reclamation. One settler called the project "an extortion game." Again remaining remarkably restrained, Dominy told them, "If the contract I'm offering you is worse than the one you got, I'm a monkey's uncle." He complained later that the farmers had closed minds and that they were unwilling to listen to facts.

As Dominy suggested, the farmers approached their congressmen. On February 15, 1960, Senators Henry Jackson and Warren Magnuson introduced a resolution asking
Congress to grant a two-year moratorium on Columbia Basin Project annual drainage charges and to establish a board to investigate all phases of the project, reporting back in one year. With the farmers refusing to pay the assessed fees and the bureau threatening to cut off water delivery, the senators commented, “In effect, the Bureau of Reclamation has set a time-bomb to go off in the Columbia Basin Project this spring.” The bill, if passed, would “defuse this bomb” and establish an “armistice period.”

As the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs conducted a comprehensive review of the repayment problem, Jackson and Magnuson amended their bill so that it guaranteed water deliveries in 1960 and 1961. The Senate Interior Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation approved the bill as amended, despite objections from the Bureau of Reclamation. Everything went smoothly as the bill passed the Senate. But the House of Representatives cut the 1961 Columbia Basin Project appropriation to its lowest level since the war, and Representative Walter E. Rogers, a Democrat from Texas, announced that he was in no hurry to conduct hearings on the Magnuson-Jackson moratorium bill.

A new repayment capacity study, done partly by the Department of Agricultural Economics at Washington State University, pictured project farmers in a more favorable economic position than they themselves indicated. Buoyed by this development, the Bureau of Reclamation hardened its position. Dominy demanded that the districts either pay the drainage assessments or at least guarantee the money and that they do so before a May 1 deadline. On May 1, 1960, all three irrigation districts together placed $620,000 in escrow accounts at various local banks. Then they waited to see what the House of Representatives would do.

In mid May the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee held hearings on the Magnuson-Jackson bill. From the outset the exchanges lacked a conciliatory tone. Committee members commented that the extensive use of power revenues to offset irrigation charges was unprecedented on reclamation projects and that drainage was traditionally not the government’s responsibility, generally being left entirely to the irrigation districts. Farmer spokesman Walter Le Page detailed the cost-price squeeze and Earl Weber of Quincy pointed out that operation costs on the project had doubled over just a few years. “Veterans are going broke,” Weber complained. The Bureau of Reclamation sent officials who testified against the bill. Up from the $125 per acre figure, the men explained that the government would now seek $133.50 per acre over 50 years as terms of any new contract.

On the final day of the hearings things went from bad to worse for members of the Columbia Basin Water Users Association. Republican Representative John Phillips Saylor of Pennsylvania responded to Walter Le Page’s statement that the “process of negotiation stinks,” by stating that such comments reflected on the committee’s integrity. At the conclusion the legislators told the farmers to “go home and work out your problems with the Bureau of Reclamation.” The House Appropriations Committee simultaneously withdrew funding from the project, stopping any new construction.

Walter Le Page wrote to Magnuson a few days later:

Maybe some of the static was justified, but not all of it. We have been criticizing the Bureau of Reclamation and maybe this
Floyd Dominy told me that you and Sen. Jackson undercut the Bureau of Reclamation when you asked for the Senate hearing. He may not appreciate your action, but the farmers do.

On July 18, 1960, Commissioner Dominy accompanied members of the House of Representatives subcommittee on a three-day tour of the project followed by a meeting in Moses Lake. Over 300 farmers attended, and the hot weather did nothing to cool tempers on either side. In response to unfriendly shouting from the audience one of the congressmen retorted that they were angry too; they had traveled to Washington state to help and had done so at personal expense and inconvenience. Most of the 30 people who testified did so calmly, and the exchanges were civil until Harold E. Soden, an Ephrata farmer, told Representative J. T. Rutherford, Democrat of Texas, that power revenues from Grand Coulee Dam were as important to the Columbia Basin Project as offshore oil was to his state. Rutherford exploded, "I told you what you'd get—nothing. Don't start throwing barbs at me, buddy boy." When the four congressmen departed the next day, two declared against the drainage moratorium bill, one said that he favored it, and one remained undecided.

The House and Senate conference returned some funding to the project. Then on September 1 Congress adjourned without passing the bill. When the three irrigation districts had placed their drainage assessments in escrow, they agreed to yield those funds to the Bureau of Reclamation if Congress failed to act. When the bill died the districts released the money without protest.

The next blow fell a few weeks later. The Bureau of Reclamation announced that it had held the drainage charge increase to $1.65 per acre in 1960 but that in 1961 the assessment would rise to $2.30 per acre. This, added to the normal operation and maintenance cost of $6.38, would bring the total to an average of $8.68 per acre. Horrified, the three district boards considered their next step.

The presidential election that fall offered hope. On November 4 Democratic candidate John F. Kennedy wrote to Washington Governor Albert D. Rosellini, "It would be the goal of my administration, if I am elected president, to seek an equitable solution to the drainage and repayment problem. We must carry forward the program and ideals established by the administrations of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman for the development of Grand Coulee Dam and the great Columbia Basin Irrigation Project." Negotiations stopped for the election.

On November 8, 1960, Republican contender Richard M. Nixon carried all of North Central Washington. In Grant County, the heart of the Columbia Basin Project, Nixon, with 6,785 votes, defeated Kennedy, who drew 6,554 votes. Kennedy, however, narrowly won the election nationally. Within a few weeks, irrigation district officials began calling on him to fulfill his promise. "Some Republican farmers are saying now, 'Let's see what the Democrats can do,'" Walter Le Page wrote in December to Senator Magnuson.

Kennedy turned the matter over to his new Secretary of the Interior, Stewart L. Udall, who in turn passed it on to Undersecretary James K. Carr. Carr appointed a board of three consultants. William R. Gianelli, former assistant to the California director of the Water Resources Department, was selected as chairman. He was assisted by LaSelle E. Coles, manager of the Ochoco Irrigation District, Prineville, Oregon, and president of the National Reclamation Association; and Dr. Roy E. Huffman, dean of Agriculture and director of the experimental station at Montana State University.

Carr instructed them to recommend an equitable solution. They found that not only were the three districts at odds with the Bureau of Reclamation, they also disagreed with each other and the directors did not always speak for the farmers. They recommended retaining the $85 per acre charge and adding $46.60 over a new 10-year period to cover drainage. That period would follow the original 40-year repayment period, thus lengthening the total commitment of farmers from 40 to 50 years and from $85 to $131.60 per acre.
Further, the report urged loosening land ownership limitations and removing anti-speculation restraints so that the project would resemble other federal reclamation efforts.

In the meantime Senators Jackson and Magnuson reintroduced their drainage payment moratorium bill. By the end of August both houses had approved it, and on August 30 President Kennedy signed the measure.

By the middle of September the Bureau of Reclamation and the three irrigation districts opened new preliminary talks aimed at a renegotiated contract. When farmers saw that the repayment costs in the first ten years of the new contract would drop from $2.12 per acre to $1.00 and that $300,000 in overpayments made by farmers in 1961 would reduce operation and maintenance charges in 1962, the atmosphere warmed appreciably. Government representatives added that they would back a bill in Congress to loosen land ownership limitations. This was significant. Operation and maintenance charges were divided among farmers depending on the amount of land they owned and the quality of that land. The more land farmed, the more acres paying the fees but the greater the farmer's after-costs profits. The bureau would also recommend eliminating leasing restrictions and removing other requirements that remained from the anti-speculation legislation of New Deal days.

Out of the discussions two contracts emerged for each district: a lengthy, detailed document and an abbreviated version, or “short form.” The long version had all the new benefits spelled out, which meant that rejection by Congress would negate the entire effort. The short form established a contract but allowed Congress to bestow or deny individual benefits. On February 14, 1962, the Quincy District overwhelmingly approved the document by 2,263 to 297. The South and East districts opted for and accepted the long form.

When Secretary Udall sent Congress a bill to amend the contracts, including all the agreed-upon benefits, Jackson and Magnuson backed it wholeheartedly. They realized the limits they faced and were irritated at the farmers who failed to understand the constraints under which they labored. The squabble had continued far too long, and Magnuson and Jackson were eager to see resolution, as was the Bureau of Reclamation. With their backing and with administration support, the House and then the Senate passed the measure. President Kennedy signed it on October 1, 1962.

During the ten-year debate over drainage and contract renegotiation, farmers on the project showed little appreciation for the value of the subsidy they received from power rate payers or the considerably higher cost of irrigation water on adjacent land not within the project. Although the 1945 contracts set a fixed price for water user repayment, unanticipated economic changes dramatically altered conditions. Had farmers been required to repay the same percentage of the cost of the project in 1960 that they had agreed to repay in 1945, the charges would have dwarfed anything ever mentioned by the bureau. A study in 1973 done under the direction of Ralph Nader claimed that while the Bureau of Reclamation frequently proclaims high returns from its reclamation projects, the figures hide enormous subsidies. As for the farmers, they simply concluded that hydroelectric power purchasers should pay the bills regardless of how high they might climb. While the Bureau of Reclamation tried to develop the project and solve its financial problems, the irrigators created considerable adverse publicity and thereby embarrassed their already frustrated benefactor. Further, the farmers undoubtedly exaggerated the economic hardships they faced.

The record of early public and private irrigation projects through the late 1890s and early 1900s shows a pattern that might well have presaged some of what happened later in the Columbia Basin during the 1950s. Farmers then frequently disagreed with officials over repayment of construction costs. The 1890 census reported that relations between corporations owning irrigation facilities and the water users were not always friendly. On early federal projects between 1902 and World War I the farmers often accused the government of “paternalistic tyranny,” alleging that it had duped them into believing that their repayments would be much lower than the later reality. Some charged that their ultimate repayment obligation reached twice the original estimates and they portrayed the federal reclamation program as a devious hoax. Officials, for their part, charged the settlers with fraud and political harassment. It was not uncommon, especially in the 1920s, for farmers on reclamation projects simply to default on their repayment obligations. Apparently the Columbia Basin Project farmers are only one group among many that do not neatly fit the Wittfogel-Worster model depicting the Bureau of Reclamation as an all-powerful tyrant intimidating politically helpless farmers.

Once adopted by the government, most projects proceeded without problems until it came time for the farmers to pay the bill. Then harmonious relations between irrigator and water provider often deteriorated rapidly. In the case of the Columbia Basin Project, the trouble started during the ten-year experimental period, before repayment actually began, when unexpected drainage problems and the rapidly changing postwar economy precipitated a conflict. In this respect only, the Columbia Basin Project was unique.

But from the start the landowners of the Columbia Basin showed their independence. Because of their refusal to bow to government mandates, the Bureau of Reclamation had to negotiate with the farmers it served and it has since turned project operation over to the farmers themselves. Hardly a leviathan, the hand of the government has actually withered during the project's development—and all of this due to irrigators brave enough to call their chief benefactor, the bureau's commissioner, a “four-flusher.”

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The Company's
COWLITZ

Hudson's Bay Company
Involvement on the
Cowlitz River Portage

BY STEVEN A. ANDERSON

EDITOR'S NOTE
An earlier version of this essay was prepared for the scripting of the Cowlitz County Historical Museum's survey exhibit, and it is printed herein with their permission.

The Hudson's Bay Company's diversification to full-time farming as a part of its business was in one sense an unusual venture for the directors of the world's oldest fur trading monopoly. The idea of company-sponsored farming deviated significantly from two firmly held tenets—a fervent conviction toward keeping business closely aligned with fur trading activities and opposition to permanent colonization, a condition that was traditionally in conflict with the fur trade.

On the other hand, the establishment of farms that supported the fur trade proved not only logical but necessary to the company's business concerns. In a business as fiercely competitive as the fur trade, any potential means to realize a third tenet—increased profits—was embraced religiously by the HBC's directors in London. As one might suspect, discussions concerning this departure from past practices were frequent among the company's most influential London and North American directors, namely Governors Andrew Colvile, George Simpson and John Pelly and Columbia Department Chief Factor John McLoughlin.

During the early 1830s small-scale "fort" farming had been practiced with limited success at several of the HBC's posts. Dr. McLoughlin firmly believed in the development of post-centered farming and so initiated the practice of raising crops and livestock at Fort Vancouver soon after his arrival in 1824. The original impetus to farm near the company's forts grew from a need to lessen the Columbia Department's dependence on costly imported foodstuffs. If properly managed, the "country made" produce would simultaneously reduce importation costs, provide a wide variety of fresh "eatables" for company servants, and boost company profits.

Cowlitz Portage was initially used as an HBC trade route to Puget Sound. Margot C. Vaughan states that "perhaps the earliest [HBC servants] to make the crossing [were] Governor George Simpson and his party... in 1828 during one of his general inspection tours of the HBC posts."

While en route from Fort Vancouver, sojourners were required to leave the downstream currents of the Columbia and ascend the Cowlitz River. This task, as noted by Jean Baptiste Bolduc, a Catholic priest, "... would not be so difficult if it were not for its rapid flow. Most of the way it is necessary to use poles and even then one strains greatly to advance a few feet." On reaching Cowlitz Landing, about a mile from the farm site, the bateaux were unloaded and the 70-mile overland trek to Puget Sound began. The HBC continued using the portage until its interests in Washington Territory were abandoned in the mid 1860s.

The portage area also figured prominently in Dr. McLoughlin's plan to increase Fort Vancouver's cattle herds. Records indicate that in the mid 1830s an HBC servant, Antoine Gobin, watched over a herd of company cattle in the vicinity of present-day Longview/Kelso and resided in a
temporary lodge near the Coweeman River. Another early resident was Simon Plomondon, a tenured French-Canadian HBC servant with 16 years in the company. In 1836 Dr. McLoughlin sent Plomondon to the Cowlitz with instructions to evaluate and occupy the most promising lands. By 1837 it was Governor George Simpson who pointed out,

Where the soil and climate are favourable to cultivation, we are directing our attention to agriculture on a large scale, and there is every prospect that we shall soon be able to establish important branches of export trade from thence in the articles of wool, tallow, hides, tobacco, and grain of various kinds.

By 1839 Plomondon's assessment led to the establishment of 4,000-acre Cowlitz Farm.

The early success of small-scale fort farming and the future possibility of an agreement to supply grain to the Russian American Fur Company led the governor and committee of HBC directors to "consider it both desirable and necessary to put our farming establishments on a more regular and systematic footing than they have heretofore been as they now promise to form an important branch of export business." One of the HBC's answers to establishing a "regular footing" was the founding of Cowlitz Farm in 1838. To regulate the business of this new farm and those already established at Forts Vancouver, Langley and Nisqually, the Puget Sound Agricultural Company was created as an HBC subsidiary in February 1839.

Farming on the Cowlitz portage was scheduled to begin in late 1838. At that time, "Mr. Ross & eight men with a number of agricultural implements" and 95 cattle from Fort Vancouver's herd were sent to comprise the site's complement of workers and livestock. On his return to the Columbia Department from a furlough to England in 1839, Dr. McLoughlin noted:

I arrived on 17 Oct and found that Mr. Chief Trader Douglas in obedience to the instructions he received from the Directors of the Honourable Hudson's Bay Company had begun to establish a farm at the Cowlitz [sic] Portage and had done more work there than I had expected he could which does him and the Gentlemen employed on it great credit. . . . On the 20th Nov I arrived at the Cowlitz and found that Mr. Chief Trader Tod had sown 275 bushels Wheat, which looked as well as any I ever saw; he had 200 acres of new land ploughed and which has been cross ploughed during the winter and 135 acres broken up and rails cut and carted to fence these fields.

Confident of success, McLoughlin later reported:

This spring, there has been sown at the Cowlitz [sic] one hundred bushels oats. I intend to sow 225 bushels wheat which with what is already sown will be 500 bushels in the ground at that place, 100 bushels Pease and as much Barley as we conveniently can.
Simon Plamondon described the Cowlitz operation:

Bounded on the South by the Claim of the Roman Catholic Mission, on the West by a Swale, on the North by a small stream used by the company as a Sheep wash and on the East by the Cowlitz River. That the farm was established in 1838 and that about 2,000 acres of land was enclosed and under tillage prior to and after the year 1846. The remainder of the unenclosed prairie land was used for grazing purposes . . . the whole occupancy covering about 3 miles square of land.

I rode slowly along full of admiration until I got within a short distance of a large dwelling, granary and outbuildings, all bearing the mark of Hudson's Bay Company construction, and I knew this must be the Cowlitz farm of which I had heard so much," wrote HBC clerk Edward Huggins in Reminiscences of Puget Sound. The farm's structures all were built in the standard style of the Hudson's Bay Company: the French Canadian technique of post-in-sill, or beam-on-beam, construction. The normal lifespan for a post-in-sill building was about 20 years. However, because they were often in direct contact with the ground, the need for building maintenance typically accelerated after the first decade. Cowlitz Farm Manager George Roberts reported on this condition to Dr. William F. Tolmie at Fort Nisqually in 1849:

As is well known to you, the Farm's Barns are giving rapidly to decay. As the impossibility almost of replacing them becoming daily more apparent, I last spring purchased at an auction . . . an excellent Barn from Broshears which old Colman would be glad to get upon [the] condition of say for me on his Farm for five acres potatoes. I officially [wrote] to Mr. Douglas (about the Barns) who said he would confer with you on the subject.

The company also erected a sawmill in 1840, two years after Cowlitz Farm was established. Simon Plamondon testified that this mill, which consisted of a "gang of seven saws," was located "in the wooded land between the Prairie and the Cowlitz river . . . ."

Following the harvest, produce items marked for export needed to be transported or "lightered down" to the mouth of the Cowlitz River and transferred to company ships bound for the Russian settlement at Sitka. Although a costly and time-consuming operation, bateaux were once again used on these downriver runs. Governor George Simpson scrutinized this inefficient practice that often left sailing vessels waiting at anchor for weeks. By 1845, at Simpson's request, Dr. McLoughlin had erected a "dwelling house, granaries, and outbuildings" at the mouth of the Cowlitz so that the produce would be immediately available once the ships arrived. These improvements were valued at £500 sterling by 1860. HBC servant Joachim Thibeault, a French Canadian, was assigned residency at this location.

References to this warehouse, or "store," as it was called in HBC jargon, are numerous in the historical documentation. Peter Crawford, one of the region's earliest non-HBC settlers, noted:

Landing our little boat on the west bank at those two houses we found that they were Hudson's Bay structures as they look just like some of their buildings at Fort Vancouver. Going up to a dwelling house, we found that the tenant of the dwelling was a Canadian Frenchman living with a native woman of one of the lower Columbia tribes. Interrogating the inmates about stopping all night, we were permitted to cook on the fire in the middle of the house and slept on the floor on our own blankets. The native woman kindly gave us some mats of Indian construction to keep our own blankets from the hard boards. In the morning we looked around and were rather pleased with the looks of the place.

Cowlitz Farm proper was estimated at 3,572 acres (1,500 cultivated and improved—the rest unimproved pasturage) and valued at £20,000. "The establishment and buildings of the Cowlitz[sic] Farm consisting of dwelling houses, sawmills, stores, granaries, barns, stables, shed, and piggeries, and of a great extent of fencing and enclosures [had] the value of six thousand pounds sterling (£6,000). . . ." Therefore, the total worth of Cowlitz Farm, by 1860, was £26,000.

The business affairs of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company's Cowlitz Farm were seen to by a succession of
managers who, by and large, were former and/or current officers in the Hudson’s Bay Company. The list begins with John Tod, a chief trader and long-time HBC employee who stayed at Cowlitz Farm during its first two years of operation.

The farm’s founder, Charles Forrest, originally hailed from Montreal and came up through the ranks of the HBC, first as a middleman and then as a postmaster. He was placed in charge of Cowlitz Farm in September 1840 because he was, according to Chief Factor James Douglas, “an active, tearing, bustling man, full of zeal for the service . . . [and who] gets through a great deal of work with the few hands at his disposal.” Forrest was considered by many to be an indispensable asset to the company. “In fact, we have no one to replace him of equal merit,” wrote Douglas in 1846. Forrest left Cowlitz Farm in 1848 because of an illness that he eventually died from in 1851 while at Fort Nisqually. George Roberts was Cowlitz Farm’s “intermittent” manager, residing on site in 1839, 1848-51, and again in 1859-60. Edward Huggins described Roberts as an old [HBC] clerk who came to Fort Vancouver in 1832 or 1833 and was for a term of years in charge of the company’s farm at Cowlitz. He was an intelligent and kind hearted man . . . [and was] temporarily in charge [of Cowlitz Farm in October 1850].

Apparently dissatisfied by the local unavailability of proper English women to court, George Roberts went on a year-long furlough to his homeland, England, in 1840 to be married. After returning to the Pacific Northwest the couple had three children.

Henry Newsham Peers had been a clerk in the HBC for ten years when he was appointed manager of Cowlitz Farm in September 1851. Married with three daughters, Peers was a man his contemporaries considered “better qualified for a life of activity & enterprise than for the routine of a Counting House . . . an active enterprising turn of mind.” By February 1853, Peers had proven himself an able administrator and so was awarded the title of chief trader. He remained the manager of Cowlitz Farm until 1857, after which he took a furlough to England. He retired from the service in 1859 and resided on Vancouver Island the rest of his days. William Sinclair, Jr, was a lifelong HBC servant who spent a majority of his career working at different posts in the Columbia Department. In 1849 he was promoted to the rank of clerk. He arrived at Cowlitz Farm in the spring of 1857 and remained there through the spring of 1859. Considered a “faithful and trustworthy officer,” Sinclair uncharacteristically left the Cowlitz for Victoria and the gold fields of the Fraser River in the fall of 1859.

Antoine Gobin and Simon Plomondon were not the only Canadians to inhabit the lower Cowlitz River region. By 1850, recalled Edward Huggins:

> There were a number of retired Hudson Bay Company servants owning fine large claims on Cowlitz Prairie, principally French Canadians. I recollect some of them, [Simon] Plomondon, the oldest of all the old Hudson’s Bay servants, Xavier Catman, Jean Baptiste Bouchard, Joseph Brulé, Cottendraye, Marcel Benier, Joseph Legard, Jean Baptiste Chaudiéaux, Peter Bercier and Eli Shareault. I have forgotten the names of a few . . . .

The Cowlitz’s Canadian settlement rose significantly in numbers during the early 1840s, due largely to the company’s efforts to colonize the region. This now-famous attempt to counterbalance the flood of American immigrants by offering half-shares to Canadian farmers at Lord Selkirk’s Red River Colony proved unsuccessful. It was reported:

> About 150 families were induced by this means to settle on the Cowlitz river, and on the plains in the neighborhood of Nisqually, in Puget’s Sound; and horses, cattle, etc., given to encourage their labor. The soil of that part of the country not yielding so great a return as anticipated, many of them removed in the following year to the valley of the Willamette.

The size of the work force at Cowlitz Farm ranged significantly over its first ten years in existence. Various sources give the following estimates:

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<td>(after California Gold Rush)</td>
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The Cowlitz Mission Centennial Pageant in 1939—complete with priests, trappers, pioneer women, Indians and nuns—commemorated the establishment of the mission a century before.

The Canadian influence on the Cowlitz Portage was not strong enough to stem the tide of the land-hungry American immigrants. Huggins noted that “nearly all the first settlers on Cowlitz prairie were French Canadians and soon all these men sold out their fine tracts of land to Americans who in 1851-52 commenced to flock into the country.”

With a large population of French Canadian laborers and retirees assembled at Cowlitz Farm, McLoughlin and the company arranged for the Roman Catholic Church to establish a mission near the farm to serve the workers. The church hoped to extend faith beyond the field and to convert as many local Indians to Catholicism as it could.

Established by Father Francois Blanchet in 1838, soon after the company erected Cowlitz Farm, the St. Xavier Mission in 1840 consisted of

a rude construction 30 feet in length by 20 feet in width, covered with bark, made of round, rough tree trunks, notched and crossed at the ends to form the corners, having a [flooring] of nothing but some pieces squared by an ax and fitted in the same way, without ceiling; such was the missionary’s house during the winter of 1840, and that house was also the chapel.

The arrival of Father Modeste Demers in October 1840 brought continued improvements to this humble beginning. Cowlitz Farm Manager Charles Forrest noted in 1842 that “[a sailing vessel soon to arrive] has two Priests [aboard] for the [Cowlitz Farm’s] Roman Catholic Mission. We will have Priests by the dozen now.” One of the priests, Jean Baptiste Bolduc, noted the Mission’s improvements:

I arrived at my mission where there is a little chapel and a church of fifty by thirty feet not yet completed. The dwelling of the missionary is truly superb for the place. It is a wooden house, thirty by twenty feet but entirely bare which forced me upon arrival to use the plane, in order to make two little rooms fairly comfortable for the winter.

In 1850, during his first trip to the Cowlitz region, Fort Nisqually Clerk Huggins was surprised to find a church, built with some show of clerical design, steeple, churchyard, graveboards, crosses and all the adjuncts of a country church. This was the Roman Catholic Church which had been established there for some years.

The mission’s priests had difficulty converting the native populations, a circumstance that was blamed on “the dissolute and only partially reformed American and Canadian settlers” then occupying the Cowlitz prairies.

The Hudson’s Bay Company’s farm on the Cowlitz Portage did its job, which was to supply about 10,000 bushels of wheat to the Russians annually. The farm did not stem the tide of American interest in the Cowlitz region, nor did it successfully hold its ground against squatters and those individuals uninterested in the company’s rights or claims.

Through the efforts of the farm’s managers, however, the property was maintained until the final settlement of claims between Britain and the United States was announced in 1869. The Puget Sound Agricultural Company was awarded $250,000 and the HBC $400,000 for their holdings south of the 49th parallel. This was not the one million dollars requested by Governor Simpson in 1846, but it was an amount that few American settlers in the region would have been willing to pay as what they perceived to be ransom money for American soil.

Steven A. Anderson is director of the Renton Historical Museum. Previously, he was manager of the Fort Nisqually Historic Site for ten years, and he has written numerous articles on the British fur trade.
Asahel and Edward Curtis were born into the Victorian Age, during a time of innovation, invention and industrialization in the United States. The brothers were teenagers—Edward, 19, and Asahel, 14—when their family moved from Minnesota to Washington in search of a better life. Edward and his father, Asahel “Johnson” Curtis, were the first members of the family to make the transcontinental journey, settling near Port Orchard in 1887. Mrs. Curtis, Asahel, and his younger sister Eva stayed in Minnesota with the eldest Curtis son, Raymond, through the winter, and then traveled west in the spring of 1888.

In that year before statehood the Washington they experienced was a rapidly changing place. The railroad, with the Northern Pacific’s first direct transcontinental route to Puget Sound completed in 1887, opened the territory to development. Methods for building hard-surfaced roads, harvesting natural resources and utilizing electricity were already in use throughout the eastern United States. Word of the automobile and telephone, then novelties in personal transport and communication, spread across the country. And in the midst of adapting and bringing existing technologies to the western landscape, Northwesterners at work in the wheat fields, timberlands, and fishing banks of Washington were conjuring technological innovations of their own.

The sidehill leveling device used in the wheat harvest, the “Iron Chink” fish cleaning machine, and the deep woods steam donkey were all being put to use. Across America domestic and vocational processes were being mechanized. Inventions such as the electric lightbulb, phonograph, Linotype printing machine, radio, flush toilet and airplane—all developed or improved upon between 1880 and 1915—changed the lives of all Americans. Great innovations in photography also occurred during this time.

While the development of daguerreotypes (single photographic images created on silver or silver-coated copper plates) had revolutionized photography earlier in the 19th century, it was the mass production of gelatin dry-plates during the 1880s that made the Curtis brothers’ field photography possible. These chemically treated glass plates shortened exposure times, allowing subjects to be photographed in motion, and yielded negatives from which images could be printed again and again.

RIGHT: Edward Curtis (1868-1952) spent 33 years and millions of dollars creating his mammoth 20-volume ethnographic study, THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN.

ABOVE: Asahel Curtis (1874-1941), the younger of the two brothers, chose a different path. Trained in the newsroom as much as the portrait gallery, his work was of a more commercial nature.
Edward accompanied the Harriman Alaska Expedition in 1899. While most of his photographs were of glacial formations, he learned a great deal about ethnographic photography from C. Hart Merriam and George Bird Grinnell, who were among the many nationally acclaimed scientists aboard.

Intrigued with the technology, Edward had built his first camera when he was a boy, using a stereopticon lens given to him by his father. In later years it was this early interest in photography, as well as the recasting of North America’s cultural and industrial landscape, that inspired his career.

In one of history’s rare occurrences, the “civilizing” end of a frontier and the metamorphosis of a native people from dominant culture to “vanishing race” were recorded simultaneously through photographs. Beginning his professional photography career in 1892 with the establishment of the Curtis & Guptill studio in Seattle, Edward spent more than 30 years photographing and recording the life-styles and traditions of the North American Indians.

Asahel made a name for himself during the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897, his photographs of stunning landscapes and everyday working life becoming the trademark of his 40-year career.

ALASKAN JOURNEYS

A Seattle paper wanted pictures of the Alaskan trails in the fall of 1897 so, as a cheechako [Chinook jargon for someone new to the Pacific Northwest], I sailed north on the Rosalie in command of Capt. John A. O’Brien in September. La Farge, the purser, proved my guardian angel, and he and Capt. O’Brien showed me the mysteries of navigating the scantily marked channels of the Inland Passage. A storm drove the Rosalie out of Skagway to shelter in Pyramid Harbor a half hour after La Farge had taken me ashore in the first boat minus my camera. Goods were landed on lighters, to be grounded at high tide, horses to dumped overboard to swim ashore. The wharf was for later arrivals.

—Asahel Curtis for Alaska Sportsman, 1940

While Asahel had gone to work in his brother’s studio two years prior, it was this trip to Alaska and the Klondike that established him as a professional photographer. Most accounts of Asahel’s journey suggest that the brothers had developed an elaborate plan for what the December 18, 1897, issue of the Seattle Argus called a great effort to “go into the Alaska view business on the most gigantic scale ever attempted.” The Curtis family rallied together, sending 24-year-old Asahel north with the required year’s worth of supplies, as well as 3,000 glass plate negatives.

In the months it took to shuttle supplies from Skagway to the head of the Yukon River, Asahel roamed the Alaska and Yukon trails, recording the cold winter trials of the prospector’s life. Photos depicting supply hauling, boat building, men at work on their claims—images captured on sheets of glass—were often sent home to miners’ sweethearts and families as proof that they were still alive.

Although Asahel’s account, written in hindsight, makes no reference to Edward and the studio’s proposed view business, it does suggest the depth of the rift that separated the two brothers for their entire adult lives. In all, Asahel shot more than 1,500 photographs of Alaska and the Klondike, most of which were shipped south to be printed by Edward’s studio. Yet nearly a year before Asahel was to return to Washington, in the spring of 1898, Edward published an article in the Century Illustrated Magazine entitled “The Rush to the Klondike...
naturalists, geologists, paleontologists, botanists, zoologists and ethnologists. Artists and photographers were also to accompany these scientists, and Merriam asked Edward to join the expedition as lead photographer.

Aboard the George W. Elder the Harriman family, scientists and crew sailed from Seattle north up the Inland Passage, along the southern coast of the Alaskan Peninsula, then north to the Pribilof Islands and Cape Prince of Wales. A virtual "floating university," the expedition collected data on wildlife, natural resources and native cultures, with Harriman’s primary goal being the assessment of a proposed trans-Alaska railroad route that would course through Alaska and, via tunnel or bridge, connect North America to Siberia. Aside from giving Edward his own taste of the Alaskan wilderness, the two-month expedition allowed him to assist and observe leading scientists as they made detailed reports on the environment and native culture. From this foundation, self-educated Edward developed techniques that played a critical role in the creation of his 20-volume work, The North American Indian.

SEPARATE ROADS
People’s lives are marked by good fortune and bad, their perspectives changed by events and circumstances. After severing ties over the Alaska negatives, Asahel and Edward Curtis lived their entire adult lives in different worlds, albeit for much of the time in the same city. Not even their children knew one another. Edward married Clara Phillips in 1892 and had four children—Hal, Florence, Beth and Katherine. Asahel married Florence Carney in 1902 and also had four children—Walter, Asahel Jr., Betty and Polly.

There is little record of any exchange between Edward and Asahel. Like repelling magnets, their interests and bodies of work moved in opposite directions. Edward’s aim during the peak of his photographic career was to document the American Indians’ traditional way of life—something that had virtuously disappeared when he began. Asahel was interested in process—the way things worked—and there was no better time in history to photograph industrial and agricultural advancements than during his lifetime.

Only a few daring individuals such as Edmond Meany, a history professor at the University of Washington, maintained friendships with both brothers. Meany climbed mountains with Asahel and visited Indian reservations with Ed-

The Curtis Brothers—On-Line & On the Air

Through a special partnership with KCTS/9, WSHS is pleased to provide additional information on the Curtis brothers in a variety of media. KCTS/9 producers Randy Brinson and Stephen Hegg have been hard at work on the 30-minute broadcast/video documentary, "Different Lenses: The Photography of Edward and Asahel Curtis." Tracing Washington’s history during the early decades of statehood and featuring hundreds of Curtis images, this program was written with the assistance of Stephen Most, text writer for the new Washington State History Museum’s permanent exhibit. The program is scheduled to air in late spring 1996 and will be available on video.

Through its KCTS/9 partnership, WSHS has also ventured onto the World Wide Web. Five COLUMBIA articles and numerous related Asahel Curtis images can be found in the Education—Special Learning Projects section of the KCTS web page at http://www.kcts.org. "Northwest Imagery: The Photography of Edward and Asahel Curtis," an innovative on-line exhibit featuring 12 Curtis images, is also available at that site.

The Curtis On-Line and On-the-Air Project was funded, in part, by the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction through an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Chapter Two “20%” Competitive Grant.
ward. He understood that the brothers traveled separate roads, their personal interests and professional perspectives reflected in their photographic imagery.

**EDWARD**

_I paid the princess a dollar for each picture I made. This seemed to please her greatly and with hands and jargon she indicated that she preferred to spend her time having pictures taken to digging clams._

—Edward Curtis, c. 1950s

The inspiration to create a great documentary work on Native Americans came slowly to Edward, and a number of events led to its inception. At the 1898 National Photographic Convention Edward was awarded first place in the Genre Class for his Indian images and a diploma of excellence for his portraiture. The following year his images “Evening on the Sound,” “The Mussel Gatherer,” and “The Clamdigger,” featuring Princess Angeline, the daughter of Chief Seattle, earned him another set of first place honors and semi-regular publication in the West Coast journal _Camera Craft_ between 1899 and 1901.

His contact with C. Hart Merriam and George Bird Grinnell continued during this period as well, influencing the quality and scope of his work. Merriam had been charged with the direction of the publication effort relating to the Harriman Expedition—13 volumes of findings were published over the next 12 years, 2 for general public use and 11 scholarly works that became standard references in their fields. Additionally, a special souvenir album of Edward’s photographs was commissioned by Harriman for the expedition members, production of which kept Edward in contact with Merriam throughout the summer of 1900. Merriam was a meticulous mentor when it came to print quality and recropping, demanding the best work Edward could supply.

At the invitation of Grinnell, Edward traveled to northern Montana during that same summer to observe the sun dance ceremony held by the Blood, Blackfeet and Piegan tribes. Edward later recalled the scene from his vantage point on the windswept plateau:

_“Neither house nor fence marred the landscape, and the broad, undulating prairie stretching away toward the Little Rockies, miles away to the west, was carpeted with tips... It was the start of my concerned effort to learn about the Plains and to photograph their lives, and I was intensely affected.”_

Seven years after his trip to Montana Edward had embarked on what was to be a 33-year project in _The North American Indian_. As explained in Volume I, his aim in recording the descriptive material and photographs was “to form a comprehensive and permanent record of all the important tribes of the United States and Alaska that still retain to a considerable degree their primitive customs and traditions.”

Funding for the project came...
THE CURTIS BROTHERS

through a critical sequence of events. Edward submitted a photograph of Marie Fischer to the Ladies' Home Journal for a contest seeking “the Prettiest Children in America.” His photograph was chosen by the well-known portrait painter Walter Russell, who then came to Seattle to paint a portrait of Marie as one of 12 selected through the contest. Impressed with Edward’s work, Russell later invited him to Oyster Bay, New York, to make photographic studies of President Theodore Roosevelt’s sons as a foundation for portraits in oil.

Knowing that Roosevelt and Harriman were good friends (Harriman was one of Roosevelt’s largest campaign contributors) and that the president took great interest in all things Western, Edward brought a set of Indian prints along to show him. A good acquaintanceship began, later resulting in a letter of support for Edward’s work, dated December 16, 1905.

I feel that the work is worthwhile, and as a monumental thing nothing can exceed it. I have the ability, strength, and determination to finish the undertaking, but have gone to the end of my means and must ask someone to join me in the undertaking and make possible for all ages of Americans to see what the American Indian was like.

The January 24, 1906, meeting resulted in an agreement to provide Edward with $15,000 a year for five years. In return, Morgan would receive 25 sets as well as 300 large photographic prints and 200 small ones. As support for the project had been difficult to come by—the Smithsonian Institution and National Geographic Society were wary of investing in what they perceived as the work of an amateur ethnologist—this funding arrangement with the wealthiest man in America was a major coup.

In the year following his meeting with Morgan the first volume of The North American Indian was published. It included an introduction by Theodore Roosevelt and was edited by Frederick Webb Hodge of the Bureau of Ameri-
can Ethnology. Hodge's involvement with The Handbook of the American Indians North of Mexico, the bureau's major publication to date, lent valuable credibility to Edward's work and proved to be the bureau's only significant expression of support for the project.

"While primarily a photographer," Edward wrote in his introduction to The North American Indian, "I do not see or think photographically; hence the story of Indian life will not be told in microscopic detail, but rather will be presented as a broad and luminous picture." By this time Edward had lectured throughout the country and become known as an advocate for the American Indians. Beliefs developed through intensive field work and expressed in Volume I set the stage for future volumes:

Since the early days of Columbus the assertion has been made repeatedly that the Indian has no religion and no code of ethics, chiefly for the reason that in his primitive state he recognizes no supreme God. Yet the fact remains that no people have a more elaborate religious system than our aborigines, and none are more devout in the performance of the duties connected therewith.

Yet Edward's passion for his subject stemmed from the belief that Indians as an entire race were slated for extinction. In his introduction to the work Edward shares with his readers the words that may have swayed once unsure patrons, "When the last opportunity for study of the living tribe shall have passed with the Indians themselves, and the day cannot be far off, my generous friends may then feel that they have aided in a work the results of which, let it be hoped, will grow more valuable as time goes on."

While awareness and appreciation of Edward's photography has grown in the last two decades, little mention is given to the comprehensive text that envelopes each volume's 75 photographic plates. When one considers the numerous small units grouped under the common designation of "Yakima" or "Salishan Tribes of the Coast," the 20 volumes of The North American Indian encompass more than 100 different tribes. Northwest tribes such as the Yakima, Klickitat, Salishan, Nez Perce, Walla Walla, Umatilla, Chinookan, Quilliute and Willapa are described in volumes VII, VIII, and IX. These volumes were published in 1911 and 1913 and utilized much of the data and images Edward had collected during his early years of Indian photography.

Due to the large number of tribes dealt with in these volumes, Edward and his field team spent nearly all of 1909 completing extensive research. Particularly taken with the customs and beliefs of the Wishram as described in Volume VIII, Edward went to great lengths to gather stories and observe fishing techniques, proclaiming, "Considerable labor was involved in this research, as it required a detailed study of the entire stretch of river and the interviewing of every aged Indian to be found on its shores . . ." Adding to that field research, Edward provided detailed accounts of the life-changing encoun-
ters between the Northwest Indians and the federal Department of the Interior, told from the Indians' point of view.

Shortly after the last volume of The North American Indian was published in 1930, both Edward and his lifework seemed to slip from public view. It is estimated that only 500 copies of The North American Indian were printed, and of that number, just 291 were marketed. For decades the work was virtually "lost" in that the size and elaborate nature of the 20-volume set caused it to be placed out of the public view in private collections and rare book rooms of larger repositories.

In Washington a handful of public repositories—including the Washington State Historical Society, the University of Washington, Washington State University, Tacoma Public Library, Seattle Public Library and Pacific Lutheran University—maintain complete sets of The North American Indian. Most of these sets are from the original 500; a few are reprint editions published by the Johnson Reprint Corporation during the 1970s. Aside from their dramatic sepia tone photographs, these volumes carry a wealth of information, each one living up to Edward's promise to "picture all features of the Indian way of life and environment—types of the young and the old, with their habitats, industries, ceremonies, games, and everyday customs."

Edward Curtis died in 1952—divorced, virtually unknown and with few resources, yet pleased to have accomplished his task. With this work he had not only faced physical and financial hardship, he faced the critiques of scholars who discredited his work as that of an untrained amateur. Today, after the "rediscovery" of The North American Indian during the 1970s, Edward's photographs inspire both awe and criticism. Some feel that he fought too obvious a battle with time, trading the everyday "westernized" clothing of his subjects for traditional costumes and idealized settings. Edward, like other ethnologists of the time, was unconcerned with acculturation and went to great lengths to avoid evidence of reservation life and the imposition of western culture and religion on the North American Indians portrayed in his photographs. Yet the fact remains that Edward Curtis photographed American Indians as individuals during a time when our country was trying to confine and forget its native people.

ASAHEL

...Watching the throngs constantly changing. What better could his chance be than that of the thousands who are before him. Seemingly every degree of social scale has its representative. Every possible kind of garb is to be seen....

The look of abstraction and gloom in many a face is heartrending. The probable cause is the same in many cases: a mortgaged home or a farm or a business that passed into other hands that the great Eldorado could be reached. These fair hills far away between which streams whose beds were pebbles of gold have faded. Weeks and months of hard work coupled with...poor food have left the system weakening....

—Asahel Curtis, Dawson Diary, 1899
Asahel Curtis was a keen observer of people, place and process. More modest in manner than his older brother, Asahel concentrated his professional and personal life on the Northwest. After leaving the Curtis & Guptill Studio upon his return from the Klondike in 1899, Asahel worked as a newspaper photographer for the Seattle Times and Post-Intelligencer.

Shortly thereafter, in 1901, Asahel established his own studio in partnership with W. P. Romans. As his photographic skill and interests in the out-of-doors and Northwest industries grew, Asahel’s photos of Washington’s scenery and abundant natural resources earned him a reputation as both a documentor of time-marking events and a booster of statewide industry and tourism.

Asahel’s images of Northwest railroads, logging, fishing, agriculture, the Denny Hill regrades in Seattle, and the damming of the Columbia River mark events that changed Washington forever. These were the subjects he was often hired by companies and individuals to document. The photographs born of his own interest were of mountains, parks and outdoor expeditions.

An avid mountain climber, Asahel assisted with the formation of the Mountaineers (an offshoot of the Portland-based Mazamas), a group of outdoor enthusiasts dedicated to organizing outings to Washington’s mountains. By 1912 Asahel had helped lead climbing expeditions to Mounts Baker, Rainier and Olympus. Asahel’s written and photographic accounts of these outings were published in The Mountaineer annuals and describe in detail the rigors of some of the first mass ascents of Northwest peaks.

With the establishment of its national park in 1899, Mount Rainier became a favorite of Asahel’s for climbing.
The photographs inspired by Asahel's personal interests were of mountains, roads, and national parks. This photograph, taken in 1932, is just one of hundreds he took of Mount Rainier throughout his 40-year career.

and photographing. He served on the park's advisory board from 1911 to 1936 and campaigned extensively for access roads into the park. "I realize the true Mountaineer would much rather see the mountains from the trail or the unexplored wilderness," wrote Asahel ("The Future of Rainier National Park," The Mountaineer, 1911), "but to make mountains at all popular, to get the majority of people into them, it is necessary to have roads."

As part of his Rainier roads campaign, Asahel developed a lecture and slide show that described the system of trails being developed and suggested automobile routes. Yet within his description of the new 207,360-acre "national playground," he shared with his audience his love of the natural landscape:

One comes more intimately in touch with the mountains when he travels the trails. In the valleys the forests seem lower, the giant trees rise from one's side to tremendous heights and the lower growth reaches out a friendly hand to bid you welcome; but it is on the untrodden mountain heights that the traveler receives a true reward for his toil. Here where vegetation makes its last stand amid a world of ice and snow, with the lower world stretching away to the horizon, nature unfolds in all her beauty.

The objective of Asahel's lecture and lobbying was to increase accessibility to the park and, as a result, heighten public sensitivity to the importance of environmental conservation. But he had no desire to expand the parks, as was proposed in later years, and in fact lobbied against expansion as well as the establishment of North Cascades National Park. In a letter dated November 13, 1939, to Mr. W. G. Oves of the Spokane Chamber of Commerce, his reasons are clear:

I am opposed to any new National Parks or any additions to the present ones. By subjects, here are the reasons:
Recreation: We now have, under the Forest Service, full use of the mountains for recreation; all too often the cost within a park is much higher.
Water: The cities and communities on both sides of the range need water for domestic and industrial use as well as irrigation. Water cannot be impounded in a National Park, except by special act of Congress, difficult to get.
Mining: No mining is permitted in a National Park. We believe that there are mineral resources in the Cascades.
Livestock: No grazing is permitted in a National Park. The livestock industry makes valuable use of the lands in the National Forests, and under the Forest Service regulations the range is not overgrazed.
Forests: There are vast forests within this area upon which the lumber industry must depend while reforested lands are growing. There are no figures for the whole area, but in Whatcom County (of which the proposed park includes 66% of the county) this is nine billion feet. The counties having National Forests are concerned on this point as they receive 25% of the gross revenues of the Forests.
Labor is vitally concerned, for in the
Olympics they lost the opportunity to earn $95,500,000 in wages for harvesting the forest crop on the extra lands included in the Olympic Park. We believe in the multiple use of the forests for all the purposes listed above and for others. These uses do not conflict.

The State already has two large National Parks. There is no money available to make them accessible, in fact the plan is that they are to remain primitive. Unless made accessible there can be no considerable tourist revenues to offset the great loss through locking up all the other resources.

Asahel’s concern for the future of Washington’s National Parks and Forests went much further than dollars and cents. He had great reverence for the natural landscape, but when it came to weighing the well-being of working people with the expansion of a “playground,” the scales weighed in the peoples’ favor. His compassion is evident in a February 26, 1940, letter to Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg:

> Our state has had a National Park, the Olympic, carved out of it. A part of this area could well be so used, but there was added to it a large area not suited for a park (so reported by the Park Service). The loss of this area to the state means a loss to labor alone of more than $100,000,000, and many of the men who would be glad to work there are on relief. This was bad enough, but now the Park Service is driving the settlers off adjacent lands with threats of condemnation of their [property] . . . . It is a modern Acadia needing only a Longfellow to shock the world with its brutality.

Although Asahel failed to win the battle against the expansion and new designation of Washington’s national parks, his voice as a road and trail builder was one history heard. Throughout his tenure on the park board and during his service as president of the Washington State Good Roads Association from 1932 to 1933, Asahel often punctuated letters to senators, chambers of commerce, and government officials with photographs—to the advantage of the cause. “You are certainly most generous with your pictures and I thank you very much for the best ones I have yet seen of views on the south side of the park,” wrote O. A. Tomlinson, superintendent of Mount Rainier National Park. “We have already made plans for including the trail you suggest in our next year’s program.” The roads and trails allowing access to Mount Rainier National Park are still credited largely to the efforts of Asahel Curtis and the Good Roads Association.

While photographs of Mount Rainier comprise a large portion of his work, Asahel created a multitude of photographic “sets.” Maintaining copyrights and detailed business records, Asahel often named these sets for the companies and individuals who hired him. The Harney State Set, including some 40 images of a traditional Makah whale hunt, was actually a collection of photographs shot for Artwork of Seattle and Western Washington, a nine-part
had engaged Asahel to photograph a number of western Washington scenes. As a result, Asahel shot nearly 200 photographs ranging from Willapa to Everett, Mount Constance to Cape Flattery. In the midst of these landscape images fell one photograph of Harney, the crew of the Edith after a wreck at Neah Bay, and the photographs of the Makahs.

In all, the 1910 published work—actually one of Harney’s many multi-part art portfolios, including State of Washington and Eastern Washington & Western Idaho—featured 80 of Asahel’s photographs. Most are stunning scenerics; the Makahs are unforgettable.

Printed in sepia, the Makah images record one of the last grey whale hunts at Neah Bay—a whaling canoe under sail, many hands pulling the whale to shore, women waiting with carrying baskets ready, children watching. From sea to land, Asahel documented a fading tradition that had flourished among the ancestors of the Makahs and their northern neighbors for centuries.

Photographing the people and sights of Neah Bay just as he found them, Asahel created a compelling portrait of the Makah people during the early reservation years, a time of transition. Through his lens we see the penetration of western culture in clothing, housing and life-style contrasted by a deeper set of Makah traditions and skills as seen in whale hunting and basket making.

In addition to the Harney State Set, compilations of photographs taken for chambers of commerce and railroads can also be found in Asahel’s body of work. Like a handful of other Northwest photographers who recognized that there was a sizeable market for photos depicting the Northwest’s beauty and abundance, Asahel photographed natural areas, orchards, wheat fields, logging camps, shipyards, and fisheries. Although few documents exist describing his thoughts on photography or his plans for photo shoots—the 12 boxes of correspondence in the University of Washington’s Special Collections are primarily related to his parks and road-building efforts—a handful of letters allow glimpses into his rigorous schedule.

On April 17, 1928, Asahel wrote to Mr. F. O. Hagie, secretary of the Yakima Chamber of Commerce:

I plan at the present time to be in the Valley when the apples are in bloom—probably going down through the Valley one day. I want to make at least a dozen negatives of the country around Yakima. I would appreciate it very much if you would let me know how the blossoms are coming on.

In August 1929 an invitation arrived at Asahel’s studio from A. L. Eidemiller, advertising agent for the Chicago Milwaukee St. Paul & Pacific Railroad:

Since our change in schedule on The Olympian a short time ago, we have the opportunity of offering our passengers a daylight ride through some of the most scenic parts of the Bitter Root Mountains . . . Could you undertake to . . . make us a series of photographs?

In time, after the formation and dissolution of partnerships, first with William P. Romans and later with Walter P. Miller, Asahel established his own photography studio in 1920. With the help of his sister Eva, his wife Florence, his daughter Betty, and a crew of colorists and developers to assist with large-scale projects, he continued the scenic and industrial photography for which he had become known. Among his many clients were the Puget Sound Navigation Company, the Spokane Chamber of Commerce and National Geographic magazine, in whose February 1933 issue a number of his black and white and experimental color photos appeared.

While Asahel created some 60,000 images throughout the course of his career, the nature of his work was more practical than artistic, more likely to be ranked among commercial photographers such as F. Jay Haynes or Lewis...
Amazed by the majesty and abundance of the Northwest's old-growth timber, Asahel made this self-portrait in 1910.

Hine than the “art class” of photographers such as Ansel Adams, Imogene Cunningham, or even his brother Edward. Nor did he consider himself an artist. “He liked to think of himself as a shrewd businessman,” says Polly Curtis Kella, the youngest of Asahel and Florence Curtis’s four children. “But I think he was just the opposite. Dad didn’t permit himself to think of himself as an artist, but artist he was.”

Asahel died of heart failure on March 7, 1941, working until his last day. In memoriam, E. J. Fenby, acting supervisor of the Snoqualmie National Forest, wrote to Asahel Curtis, Jr., on June 9, 1942.

Surely, nothing better can be said of a man than that he loved nature, the wild and beautiful things of his surroundings.

Your father’s work and ideals were so outstanding that the United States Forest Service desires to honor his memory by dedicating a grove of virgin native trees as the “Asahel Curtis Forest Camp.” This camp is located on the banks of the South Fork of the Snoqualmie River where the Sunset Highway crosses it for the last time in its ascent to the summit of the Cascade Range.

A year later the main body of Asahel’s work—some 30,000 negatives and 40,000 prints—was purchased by the Washington State Historical Society and now comprises the Asahel Curtis Collection. The collection’s print count includes studio albums, leather-bound annotated photo albums, black and white hand-tinted originals from the Curtis studio, and reference prints made by the Society. Additionally, some 20,000 copy negatives have been made as most of Asahel’s original negatives were made on fragile glass plates and unstable nitrate film.

For 40 years Asahel documented change and growth in the Northwest. His photographs appeared in books, magazines, promotional pamphlets and advertisements. In more recent years they have been used to illustrate typical scenes of early Northwest industry, and they appear in almost every issue of this magazine. They are clear and true-to-the-moment photographs, largely valued for their historical accuracy.

Aside from his images, we have little material, such as journals and personal letters, with which to build a picture of Asahel’s character. The most telling clues we have are perhaps his most memorable photos—the symmetry of Mount Rainier reflected in an alpine lake, a miner playing Solitaire in a shaft of sunlight, a young girl and a big fish, or a couple sitting on top of a mountain, “Lost to the World.” These and the rest of Asahel’s photographs reveal the soul of the man behind the camera while at the same time documenting life in the Pacific Northwest as he encountered it.
The

GREAT DEPRESSION

A Personal Memoir of a Dust Bowl Migrant to the Pacific Northwest

No sound basis exists for believing history is inevitable, predictable or subject to universal laws. Contrary to popular belief, history does not repeat itself—each historical event differs from every other. History is not clear—if things seem clear it is often because they are oversimplified or misunderstood. The migration of 100,000 people from the Great Plains to the Pacific Northwest during the 1930s serves as a case in point. Much of the professional interpretation of the Dust Bowl migration seems to stem from John Steinbeck's novel, The Grapes of Wrath. Other than that, movies, newsreels, and other media played down the Great Depression. What has been published about the migration to Washington tends to be sparse and generalized at best and misleading at worst.

Political scientist Neal R. Peirce wrote in his influential Pacific States of America, "Fresh fuel for the radical fires came from 'blowed-out, burned-out' dust bowl farmers who drifted into the state during the Depression years, occupying miserable shanty towns on the edge of Seattle and other cities, scrounging farm jobs where they could and helping to build the Grand Coulee Dam."

In The American Northwest Gordon B. Dodds said, "Regardless of their condition, the migrants were almost all united in one respect. They were the first group of white Anglo-Saxon citizens who were not welcomed to the Pacific Northwest." Dodds further explained that the old residents feared for their jobs and were apprehensive that the newcomers would require higher taxes to pay for relief measures.

Dorothy O. Johansen opined in Empire of the Columbia, "Years of drought in the Dust Bowl sent thousands of refugees to the green haven of the Northwest, but unfortunately to cheap, unproductive cut-over lands or to cities burdened with the unemployed."

This brief overview fairly well sums up the existing interpretations. Much more remains to be said, though. How my own family was trapped by the economic collapse of the 1930s somewhat typifies earlier patterns of immigration and migration on the Great Plains. I was born on a wheat farm near Portal in extreme northwestern North Dakota in 1934. My parents moved to Washington in 1936. We stayed a year in Dishman, a Spokane suburb, and then moved to my grandfather's place on Waddell Creek, about 14 miles south of Olympia. In 1939 our immediate family moved into a self-built house on a nearby 40-acre tract of logged-over land, commonly called a "stump ranch," where we stayed for 12 years, the span of my public school years.

By Rolland Dewing
My grandfather Jacob (Jake) Dewing, an eighth generation American descended from Puritans who came to America in 1636, had married Elsie Bowyer in 1901. The newlyweds had left Minnesota and homesteaded near Portal, North Dakota. The new home was considered a rural showplace in 1902. The young couple spent their first North Dakota winter in a crude earthen shelter before finishing a modest wood-frame home. Meanwhile, Jake broke the sod of some of the finest spring wheat-producing soil in the world.

The Dewing homestead prospered. In 1918 the burgeoning family, which eventually included six sons and two daughters, moved into a large, comfortable house built adjacent to the original homestead. The new home was considered a rural showplace in the area. It had windmill-generated electricity, indoor plumbing and, before long, a telephone. A large barn was added and the farm expanded to 1,000 acres, primarily devoted to spring wheat. Jake took an active role in local politics, and the family was highly regarded in the community.

Lloyd Dewing, my father, was born in 1911. He grew up with no reason to suspect that he would not become a successful wheat farmer like his father. He was competent and ambitious, but factors beyond his control wrought failure.

In February 1932 Lloyd married Mary Dalebout, daughter of Dutch immigrants. Karel, her father, had followed his own father to North Dakota. Although the predominant ethnic group in the area was Norwegian, many other countries were represented as well. The Daleabouts fit into a Dutch-Belgian enclave and made a reasonable living until the Great Depression struck. Karel’s wife Cornelia had died in 1927 at age 47, and Mary had moved to nearby Columbus where she worked as a nanny and finished high school.

The newlyweds moved into a small house on Jake’s farm. It was called “the honeymoon house” because several older brothers and an older sister had lived there when first married. A daughter, Cornelia, was born there in 1932, and I was born there in 1934. Lloyd farmed some of Jake’s land as well as some of Karel’s. Wheat farming from 1932 to 1936 proved disastrous, however, due to drought, grasshoppers, wheat rust and low prices.

After the crop failure of 1932 Karel relocated to western Washington, following the recommendation of Swedish neighbors Ed and Orville Moline who had just moved there. Karel liked Washington because it reminded him of the Netherlands. Because of the Depression, Karel was able to buy a 40-acre parcel with a house and substantial root cellar-woodshed for $400. Waddell Creek formed the northern boundary of the acreage. Karel sold five acres from the southeast corner to his eldest son John who soon moved from North Dakota and built a house there.

Northwestern North Dakota was one of the hardest hit areas in the United States in the 1930s. Burke County declined from a population of 9,998 in 1930 to 7,653 in 1940. Divide County dropped from 9,637 to 7,086 residents. Between 1935 and 1940 some 87,000 North Dakotans left the state, primarily for the Pacific Northwest. In 1925 a North Dakota farmer could pay off a $10,000 mortgage with 6,700 bushels of wheat; in 1933 it took 33,000 bushels. The 1930s robbed the state’s farmers of an estimated $1.34 billion.

Even though New Deal programs and the state helped mitigate the tragedy, it was virtually impossible for a beginning farmer to survive the lethal combination of economic and natural disaster. Essentially burned out, the 1934 wheat crop was less than one-third that of 1933. The New Deal raised prices to 98 cents a bushel, but there was little to sell. Although the state enjoyed a fairly good crop in 1935, late rains created a rust that ruined our family’s wheat. The 1936 crop was a total failure, shrivelled by ongoing drought and blistering heat. Farmers were forced to cut thistles to feed starving livestock. Several of Lloyd’s close friends joined the Young Communist League and attempted to recruit him, but he had no interest, partly because of his parents’ adamant opposition.

My parents sold out on August 22, 1936. The sale netted $430, but only about half of it was ours because others had put up items for sale, too. We drove to Dishman in a Model-T Ford, towing a homemade trailer. We camped along the way and cooked our meals over a campfire. It was a relatively uneventful trip. Unlike the fictional Joads in The Grapes of Wrath, everyone, including the authorities, seemed supportive and sympathetic.

At Dishman we rented a small but modern house. After helping with the fall fruit harvest, Lloyd took a job at a paper mill in Post Falls, Idaho. His uncle Eugene, who had moved to Dishman earlier and encouraged Lloyd to do the same, helped him. My first memories of the 1930s are as a three-year-old in Dishman. They are hardly unpleasant—lots of relatives coming and going, playing in empty irrigation ditches, a bright red race car for Christmas.

When the job at the paper mill ran out in 1937 we moved to Karel’s place. There were no modern conveniences, no neighbors in sight, and the climate and vegetation were...
entirely different. The trip from Spokane took all day, so it was dark when we arrived. Mother recalls that it seemed as if we traveled through a dark jungle to get to the house.

Although we lived with a minimum of creature comforts, life at grandfather's was generally pleasant and entertaining for a four-year-old. Our family of four used one large bedroom; Karel and his sons slept in the other. The main room, which ran the distance of the two bedrooms, divided the house in half and served as a combined kitchen, family room and dining room. Mary did most of the cooking and housework as the young men came and went seeking work.

Karel worked for a neighboring Norwegian widow, Jennie Shervin, who ran a fairly substantial dairy operation. During such peak periods as harvest or butchering time, other family members worked there, too. The entire group participated in felling and cutting up a huge old-growth tree on the Shervin property that provided several years' supply of firewood. Another cooperative effort rescued one of the Shervin cows after an all-night struggle when it fell into an abandoned well.

The Dutch have a particular affinity for Christmas and St. Nicholas. No effort to observe the holiday was spared. A fine fir Christmas tree was cut, carefully decorated and lit with real candles. Presents for all were placed under the tree. The neighborhood gathered at Karel's house on Christmas Eve. Ed Moline brought his violin and Uncle John joined him. Usually someone played an accordion, too. Wine was consumed in moderate amounts, and after everyone enjoyed a hearty dinner, Karel appeared in a complete Santa Claus outfit, distributing gifts. He relished his role, and it seemed everybody had a terrific time. Despite the interest in Christmas, no one participated in organized church activities. Karel rarely mentioned religion. When he did he invariably referred to his abiding dislike for the Roman Catholic Church, a heritage from the Netherlands.

Although the Waddell Creek neighborhood tended to be close-knit and self-contained, friends and acquaintances from outside the group were established quite readily. Imbued with a tradition of hard work, self reliance, honesty and Great Plains neighborliness, the "Northern Okies" were well accepted by working class neighbors and associates. Relations with the business and professional community were more formal but not strained. Small general store owners quickly extended credit when they were assured they were dealing with dependable people. Other, well-established community members reacted with more indifference than open hostility. Their opposition to New Deal programs and organized labor was open and virulent, however. In this sense they directly opposed programs that most benefited the migrants. Very little local welfare was extended, but the North Dakotans did not ask for much either.

When the newcomers found work in the timber industry or on the railroad, they willingly joined the union. They appreciated and profited from the union's achievements in wages, benefits, working conditions and job security. There
was no choice in the matter anyway, because union membership was mandatory.

The coming of war in Europe ended the Great Depression, and the young North Dakotans were quickly assimilated into the growing economy. Uncle Joe married a North Dakota woman and returned there to farm. Uncle John had already been working for the Northern Pacific Railroad for several years. After working briefly for the Bordeaux Logging Company as it finished its operation in the Black Hills, Uncle Cornelius took a job as a bucker for the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company. Uncle Peter took over management of his new wife’s family farm, about a mile from Karel’s place.

After working as a farm laborer and serving a stint on a Work Projects Administration road construction crew, Lloyd became a railroad section hand for Weyerhaeuser. He stayed in camp during the week and returned home on weekends. Mary worked in the fall at a fruit cannery in Olympia for 30 cents an hour, as did several other women in the neighborhood. The women also picked strawberries in the spring for about two dollars a day. I was taken along to the berry fields but was too young to do much picking.

In 1938 Lloyd paid $70 for 40 acres of cut-over timberland near Waddell Creek. The land had once been the homesite for a member of a local pioneer family. Using lumber and shakes produced from logs on the property and materials from Bordeaux’s abandoned logging town, called Hollywood, he built a basic house. Throughout the war years it had no electricity, plumbing, or running water. There was an existing well, but it went dry in the summer. We hauled water from the creek until the well was improved. The Depression had not completely ended for our family. We started with some goats and a few chickens but developed the property substantially as the family’s income improved. The place deteriorated rapidly after we moved out in 1952. Nothing remains of our former home now. Ironically, developers are currently building luxury homes in the immediate vicinity.

Lloyd transferred to Weyerhaeuser’s Olympia plywood factory in 1940 and worked there for 25 years. Before and after retirement he successfully invested in real estate. Always a farmer at heart, he also became one of the better known polled Hereford breeders in Washington.

Mary provided significant additional income when she took a full-time job at the Cedar Creek state forestry nursery in 1950. After working in the fields for several years, she became secretary of the new L.T. Webster nursery. Since retiring from the nursery in 1977 she has remained remarkably active and productive.

Karel died in humble circumstances in 1959. Though his material legacy was scant, his human contribution is enormous: 18 grandchildren, over 30 great-grandchildren, and a rapidly increasing number of great-great-grandchildren, most of whom live in Washington. Few of these descendants know much about what transpired between 1929 and 1939.

Those who experienced the brunt of the Great Depression will carry its scars forever. It may have more profoundly influenced the younger generation, born in the 1930s, that grew up in Washington. Their lives were yet unshaped and they were forced to compete in a more urban society under extremely adverse circumstances.

Depression migrants from the Great Plains to Washington deserve a more comprehensive and balanced interpretation of their experience. It should contain a thesis something like this: During the 1930s tens of thousands of migrants from the drought-stricken Great Plains chose Washington. Doubtful about the presence of so many new job seekers in an already badly depressed economy, the state extended little assistance to the newcomers. The migrants nonetheless made a remarkable adjustment to their desperate plight. Imbued with strong family values, an extraordinary work ethic, and a tradition of honesty and neighborliness, they quite readily assimilated into the work force and they played an important role in transforming Washington from an isolated backwater into one of the nation’s leading states.

Rolland Dewing is Professor of History and chairman of the Social Science Department at Chadron State College in Nebraska. His most recent work is Wounded Knee II (1995), on the 1973 occupation of the town of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, by members of the American Indian Movement.
Some of the military leaders who helped shape the state of Washington had a flair for the limelight, winning wide and lasting acclaim for their endeavors. Others, more typically, labored as "good soldiers": loyal, professional, their achievements largely unsung beyond the small circle of those who knew them. In this latter category was Richard Hulbert Wilson, career Army officer and first commandant of Washington’s Businessmen’s Camp.

In the kind and accurate words of an officer on his staff (Russell Langdon), "His innate modesty always kept him from parading his splendid qualities of mind and heart."

Richard Wilson, known to his West Point classmates as "Bert," came to Washington in the closing years of a long and productive career. The character and abilities he brought to his command of the 14th Infantry at Fort Lawton, Seattle, shortly before World War I were the result of nearly 40 continuous years of cadet and commissioned service. When asked to train 95 zealous citizens temporarily in uniform, he was ready.

The last decade of the 19th century and the opening years of the 20th were times of dynamic growth and activity for the citizens of the Pacific Northwest. These people had a profound sense of history. Still living in their midst were the pioneers and founders of the territory and the state. People identified themselves with the roots and character of the nation.

The positive citizenship of turn-of-the-century Pacific Northwesterners was shared by most Americans. Typical was the enthusiasm expressed for the various volunteer units of the Spanish-American War—the Yale Batteries, the Harvard Batteries, and, of course, the Rough Riders who, in the attack on San Juan Hill, had been led by Colonel Leonard Wood and his vigorous second-in-command, Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt.

But the nation's enthusiasm for manly activities and patriotic ventures did not last. When the Philippine Insurrection turned into a thankless war of attrition (a presage, perhaps, of an Asian war yet to come), most of the volunteers left the game. It remained to be played out, tediously and painfully, by the regulars. There was a trend across the nation for citizens to turn their backs on their armed forces and close their eyes to the need for an adequate national defense.

Notwithstanding this new attitude on the part of many Americans, Puget Sound citizens generally liked their armed forces and appreciated having them close at hand. The presence of the
military was a comfort to those living on the nation's frontier. At the turn of the century Seattleites welcomed the establishment of Fort Lawton as a base for Army regulars on choice real estate overlooking Puget Sound. The citizens were willing hosts to Colonel Wilson and his veteran 14th Infantry when they arrived in December 1913.

These early years of statehood saw the founding of the National Guard of Washington, which had held its annual encampments near American Lake, south of Tacoma, since 1892. In 1913 the Washington National Guard included the 2d Infantry and a Coast Artillery Reserve Corps, totaling about 1,200 men, plus a unit of naval militia. The first significant involvement of

Colonel Wilson and his 14th Infantry regulars with the Washingtonians was the annual encampment of the National Guard at American Lake during July 1-10, 1914. Colonel Wilson, on War Department and Western Department (Presidio, San Francisco) orders, had the job of planning and conducting this training event. He used officers, "noncoms," and selected units of his 14th Infantry.

The 14th Infantry contingent marched the 60 miles from Fort Lawton to American Lake, taking four days for the move, and afterward marched back again. Major elements of the National Guard traveled by train. One guard company—Company A, Field Signal Corps—traveled from Seattle on horseback and in horse-drawn wagons, though with one innovation: the unit took along one motor truck to demonstrate its usefulness in stringing communication wire. Perhaps more important, while on the march, the truck served to get the cooks forward to the next campsite early so they could have food ready when the troops marched in.

Wilson's planning for this event was accomplished with his usual attention to detail. Everything was done to maximize training benefits for the guardsmen. Companies of regulars were pitched alternately with companies of militia so that "the guardsmen may have the advantage of watching the handling of company matters by captains, lieutenants and sergeants and at the same time gain information in the internal economies practiced in the issuance and preparation of provisions."

Mornings at camp were given over to drill, afternoons to field problems. Military ceremony was not neglected; each day ended with a parade.

At the outset of training the National Guard personnel exhibited immense interest and the expectation of a satisfying experience. This expectation was evidently fulfilled. Tacoma and Seattle newspapers published daily accounts of the guardsmen's activities and achievements, all in great detail, citing specific individuals and their units.

Colonel Wilson and his 14th Infantry, responsible for running the whole show, were mentioned in the news only sparingly, though with evident respect. There seemed to be a presumption of excellence where the 14th Infantry cadre and its veteran commander were concerned. In his brief remarks to the assembled National Guard officers on the last night of the exercise, Wilson stated that he had "never been associated with men who showed such good order and such a spirit of willingness to do whatever task was given them."

The 1914 National Guard encampment was so successful that its principal elements were repeated and expanded the following year to comprise a two-week maneuver during the latter half of July. This time, with the staff recognizing the merits of thorough preparation,
RICHARD WILSON was born June 10, 1853, and grew up in a Michigan farming community where as a boy he saw the impact of the Civil War on the lives and outlook of his parents and neighbors. Eight years after General Lee's surrender at Appomattox, he entered the U.S. Military Academy, from which he graduated in June 1877. The Class of 1877 graduated one year after Custer's debacle at the Little Big Horn, an event that deeply moved these young men, soon to begin their own army careers. Lieutenant Wilson, like many of his classmates, was destined to spend much of the next two decades on the western frontier.

Still a new lieutenant, Wilson was assigned to Camp Gaston, California, in 1878—a duty that lasted six years. Gaston was a lonely one-company post in northern California, near the Klamath River on the Hoopa Indian Reservation. The place was so isolated that wagons could not reach it—all supplies came by pack mule. Unlike some of his colleagues who sought to relieve the monotony with gambling and drinking, Wilson undertook the study of languages and music, building on a classical education that included two years at Hillsdale College, Michigan.

Beginning in 1889 he was tapped for two years of instructor duty at the Infantry and Cavalry School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He then returned to the 8th Infantry in Wyoming for four years as adjutant and company commander.

For three years, 1895-98, Wilson, now a captain, was Acting Indian Agent at the Arapahoe and Shoshone Agency at Fort Washakie, Wyoming. Wilson performed his duties with great compassion and regard for justice. He made warm and lasting friendships with the Indians—friendships that were shared by his new wife, Grace Chaffin of Cheyenne, whom he married in 1895. Among Wilson's friends was Chief Washakie, the aged tribal leader for whom the fort was named.

In April 1898 Wilson was reassigned to the 8th Infantry at Fort D. A. Russell, Wyoming. War with Spain appearing imminent, the regiment shortly moved by stages to Florida before boarding the transport vessel Seneca bound for Cuba. Now a captain with 21 years of commissioned service, Wilson was given command of the 2d Battalion, 8th Infantry. Arriving in Cuba, the 8th Infantry was the first unit ashore of the corps comprising the invading force.

Captain Wilson's brigade and division commanders were impressed by his performance in the battle at El Caney and the celebrated San Juan heights. He was recommended for "Brevet Major, U.S.A." for gallantry, and in due course was awarded the Silver Star.

After these battles the 8th Infantry led the advance on Santiago. Wilson did exceptional service in developing intelligence on the Spanish position. He personally reconnoitered the terrain and questioned local inhabitants, making great use of his proficiency in Spanish, learned back at Camp Gaston.

With the close of active operations in Cuba in mid July 1898, another foe confronted Shafter's command—yellow fever. Most of Wilson's men became seriously ill, and many died. Wilson had one episode of fever but hardly slowed down, exerting himself to shelter his troops from the tropical downpour. He gave up the single staff tent authorized for his battalion so it could be used for the sick.

After returning stateside for a brief tour of recruiting duty, he went back to his 2d Battalion and the regiment in Cuba, serving a year on occupation duty. Characteristically, he made friends among the Cubans and remembered a number of them after his return to the States. His Cuban tour was followed by two years as a recruiting officer in Denver, Colorado.

Promotion was "very slow" for Richard Wilson. However, in February 1901, 23 years after his commissioning, he was finally promoted to major. In May 1902 he saw his first duty in Washington when he became interim commander of the newly established post of Fort Lawton in Seattle for six weeks while en route to Alaska. He had received orders to the Philippines, but after embarking in the transport, had been abruptly redirected to Fort St. Michael, Alaska. After two years of controlling Gold Rushers moving to and from the Yukon, he was sent to distant Fort Slocum in New York City.

The Fort Slocum tour lasted 16 months, when continued unrest in the Philippines demanded the know-how of veteran infantrymen. Stationed initially at Camp Jossmark until April 3, 1906, Wilson was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, ending his 29-year career with the 8th Infantry. He was reassigned to the 16th Infantry at Portland, Maine.

Wilson next served with the 16th Infantry at Fort Crook in Omaha, an assignment lasting until March 1908. Ever the handy troubleshooter, he was then sent to command the Porto Rico Provisional Regiment of Infantry at San Juan, Puerto Rico. This assignment lasted a year, followed by another year with the 16th Infantry at Fort Logan A. Roots in Little Rock. In June 1910 Wilson was promoted to colonel and given command of the 14th Infantry and Fort William Henry Harrison at Helena, Montana.

Colonel Wilson's next move brought him back to Washington, where he commanded his 14th Infantry and its new home base, Fort Lawton, from December 1913 until May 1916, when he retired from military service. This turned out to be an exceptionally productive assignment for the veteran infantry colonel, bringing with it the opportunity for his unique involvement with the volunteer civilians of the Businessmen's Camp.
the exercise period was preceded in June by a one-week encampment for the officers and noncoms of the 2d Infantry. This session, of course, as well as the July encampment itself, was conducted under the valued tutelage of Colonel Wilson and his cadre from the 14th Infantry.

By the time of the 1915 encampment, international events had instilled a sense of alarm in Washington citizenry, as in other communities across the land, with regard to the nation's defenses. The bloodletting in Europe had been under way for a year, touching more and more nations with its increasing ferocity. Americans were beginning to feel queasy about the pitifully meager, albeit well-motivated, defense forces available to the nation. The United States at that time had a standing army of 130,000, with a backup of 70,000 reserves. These figures compared poorly with those of attacking German and Austrian armies, which numbered into the millions. British and French forces were potentially large but in that first year were in a feeble state of mobilization, training, arming and supply. And of course the United States Congress and the president had pledged to "keep us out of the war."

At this time a Washington personal-

ity became an important influence on local events. He was Clarance B. Blethen, Captain in the Coast Artillery Reserve Corps of the Washington National Guard. Also, and perhaps more significantly, he was managing editor of the Seattle Times.

Blethen, with other guard and regular officers, attended a five-week course of instruction with the U.S. Artillery School at Fort Monroe, Virginia, in May and June 1915. Besides taking branch-pertinent instruction, these officers were briefed in detail regarding the nation's defense posture. Blethen was impressed by the seriousness with which the regulars viewed this situation. He returned to Seattle determined to jar the public consciousness.

Meanwhile, in New York State, a veritable "Who's Who" of business and political leaders of the time had begun a new movement that would have far-reaching impact. The idea was that the already-established summer military camps for students should be extended to include older civilians, generally 30 to 40 years old, from the ranks of business and the professions. There would be two main objectives. One was to impart some practical know-how on troop activities in the field and the elements of leadership, while the other was to foster a lively commitment to the cause of an adequate national defense.

The two kingpins of this movement were Grenville Clark, a young, charismatic New York businessman, and Major General Leonard Wood, commander of the Eastern Department of the U.S. Army. Both were Harvard graduates and well matched in outlook and disposition. Clark and Wood held numerous public and private meetings and pulled all the strings, including some leading clear to the White House. The project took form with the support of such figures as Theodore Roosevelt and Bernard Baruch, an eastern financier who gave it prestige as well as money.

The conspicuous result of these efforts was a four-week encampment at Plattsburgh Barracks, New York, from August 8 to September 6, 1915. Over 1,000 enthusiastic citizens attended, including prominent sports personalities and assorted business and professional men. The exercise was conducted by General Wood and his regular army cadre, with support from the New York National Guard, and was deemed a great success.

A similar but more modest encampment was staged at the Presidio in San Francisco, with 81 civilian trainees. The ball was then grabbed by several enthusiastic civic leaders in Washington and seriously promoted by Clarance Blethen. Editor Blethen saw to it that the Seattle Times maintained a steady drumbeat of daily news and supportive commentary beginning in June 1915. His articles stressed support for and participation in a military encampment. He said this was a matter of civic duty and pride for citizens who had earned prominence in their respective fields of business and the professions.

Blethen's campaign was successful in generating the necessary political support, including that of Governor Ernest Lister and the state adjutant general, Brigadier General Maurice Thompson. The War Department also came through: Major General James Franklin Bell, commanding general of the Western Department, authorized participation by that most vital resource—
Richard Wilson and his 14th Infantry. The encampment, dubbed the "Businessmen's Camp," was scheduled for August 23 through September 12, 1915. Like the National Guard encampments, the Businessmen's Camp was sited near American Lake.

In the course of two summer sessions with the Washington National Guard, Wilson had cemented his reputation as both the seasoned professional mentor and a diplomat without peer. At this time two years away from mandatory retirement (on his 64th birthday), Wilson nevertheless took pride in his mental and physical fitness. The second week of the encampment was to coincide with the annual requirement for him to demonstrate fitness for duty, a requirement instituted by Theodore Roosevelt to improve the fitness of Army officers. Each regular officer was required to ride horseback 90 miles in three days. Wilson would never take the full time allowed. A small man (with a very large horse named "Patsy"), Wilson would travel at a trot throughout the day, not even stopping for lunch, which caused considerable annoyance to some of his officers.

Feeling, no doubt, that this encampment might be the final significant event of his career, he set about to make it a showpiece. The enrollees were in for a very full three weeks. The schedule included: schools of the squads, company and battalion; care and use of the rifle, with preliminary instruction for target practice; camp sanitation, military hygiene and first aid; company administration and use of rations; map reading and use of maps; methods of discipline and court martial procedures; military history; practice march, with individual cooking; and military signaling and signals.

To accomplish this intensive education, Camp Commandant Wilson's staff consisted of officers, noncoms, and one company of the 14th Infantry. In addition, he had assigned to him seven handpicked officers from the Coast Artillery Corps and the 21st Infantry, all Army regulars. Washington National Guard personnel were given no part in the actual conduct of the camp; nevertheless, they did yeoman's work in enrollment and communication to get the camp set up. Editor Blethen set about to maximize the impact of this encampment with daily detailed news items.

During the encampment, Colonel Wilson paid a short courtesy call on another Blethen—Colonel Alden J. Blethen of the Washington National Guard and founder of the Seattle Times. The day was hot but the meeting was cool. As Colonel Wilson's daughter Mary Helen recalls, "It was maybe because our car collided with the Blethens' when Father was learning to drive. Driving was hard for him because he was a horseman."

Although expecting a larger enrollment at the camp, the organizers were pleased with the final tally of 95 volunteer trainees. These included "capitalists, doctors, businessmen, clerks, and a preacher"—a fairly representative assortment of responsible, civic-minded citizens. One of the more vocal and supportive participants was Stephen Appleby, cashier of the National Bank of Tacoma. Appleby was quoted as saying, "It is simply great. I wish the camp would last three months instead of three weeks."

Each trainee upon his arrival was required to pay a fee of $25 to cover rations, quarters (tents), use of equipment and loan of uniforms. Only days before the start of camp, the War Department decided it was illegal to furnish uniforms, even temporarily, to civilians. Hence, the trainees were asked to bring their own outdoor roughing-it clothes and had their fee reduced to $15. However, upon their arrival, they found that the cadre had managed to scrounge at least one set each of khaki shirts, trousers, leggings and a campaign hat, to give the attendees at least the appearance of a uniformed body.

On the day of reporting in, the trainees were checked over by an Army surgeon (everybody passed), issued field gear, assigned to units and tents, and treated to a hot roast beef dinner. Even at the outset, Colonel Wilson was favorably impressed with the enrollees.

Typical Americans they are... and look as though they would make good students for instruction. It is commendable for them to come out here... I hope this is the foundation for a great national institution—this businessmen's encampment. We will certainly do all we can to make this encampment a profitable one.

The daily news reports during the encampment read like letters home from recruits—albeit more mature than average. Repeatedly mentioned were long hard hours of drill, fatigue, blisters and practical jokes. A good mess, as in every soldier's experience, was a major factor in keeping morale high. The accounts were all upbeat in tone.

The schedule was not all work and no play. One afternoon was given over to a well-organized game of baseball. Colonel Wilson supplied bats, base balls, mitts and masks from Fort Lawton, and then presided over a spirited game. The exploits of individual businessmen-players were well reported in the next day's papers.

Mixed in with the nitty-gritty of soldiering, the regular officer instructors held forth unabashedly on the need for a bigger, stronger army. From quotes...
dubbed the encampment a resounding success and the basis for a bigger and better repetition the following year.

There was indeed a bigger and possibly better businessmen's camp in 1916. It even had an expanded name, "Northwest Businessmen's Preparedness League" encampment. It was conducted in August in the same area near American Lake. This time it was not run by Richard Wilson but by another regular officer, Colonel U.G. Alexander. Once again, an active booster and participant was Stephen Appleby, cashier of the National Bank of Tacoma.

Following this encampment, Appleby headed up a committee of Tacoma businessmen who immediately began to lobby for a permanent military post in the area. In pressuring their cause, these men labored prodigiously to persuade first the War Department, then political figures at the local, state and federal levels, and lastly the voters of Pierce County. Their efforts culminated in the establishment of Camp Lewis in April 1917, just days before the nation's entry into the war to give this training ground a major role in mobilizing soldiers for Pershing and his American Expeditionary Force.

Also typifying the ardor engendered among the attendees of the businessmen's Camp was Seattle attorney Benjamin L. Moore, who attended both the 1915 and 1916 encampments. Within a week of U.S. entry into World War I, Moore signed up for reserve officer's training at the Presidio, San Francisco.

In May 1916, leaving behind a more aroused and ready citizenry in Washington, Colonel Wilson and his 14th Infantry were on the move once again. This time it was to Douglas, Arizona, and then, in September 1916, to the Yuma District to control the recurring instances of banditry instigated by Pancho Villa in that area. In May 1917, after the United States had entered World War I, Wilson and his regiment moved to Vancouver Barracks, Washington. There, on June 10, 1917, he retired from active service.

Three months later he was recalled to active duty and served as Professor of Military Science and Tactics at Massachusetts Agricultural College and Amherst College, Massachusetts. He retired for the last time in April 1919.

Wilson's retirement years were spent in Seattle, where he maintained his characteristic low profile but did work of lasting benefit. A born teacher, he tutored the young children of his friends and relatives when they had trouble with their schoolwork. His grandson, now Lieutenant General (retired) R.H. Groves, recalls that in second grade he couldn't read. Grandfather Wilson took him in hand and soon had him reading better than his classmates. "In the process," according to General Groves, "he taught me what to read and how to find pleasure in doing so."

As an exercise of his linguistic ability, Wilson devoted some effort to translating archaic French manuscripts. A quite different and lasting legacy of Colonel Wilson's is the system of bluff and woodland hiking trails he created at Fort Lawton, now open to Seattle citizens as Discovery Park.

Richard Wilson's untiring service to his country and his fellow citizens of Washington ended with his death on March 21, 1937. In the words of a friend, "The inspiration of his kindly spirit and the example of his well spent life will remain always in the hearts of those who knew him."

Colonel (ret.) C. Stuart MacVeigh, a 1943 graduate of the United States Military Academy, after a distinguished career as a commissioned officer in the Army Corps of Engineers, left the Army in 1969 and became King County's manager of road construction and, later, road design. Now retired, he continues to consult on the county's engineering efforts.

AUTHOR'S NOTE
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“A Good Route from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound”

When J. J. Cole, one of America’s leading auto manufacturers, said that “Christopher Columbus located the continent of America in 1492 and Americans discovered it in 1915,” he couldn’t have been closer to the truth, especially when it came to the explosive growth of automobile use.

The word “trail” has often been employed to refer to a transportation path of usage or discovery, such as the Indians used, or “pathfinder” trails of Lewis and Clark and other explorers. It is also a word well chosen for the paths of the earliest cross-country and national park motorists. Trail associations, auto clubs, chambers of commerce, local newspapers and other auto boosters lobbied to get the first road access into our national parks. According to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, by 1924 there were 100 associations and 250 auto trails in the United States, each with its own distinctive colors, insignias and marking signs.

The trail associations’ main goal was to seek out connecting wagon and early auto routes, to establish longer, contiguous touring routes and to put route markers along them. To encourage the inhabitants of towns, counties and states along the way to improve and maintain the roads, trail associations marked the locations of hotels and garages, and the associations then advertised the routes to cross-regional or cross-country tourists. This increased interest in vehicular travel gave rise to the automobile tourist industry and, subsequently, tremendous economic growth.

The Yellowstone Trail Association (YTA) stands head and shoulders above the rest as the first such organization in the nation, as well as the most effective, thorough, and long-lasting. The YTA, in 1915, was the second group to blaze its trail through Washington. One of the first transcontinental auto touring routes, the Yellowstone Trail existed in Washington from 1915 into the late 1930s. It began, of all places, in Ipswich, South Dakota, the brainchild of Joseph Parmley, who with strong local support formed the Yellowstone Trail Association in 1912 and immediately began connecting up a transcontinental route toward Yellowstone Park. Parmley saw how successful the Northern Pacific Railroad had been at accessing and promoting Yellowstone Park with its “Line of the Yellowstone” route and how popular western tourism was becoming. He in turn launched a vigorous campaign to develop a “northern” transcontinental auto route with its prime focus on Yellowstone National Park.

Yellow and black banded signs would designate the route, with all markers east of the park pointing west toward it and all signs west of the park pointing east. An old Cle Elum Miner Echo reported:

The Yellow Trail has been painted through Cle Elum. A yellow splotch with a black arrow marks it for straight ahead, a black R within the yellow for right turn, L for left, X for railway crossing, S for slow and D for danger. A combination of the letters are to be read literally, thus X,D means railroad crossing, danger. These marks having been completed to Seattle, the Yellow Trail is blazed from Coast to Coast, from Plymouth Rock to Seattle. It does not pretend to follow the most direct route. Detours are made to select a better road, for scenic effect or to reach larger cities or points of interest. Thus when reaching Spokane, the route swings to the south in order to reach Walla Walla and pass through the Yakima Valley. The work is under the direction of the National Good Roads Association. . . . Tons of paint have been used on the posts, fences and rocks along the way, and the route . . . has been so plainly marked there can be no trouble following it.

Mr. Warwick has been in the trail marking game for many years, working mostly in the southern routes and in Mexico.

As Warwick progressed, articles detailing his work appeared in local papers across Washington. He relied on contributions from businessmen in each city to pay for his paint and expenses as he went.
Even though you won’t find information about the Yellowstone Trail, or any other auto “trail,” in state highway reports for the years 1915 to 1939, you will find information about it in old newspapers. The best “official” maps of it were printed in such road atlases as Rand McNally’s.

Though the railroads provided rapid, reliable transportation during the winter in the northern snow and mud belt, early automobile routes did not. There was no snow removal for rural roads, especially mountain passes, and the automobile was parked for the winter in favor of the horse-drawn sleigh. However, once automobiling was established, as early as they could each spring, Kittitas and Chelan County businessmen and road boosters would “motor” to the passes with their wives, have “snow line picnics” by warming campfires, and hand-shovel the routes with the aid of county road crews and equipment in order to speed pass openings. In the Cascades the first auto mountain passes—Snoqualmie and Blewett—were not kept open by the State Highway Department until 1930–31.

Winter did not bring a lessening of the Yellowstone Trail Association’s activities, however. On the contrary, the state chapters held their annual meetings in winter, staggered in date so that the association’s manager (sometimes accompanied by other executive officers) could attend and hear discussion and reports about conditions and improvements in local roads. YTA officials also collected pledges from individual and town members and acquainted themselves with representatives selected from each state—the number of representatives determined by how many members signed up—to help make major national decisions such as route changes and budget allocations. Communication was via mail, telegraph and, as the technology progressed, the telephone.

Some of the other trail associations did little more than stir up booster enthusiasm, post a plethora of confusing signs on routes through cities, and collect money they didn’t manage well. They provided little actual road improvement or publicity and quickly phased out of existence. The YTA, on the other hand, was very well run. The association accomplished many things, including compiling free weekly up-to-date reports on road conditions and travel accommodations. These were posted at hotels, garages, campgrounds and travel information centers along the route—centers that the YTA itself established. The YTA had promotional tour buses that traveled around the country distributing literature about the trail. It also promoted locally built and maintained campgrounds in towns and cities, and kept statistics on auto travel.

In a 1923 appearance in Cle Elum to boost membership, H. Cooley, the YTA’s national manager, noted that the trail had been blazed from Plymouth Rock to Seattle less than ten years before. In 1912 four cars made the trip from Minneapolis to Yellowstone National Park. In 1922, by actual registration count, 57,000 cars drove the route. Cooley related how the YTA employed 30 people to “advertise the Far West, and route[e] people over this trail,” had branch offices in 11 large Eastern and Midwestern cities, and distributed 150,000 map folders.

In response to the growing demand for good roads, progressive civic and legislative efforts focused on opening Washington cross-state routes for auto travel. The Washington legislature named a number of cross-state trunk roads: the Pacific Highway from Blaine to Vancouver, the Sunset Highway from the Idaho border through Spokane to Seattle, the Columbia River Highway from Washougal to Goldendale, plus the Central Washington, National Park and Olympic highways. New maps came out showing routes with names as well as numbers. Often the naming of a trunk road preceeded its factual existence. For instance, though the Sunset Highway was to go from Seattle to Spokane, the first stretch through Snoqualmie Pass only extended from North Bend to Easton. In those early years King and Kittitas counties were expected to connect their.

This detail of a map from the YTA’s 1928 route guide shows the western half of the Yellowstone Trail.
country roads to the pass road and, once it was completed, maintain them all.

The state was not in the tourist business in those years, so it did not promote or advertise for travelers. Newspapers, however, did an excellent job of promoting auto tourism. Many developed a front page banner they published each day during the tourist season over a period of several years. The banner, run above the headline, extolled the Northwest as a tourist playground. The Seattle Times had a “Pathfinder” auto in which it sent out reporters who produced many lengthy, well-illustrated articles that included road logs and information on scenery, garages and hotels.

In 1915 the YTA sponsored and organized the amazing 2,611-mile Chicago-to-Seattle Auto Relay Race for the purpose of demonstrating that the route was open and in excellent condition for travel. This exciting automobile race featured 21 participating relay teams. The results of time runs were telegraphed back to Minneapolis at every relay point. The cars carried messages to the mayor of Seattle from the mayor of Chicago and 20 mayors of towns along the route, with several of them riding in cars that took part in the race. The relay, expected to be run in 100 hours, was actually completed in less time than that, setting a record. One sad note was that near Redmond a carload of racers flipped over and George Dickson, a state legislator from Ellensburg, was killed and two others injured. Even so, the race made headlines around the nation and signaled to all that the northern auto route was open and ready for tourists to flood west—and they did.

A much-debated change in the Yellowstone Trail route through Washington was announced in the May 8, 1925, Cle Elum Miner Echo:

Yellowstone Trail Changes Its Route. Change of the route of the Yellowstone trail to go through Wenatchee instead of Yakima was officially announced this week, shortening the distance between Seattle and Spokane by 143 miles.

Asahel Curtis, Seattle, committeeman in the Yellowstone Trail Association, stated that the association had voted 6,127 to 2,133 for the change which the Wenatchee Chamber of Commerce requested.

The alternative is effective at once. Curtis said he voted against the modification.

A May 15 follow-up article went into more detail:

The National Executive committee of the Yellowstone Trail Association today voted to change the routing of the Yellowstone Trail through the state of Washington between Spokane and Seattle. The route of the Yellowstone Trail up to the present time made a loop through the southern part of the state, taking in the cities of Colfax, Dayton, Walla Walla, Pasco, Yakima, and Ellensburg. The new route, which was voted upon, takes in the cities of Davenport, Elma, Coulee City, Waterville and Wenatchee, passing through the central part of the state.

This change was brought about by a petition of the Wenatchee Chamber of Commerce at the National Executive Committee meeting, which was held at Minneapolis last February. This is one of the greatest changes that the Association has made in any state. The new route crosses the old Columbia river bed at Coulee City, which is several miles in width. It is known as the Grand Coulee. It is a miniature grand canyon, a wonderful sight and one long remembered. The route of the Yellowstone Trail from Spokane east to Boston, Massachussets, is practically the same. No changes are being made with the exception of shortening the roads through towns and in some instances eliminating towns, making the mileage less.
Asahel Curtis, a noted photographer whose oeuvre is a mainstay of the Washington State Historical Society’s collections, was national vice president of the YTA in 1925 and served on the executive committee for several years. Why did he vote against the change? While maintaining professional offices for his photography business in Seattle, he also owned an apple orchard at Grandview that was situated along the section of the Yellowstone Trail proposed for deletion. Having helped increase the popularity of the route through his photography of town and farm development along the highway, Curtis doubtless enjoyed the trail’s proximity to his property. However, a few years later he was busily helping Wenatchee area road boosters promote the opening of a new highway bridge over Peshtastin Creek, on the Blewett route.

Asahel Curtis’s and the Yellowstone Trail’s fame go hand in hand and complement each other. Curtis probably did more to develop interest in Northwest auto tourism than anyone else before or since his time. He frequently attended road and bridge opening ceremonies throughout Washington, hired to take publicity pictures. His work provides an excellent record of the growth of highway transportation in the state during the first several decades of the 20th century.

While the route change shaved 143 miles off the Yellowstone Trail and eliminated a toll ferry across the Snake River, it added another mountain crossing—4,064-foot Blewett Pass—a pass to be reckoned with. A thousand feet higher than Snoqualmie in elevation, Blewett was a steep, narrow, one-lane road with numerous precipitous drop-offs. Cars sometimes had to be jacked around one another at turnouts.

Campground accommodations were important to tourists, and the Yellowstone Trail Association did its part to promote them. At first they were free, but later they developed into pay campgrounds—to “keep out undesirables,” it was stated. The June 27, 1924, Cle Elum Miner Echo:

Cle Elum’s tourist park or campgrounds are just hitting a summer gait, according to Supt. Blanchard who has charge of them under the park board. Last Saturday night 31 cars spent the night there in comfort and safety. We say comfort and safety because these grounds now have an abundant water and wood supply, electric lights, sanitary comfort stations, a large bath house with hot water on tap all day and half the night, modern camp stoves, and a competent caretaker who is on the job all the time. During the first three weeks of June, 1,844 people have registered at these grounds.

LEFT: This travel guide, published and distributed in 1928 by the Yellowstone Trail Association, was packed with maps of the route, information on places of interest, branching points, mileage, camping facilities, and pointers on traveling by auto and the best way to see Yellowstone Park.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Road boosters worked hard each year to bring about early spring openings of the Snoqualmie Pass route, which was not kept open by the State Highway Department until 1930.
Ellensburg businessmen annually donated a day of their time in the spring to clean up their public campground and get it ready for the upcoming summer tourist trade. From the campground movement evolved the first tourist cabin accommodations. Hotels along the Yellowstone Trail not only did a brisk trade but also increased in number.

How did the Yellowstone Trail Association publicize its route? Besides its annual brochure, which provided driving tips, a motion picture of the route was made in 1918 and went on traveling exhibit around the country. The YTA conducted national advertising campaigns through organized tours of the trail by dignitaries. In 1920 the association set up ten information bureaus along the Yellowstone Trail between Rochester, New York, and Seattle. One year Joseph Parmley took a Dictaphone along and recorded his entire road trip across North Dakota for later publicity. In 1925 the YTA voted to operate a “fleet” of traveling information bureaus. Successful operation of two traveling bureaus in 1924 led to adoption of a plan to increase the number of buses in 1925. Special promotions of sections of the Yellowstone Trail took place frequently during the summer travel season. YTA meetings were often front-page news in towns along the trail. Thousands of dollars were spent on mailing out and distributing Yellowstone Trail brochures each year.

Present-day motorists can still trace some remaining segments of both the southern and northern routes through eastern Washington and along the continuous route west of the Cascades. These surviving sections of the old Yellowstone Trail provide an inviting opportunity to trace roadway evolution from primitive dirt track to paved superhighway.

Where are these sections? For starters, one mile-and-a-half section—the “Red Brick Road” near Redmond—is on both the National and State Register of Historic Sites and is excellent for a walk or bicycle ride. This section is near the spot where George Dickson was killed in the Chicago-to-Seattle Yellowstone Trail Relay Race.

One can taste the excitement of scenic mountain adventure when traveling “the big switchback” on King County Road 58 in Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Just west of Snoqualmie Pass this section is accessed from I-90 exits 47 and 52, but deep snows render it inaccessible during

lies along the earlier 1915-25 route. If you like backcountry touring and don’t mind driving dusty gravel roads, the Durr Road is a real treat. Accessible from Ellensburg or Selah, it began as the supply road between The Dalles, Oregon, and Ellensburg in the 1870s. Though never paved, Durr evolved from a wagon toll road into the favored automobile route between Yakima and Ellensburg from 1900 to December 1931, when a river-grade route was opened (known as the Yakima Canyon Highway). It winds over steep grades and a rocky ford of Umptanum Creek. On the Ellensburg end, in Shuiskin Canyon (where the road is paved) there still exists

Surviving sections of the old Yellowstone Trail provide an inviting opportunity to trace roadway evolution from dirt track to superhighway.
on the side of the road a concrete auto water trough halfway up the canyon. There were many of these troughs along mountain sections of the old roads, dating from the early 1900s. The old Durr Road provides excellent views of Mounts Rainier, Stuart, and other Cascade peaks, and the breathtaking expanse of rolling wheat fields down into the Kittitas Valley. As you cross a high divide, you will also see panoramic vistas of desert canyon and hill country.

Chelan and Kittitas counties share the Old Blewett Wagon Road, which was built as a mining road in the 1890s. Accessed from Highway 97, this one-lane blacktop with turnouts was part of the Yellowstone Trail from 1925 to the late 1930s, as was the old road between Dryden and Cashmere on the south side of the freeway. Old sections of the road can also be found around Waterville in Douglas County.

In the Yakima Valley several facets of the old route are prominent and worth turning off I-82 to visit. At Grandview one can drive on a three-mile segment of the “Grandview Pavement” upon which are still visible the stamped impressions made by the highway contractors who laid the first concrete in 1926. There is a gorgeous view of Mount Adams from the Grandview Pavement, which passes near Asahel Curtis’s old home on Asahel Curtis Drive. This section of road was recently declared a National Historic Site. A growing number of local residents and businesses are campaigning to preserve this rare, unreconstructed segment of the Yellowstone Trail in its original condition.

In Lincoln County, on a 12-mile stretch of concrete pavement between Reardan and Davenport, several of the 1928 contractor’s stamps are still discernable. This road was perhaps better known as a section of the old Sunset Highway, but according to the YTA’s own map, it was also part of the Yellowstone Trail.

During his lifetime Joseph Parmley successfully worked to promote the transcontinental Yellowstone Trail, served as the YTA’s president for many years, was always active on its executive committee, and lived to see the route’s completion from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. He also lived to see much of it paved, and the biggest part of his dream was realized when federal, state and county governments took on its modernizing and maintenance. When Parmley died in Ipswich in 1939, highway boosters from near and far attended his funeral. He was buried in his hometown along the Yellowstone Trail.

Gathering information on this all-but-forgotten roadway can be an exciting and valuable experience when paired with driving along sections of the old routes and seeing firsthand their evolution from primitive one-lane roads to two-lane brick, macadam or concrete surfaces. In some cases these routes evolved into major east-west, and a couple of north-south, cross-state highways. Snoqualmie Pass, a freeway passage that evolved from the old Yellowstone Trail, is now the heaviest traveled mountain highway north of Los Angeles.

While the term Yellowstone Trail may be forgotten along portions of its route, it had a profound influence on the development of auto tourism and the development of some of Washington’s main cross-state routes, and it made Northwest scenic attractions famous far and wide. As more and more of our roadways are “improved,” the original YTA road segments are fast becoming artifacts in themselves. However, a dwindling number of them remain intact for us to find and enjoy. Present-day travelers on the Yellowstone Trail’s historic sections can still relive some of the outstanding moments of early-day auto touring.

Yvonne Prater is a free-lance photojournalist working out of Ellensburg. Her articles have appeared in Sunset magazine and numerous other Pacific Northwest publications. Author of Snoqualmie Pass: From Indian Trail to Interstate (Mountaineers Books, 1995), she continues to research and write about Northwest history, and is particularly interested in gathering more information about the Yellowstone Trail.
CORRESPONDENCE

Carl F. Gould Reconsidered

In the "Current and Noteworthy" section of the book reviews in the Winter 1995/96 issue of COLUMBIA, I noticed your remarks concerning Carl F. Gould: A Life in Architecture and the Arts, in which you stated, "The text . . . is appropriately sensitive and insightful." I find such a statement to be an extremely generous one.

A major problem with Carl F. Gould is the lack of consistent dating. An apparently arbitrary dating process has resulted in the authors making some highly questionable claims regarding the innovativeness of some of Gould’s design work. In addition, there are a number of projects where the authors give Gould more credit for design responsibility than can be supported by historical documentations, the most troubling of these being the Penthouse Theater of 1938-40, for which Charles C. May, C. Ken Weidner and Sergius Sergev should be given primary design credit.

For a book that presents itself strongly as a biography, Carl F. Gould unfortunately has problems in this area as well. The book gives the impression of an architect who had congenial relationships with all his fellow practitioners. One minor incident with W. R. B. Willcox is mentioned, but there is no mention of Gould’s running feud of over five years’ duration with Rudolph Weaver, the first Professor of Architecture at Washington State University. During the presidency of Henry Suzzallo, with whom Gould had a close professional relationship, the University of Washington attempted to eliminate Weaver’s architecture program at Washington State University, using the disingenuous argument of duplicated educational programs when the University of Washington was the institution that had created the apparent duplication. Since the authors managed to overlook Gould’s personal involvement in this well-documented dispute, one can only wonder what other cogent information has been left out.

As the principal designer for one of the most significant, early 20th-century architectural firms in the Pacific Northwest and the founder of the architecture program at the University of Washington, Gould deserved a more thoroughly researched presentation of his career than was accomplished by Booth and Wilson. And considering how few books have been published on Washington’s architectural past thus far, the readers of COLUMBIA deserve a more fully considered review.

—David A. Rash, Seattle

Additional Reading

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

The Company’s Cowlitz


The Great Depression


The Columbia Project Farmers


Two Views, Two Voices


When the Bankers Marched Like Soldiers


Richard Hulbert Wilson, obituary, 1937. United States Military Academy Archives, West Point, N.Y.

The Old Yellowstone Trail


The spectrum of increasing interest in the historical study of railroads ranges from the intrigued enthusiast who sees the majesty of the “iron horse” to the serious scholar who realizes the integral part played by the railroads in the settling and development of this country. In the two books here under review, D. C. Jesse Burkhardt’s Backwoods Railroads is a “snap-shot,” as the author calls it, of smaller rail lines in contemporary western Oregon. In that vein, the author provides brief histories of the various railways he examines and the towns they serve. He also includes a more detailed narrative of recent events impacting these lines and provides some insight into the future, which in many cases presents a rather bleak picture. Much of this book’s strength lies in its wealth of illustrations—photographs appear on nearly every page. Taken as a whole, the author presents a pleasant photo essay that will please the weekend enthusiast.

More serious scholars, who would find their appetite whetted by the previous book, will be eager to read Peter J. Lewty’s Across the Columbia Plain. This well researched and documented work is a continuation of the study of railroad expansion in the Pacific Northwest during the late 19th century that the author began with his highly regarded 1987 book, To the Columbia Plain (see review in COLUMBIA 2-4, Winter 1989).

The intertwinning and overlapping of jurisdiction and ownership of rail lines in this region set the stage for the chaotic expansion that occurred between 1885 and 1893. As the author presents it, the prospects for significant profits from transporting farm products and ore from the mines led to financial struggles and political infighting by men such as Charles Francis Adams, James J. Hill, and the resilient Henry Villard.

The story proceeds quickly in the first two chapters, and the author maintains tempo as he shifts focus to the building of the railways themselves. Lewty ably details the greed-driven expansion that eventually ended in ruin for many of the railroads and their chief officers. In the wake of the economic collapse of 1893, which once again brought an end to the empire of Henry Villard, "who had great vision and high ideas," the author winds up his study in the interior Northwest.

Peter Lewty has crafted a fine book that should appeal not only to scholars interested in the railroad expansion but also to those studying the economic development of the Pacific Northwest.

James Robbins Jewell is an independent historian with broad interests in Pacific Northwest history. He lives in eastern Washington and has taught at Eastern Washington University.

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many of them appear too dark and muddy to offer readers a meaningful visual document. These publishing and printing caveats aside, Stevens Pass is valuable for the story it tells.


**This Bloody Deed**
The Magruder Incident
By Ladd Hamilton

It is difficult to imagine how the story of the 1863 backwoods murder of Lloyd Magruder and his companions could be better told by Ladd Hamilton. This Bloody Deed combines careful research and analysis with vivid writing. The result is a good story as well as good history. It is tough to put this book down.

The undisputed facts are these: Lewiston merchant Magruder and pack-train companions were robbed and murdered in Idaho's Bitterroot Mountains; the alleged murderers were pursued to San Francisco by Magruder's friend Hill Beachey, supposedly after a dream in which he saw Magruder killed; and Beachey returned the four suspects to Lewiston, where three were convicted and hanged following the first murder trial in Idaho Territory.

For the sake of his enthralling narrative, Hamilton not unreasonably gives some personages roles without any hard evidence and elsewhere invents lesser characters, clearly indicating where he has done so and why. He has outlaw sheriff Henry Plummer directing a plot to ambush the Magruder party, solely on the strength of disputed contemporary accounts by Montana writer Thomas Dimmendale and a vague statement from the gallows by one of the condemned. Suspect William Page is portrayed as a bystander swept up in the murder, which Hamilton says was committed only by the three men who were hanged for it. He bases this on Page's own court testimony, given in exchange for immunity from prosecution.

Some historians say Plummer's role in the murder is lesser than Hamilton portrays, or that he had no role at all; some say Page actively plotted with the others to rob and kill Magruder. In any recounting of something as legendary and open to conjecture as the Magruder incident, students may question these or other parts of Hamilton's—or anyone's—version.

Serious students will find Hamilton's bibliography a useful evaluation of primary and secondary sources. This Bloody Deed also includes a helpful list of actual and fictional personages and an essay by Carol Simon-Smolinski on the Magruder incident as an enduring part of regional folklore. Hamilton has written an outstanding, plausible account that is highly readable and equally impressive in its masterful and judicious evaluation of the evidence.

Jon Nuxoll, a native of Colfax, has a graduate degree in history from the University of Washington. A former newspaper writer in Wenatchee, he is currently teaching history at Marist High School in Eugene, Oregon.

**Current & Noteworthy**
by Robert C. Carriker, Book Review Editor

Ruth Kirk, Washington's all-in-one historian, photographer, ethnographer and environmentalist, once wrote that the ecosystem of the Olympic Peninsula "is not only more complex than we imagine, it is more complex than we can imagine." Three recent books about the people who pioneered the mountains, rivers and rainforests that make up the peninsula add a human dimension to this natural wonderland.

The Hoko River Archaeological Site Complex by South Puget Sound Community College instructor Dale R. Croes (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1996; 256 pp., $50) recounts what it was like to be an ocean-oriented native living on the Olympic Peninsula three millennia ago. Discarded baskets, bentwood fishhooks, and primitive tools tell the story.

Of a more conventional nature, Steady Folk: Personal Accounts of Life and Work on the Olympic Peninsula, edited by Mavis Amundson (Port Angeles: Western Gulf Publishing, 1994; 130 pp., $9.95), offers reflective stories written by 31 current residents in Washington's northwest corner. Strangers to each other but not to hard work, the people profiled in this interesting book provide some delightful insights into the quality of life on the peninsula during the Great Depression and World War II.

The third book, The Land That Slept Late—The Olympic Mountains in Legend and History, by Seattle author Robert L. Wood (Seattle: The Mountaineers Books, 1995; 176 pp., $14.95), is narrower in scope but equally enjoyable. In addition to synthesizing the first exploring expeditions into the Olympic Mountains, a topic Wood has treated in two earlier works, the book also considers early settlement patterns on the peninsula and the creation of the national park. Adding to the value of the book are excellent maps and many photographs being published for the first time.

The Mountaineers Books is the publishing arm of The Mountaineers, a Seattle-based nonprofit club of 15,000 members that has been championing outdoor activity and conservation since 1906. It is the largest publisher of outdoor books in the country, with over 300 titles in print. Among its newest releases is a guide for wheelchair explorers, the visually impaired and slow walkers, titled Accessible Trails in Washington's Backcountry: A Guide to 85 Outings (Seattle: The Mountaineers Books, 1995; 192 pp., $12.95). Published in cooperation with the Washington Trails Association, itself a Seattle-based nonprofit organization that has been protecting and constructing trails in the Evergreen State since 1973, this book provides information about the grade, elevation, surface and facilities found at each location. Five maps and forty photographs provide additional clarity for potential trail users.

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Chelan County Public Utility District
Commencement Bay Mill Company
Douglas County Public Utility District
F. K. & Vivian O’Gara
Weyerhaeuser Foundation
Grant County Public Utility District
Lamb-Grays Harbor Company
The Laughlin Group
Merrill Lynch
Moss Adams
Mountain View Memorial Park
Norman Archibald Charitable Foundation
Pend Oreille County Public Utility District
Pertich Marine
Premier, Gates & Ellis
Public Utility District No. 3 of Mason County
Raleigh, Schwartz & Powell, Inc.
TACO Engineering Corporation
Tucci & Sons, Inc.
Viscom Cable
Woodward & Company, Inc.

$5,000
Seattle City Light
Skinner Foundation
Sterling Savings Association
Tacoma Public Utilities
U.S. Bank of Washington
US West Foundation
Washington Forest Protection Association
Washington Mutual Savings Bank

$1,000 to $9,999
Battelle Pacific Northwest Laboratory
Bonneville Power Administration
Brown & Haley
Burlington Northern Foundation
Eisenhower & Carlton
E. K. & Lillian F. Bishop Foundation
First Interstate Bank of Washington
Florence B. Kilworth Charitable Foundation
Frank Russell Company
Gordon Thomas Honeywell
Hanna Peterson & Dahlin
Goldfine & Mary Fuchs Foundation
Greater Tacoma Community Foundation
Hugh C. Wallace Charitable Foundation
Joshua Green Foundation, Inc.
KCPQ-TV13
Murray Foundation
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
Primeau Quick
Reed-Henry Fund
Roman Meal Company

$750,000
The Boeing Company
$250,000 to $550,000
Ben B. Cheney Foundation
Key Bank of Washington
M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust
National Endowment for the Humanities
Weyerhaeuser Company Foundation

$200,000
Forest Foundation
Grantmaker Consultants, Inc.
McEachern Charitable Trust
$50,000 to $99,999
Burlington Resources/Meridian Oil Foundation
McClelland Foundation
Meadowdale Foundation
PACCAR Foundation
Safeco Corporation
Seafirst Foundation
Seattle Times
Tacoma News Tribune

$10,000 to $9,999
Airborne Express
Arthur H. Clark Company
Bargreen Ellingson, Inc.
Benton County Public Utility District
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Tucci & Sons, Inc.
Viscom Cable
Woodward & Company, Inc.

Your Membership Helps Preserve a Unique Cultural Legacy

As a WSHS member, you have the satisfaction of knowing that your contribution is helping to support the preservation of our state’s unique, multifaceted heritage. Here are some other benefits of membership:

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<th>CORPORATE BENEFACOR</th>
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Membership is for one year, renewable annually.

BENEFITS WITHOUT MEMBERSHIP

ONE-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION to Columbia magazine, History Highlights newsletter and Washington Heritage Bulletin (four issues each) .................................................. $30
MUSEUM PASSPORT (annual pass for four to both WSHS museums) .................................................. $40

To request a membership brochure, write or call:

WASHINGTON STATE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
315 North Stadium Way, Tacoma, Washington 98403
206/593-2830; fax 206/597-4186
AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

Bainbridge Island Historical Society
Ballard Historical Society
Bigelow House Preservation Association
Central Washington Agricultural Museum
Clallam County Historical Society Museum
Coalitz County Historical Society
East Benton County Historical Society
Edmonds-South Snohomish County Historical Society
Enumclaw Plateau Historical Society
Fircrest Civic and Heritage Association
Fort Vancouver Historical Society of Clark County
Fox Island Historical Society
Franklin County Historical Society
Friends of Fort Lewis Military Museum
Friends of the Everett Public Library
Friends of the Humanities
Grant House Folk Art Center
Highline School District Museum at Sunnydale
Historic Fort Steilacoom Association
Jefferson County Historical Society
Kitsap County Historical Society
Lewis County Historical Society
Maple Valley Historical Society
Maryhill Museum of Art
Mukilteo Historical Society
North Central Washington Museum Association
Northwest Chapter of the Oregon-California Trail Association
Okanogan County Historical Society
Pacific Northwest Historians Guild
Peninsula Historical Society
Renton Historical Society
South Sound Maritime Heritage Association
Spanaway Historical Society
Sumner Historical Society
Tumwater Historical Association
Walla Walla Valley Pioneer & Historical Society
Washington Trust for Historic Preservation
Whatcom Museum of History and Art
Whitman County Historical Society
Wooden Boat Foundation
Yakima Valley Museum & Historical Association