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FRONT COVER: Anemone, c. 1830, is one of a half-dozen original botanical drawings done in pencil and watercolor by Mary Richardson Walker. See related story beginning on page 26. (Courtesy Washington State University Library, Pullman)
"I wish to have no Connection with any Ship that does not sail fast,
for I intend to go in harm's way"

John Paul Jones's passion was embodied in Dave Nicandri's aspirations for the Washington State Historical Society. Desire met fulfillment in the generosity of John and Burdette McClelland's gift of life to this "fast ship," COLUMBIA. For a decade this vessel has ranged far with a purpose not distant from that of Jones's—to show our colors where we were not renowned, to seek respect, and to strive one day for a salute. From day one, she was meant to be fast. Early support from the McClelland publishing interests, the best "crew" of authors, and John's and Dave's dedication to history and quality of the highest order set a standard our society was not accustomed to. It's fair to say that the first edition of COLUMBIA evoked a feeling among us of: "Gee, did we do something this good?"

Like John Paul Jones, it took no time for "Director Dave" Nicandri to put his fast ship to use. The publication was promoted as a significant benefit of membership. A program of associate memberships with local historical organizations was implemented and our society's numbers rose. Members of the state legislature have received the publication. It is included in proposals for fund-raising. COLUMBIA is seen in the most prominent waiting rooms in the state. It is there because it is quality, it is interesting, and it makes the statement that we are proud to be part of Washington.

In this issue our colleague Chuck Twining chronicles the waters that have passed beneath our keel in this remarkable decade. If you have friends who are not members of our society, this is a historic year to join. Your gift of membership opens the horizons of COLUMBIA, the doors to our new Washington State History Museum in Tacoma, and the State Capital Museum in Olympia. To invoke Jones again: "We have not yet begun to fight."

Join us aboard COLUMBIA and the "Future of Washington's Past."

---David E. Lamb, President
at Gray's Harbor, America's only land
by right of discovery by Robert Gray
aboard the Columbia in 1792
A Personal Perspective on the Recent History of the Washington State Historical Society

By Charles Twining

SOME WEEKS AGO, David Nicandri commented on a recent snapshot of me. "Geez, Charlie, you look like a pundit." No one ever called me that before, and I may have taken it too seriously. Regardless, I was pleased to be asked to reflect on my tenure as a board member of the Washington State Historical Society on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of COLUMBIA magazine. That tenure sadly, from my own vantage point, is in its final year—board membership is limited to three three-year terms. But as my wife Dianne has often noted, one couldn't have picked a better nine years to serve!

My first direct contact with the Washington State Historical Society occurred on May 2, 1981, at a board meeting and luncheon held in the Doric Tacoma Motor Hotel. I attended for no good reason other than that I was in the neighborhood doing research for a biography of Phil Weyerhaeuser. Vernon Carstensen, then a member of the Society's board, invited me to tag along. Vernon had been my major professor at Madison, Wisconsin, prior to his coming to the University of Washington. He and I grew to be good friends over the years, and I suspect his invitation was partially inspired by mischievousness. He knew I was then serving on the board of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and he doubtless understood that this meeting would introduce me to a different sort of experience. He was right.

I was struck by the realization that nothing of significance took place. In fact, thinking back—and with no disrespect intended—I am reminded of the old quip about membership on a student council: "What did you do?" "We met."

This is not to say that all meetings of the Wisconsin board were noteworthy. Most, however, were lively, and more than a few had been frustrating and occasionally contentious. Curiously, given the age and reputation of the Wisconsin society, the problems involved "growing pains," many of which touched on the management of historic sites.

In the early 1980s attention centered on "Old World Wisconsin," situated in rolling countryside west of Milwaukee. The primary feature of "Old World Wisconsin" is numerous farms, each representing an ethnic group that settled in the state. The project attracted much interest but also required a great deal of funding. In short, what some considered a magnificent undertaking was viewed by others as an albatross. Unfortunately, the "Old World Wisconsin" enterprise seemed to require other SHSW-maintained sites to make sacrifices and in a few cases to close.

Such dire consequences were immediately interpreted as discrimination within the affected communities, and those feelings naturally provoked a political response. The result was a forced reorganization of the board to ensure inclusion of state legislators representing both houses and both parties. We in the Washington State Historical Society took the initiative in that respect and have benefited from the interested involvement of legislators. Happily, political participation in Wisconsin has matured over the years; representation that was initially committed to defending local interests today promotes an overall effort.

BUT WHAT BROUGHT me to Washington from Wisconsin had nothing to do with disappointments there; it had to do with opportunities here, most notably involving the Weyerhaeuser Company. Without knowing the details, I'm sure that Howie Meadowcroft was instrumental, somehow convincing others of the need for a corporate historian. Regardless, Dianne and I agreed to head west to Federal Way, a move that puzzled many of my Wisconsin colleagues.

Shortly after my arrival, Howie reintroduced me to the Washington State Historical Society. As a board member he was sincerely interested in contributing, but other responsibilities often intruded. Howie judged me able to serve dependably, so my initial membership on the board was largely as a surrogate.

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But in 1988 I was eager to serve, all the more so because of the extent of change apparent since my 1981 introduction. What a difference a few years had made. The catalyst was immediately obvious—David Nicandri. One could tell from his energy level that we had better clear the decks and prepare for action.

Evidence of Director Nicandri's enthusiasm abounds, but one incident stands out—the 1989 visit of Rachel Tooker, a consultant from the Minnesota Historical Society. She spent several days here, taking a close look at our staff, programs and plans, after which she provided a detailed report. Ms. Tooker offered a summary of her recommendations before the full board, meeting that day at Weyerhaeuser corporate headquarters. Her advice seemed undeniably sound: you are a small institution; you must focus your efforts with care; you must conserve your energies and expend your resources prudently. She minced no words: "After unleashing tremendous change in the organization, the Society appears to have lost control over the rate of that change."

Who could argue? None did. None could. The fact is, however, that Ms. Tooker's recommendations had no effect—simply put, they were respectfully ignored. I don't know this, but I would wager that Ms. Tooker is of Scandinavian background, and she was dealing with Nicandri, the Mediterranean. Enough said.

David is a character in the best sense of the word. What impressed me first was his sincere interest in history. Many on the management side of historical institutions are only incidentally devoted to Clio (the Muse of history). Just as easily they could be overseeing a health club or a spaghetti factory. Not David. He is a genuine historian, although admittedly a few of his pursuits verge on the eccentric. And it is the depth of his dedication that fuels his zeal. Someday he may well tire of the administrative routine, but he won't tire of the responsibility. He can't; history is his calling and thus he has no choice.

One other individual occupies a special place in my WSHS memories—the late Phil Ashby. I don't know exactly why we became friends—perhaps it had something to do with both of us having labored in the groves of academe—but early on it became clear that we greatly enjoyed mutual needling. I will admit that in most of our face-offs Phil had the advantage, beginning with his limitless supply of corny jokes, few of which really served any purpose other than to entertain. He also took unusual care in preparing his presentations as chair of the Museum Committee. And through some conspiracy I seemed always to follow Phil on the agenda. Believe me, this wasn't an easy act to follow: his subject was of greater interest; his report was well written; and he always left us laughing.

Phil's final, brave appearance was at the Port Townsend board meeting on May 4, 1994. He was literally at death's door but somehow found the strength to share his thoughts.

During my tenure on the board, three achievements stand out: first, the merger with the State Capital Museum; second, the founding of COLUMBIA magazine; and third, of course, the new Washington State History Museum.

The first of these, the merger, hasn't attracted much attention, mainly because it was accomplished efficiently and without rancor. Anyone familiar with mergers appreciates the inevitable pitfalls, and when we began this process I'm sure all of us—on both sides—were wary, to say the least. But amazingly, everything fell into place. The key elements must have been mutual trust plus an awareness that we would all be better off in the end. And so we are. It also soon became clear that the WSHS board was strengthened by inclusion of State Capital Museum representatives David Ammons, Chuck Fowler and Beth Willis, each of whom I have enjoyed working with personally.

COLUMBIA magazine was, not surprisingly, something long considered before the first issue was published in March.
1987. Recognition of the need for a journal dated back to the mid 1940s, but the question never received serious consideration until many years later. A number of problems would have to be resolved. How would a second journal affect the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly?* How could the existing staff of the Society possibly manage such a responsibility? And how could the project be funded?

The PNQ was, as its title suggests, devoted not just to Washington state but to the region. The majority of WSHS board members considered this a drawback, at least for Society purposes: its journal ought to be devoted to subjects primarily of state interest. Additionally, although it was an objection less often voiced, many found PNQ to be esoteric, written strictly by and for scholars.

As for staff and funding concerns, the answers, though obvious, seemed impossible to address. But John McClelland, Jr., Society president beginning in 1982, didn’t admit to the impossibility. A career journalist, John was familiar with the marketplace and the details of production, and it was he who agreed to finance the undertaking, even volunteering to serve as an interim editor. Thus, what had appeared unlikely suddenly seemed otherwise. In truth, the final decision was, in today’s jargon, a “no-brainer.” Now beginning its 11th year in print, COLUMBIA is an unqualified success, the envy of many sister institutions. John McClelland can take credit for many contributions, but most informed observers predict COLUMBIA will prove to be his greatest legacy.

The miraculous completion of the Washington State History Museum is by now common knowledge. I must say, however, that the perspective offered a board member during the planning and construction processes was fascinating and occasionally amusing, at least in retrospect. One of our early challenges came from those who were convinced that the museum’s design was not in keeping with the ambiance of Union Station or the newly constructed courthouse.

Such disagreements, however, amounted to mere bumps in the road. We have our museum and it lives up to its promise in all respects. Withal, much work remains for this Society. Museum concerns have dominated. Now—and this will answer that annoying question of the recent past, “Why do you need two facilities?”—we must attend to the business of the old building on Stadium Way, home to our research center and archives. Granted, museums hold greater interest for the public at large, but the fact is that museums would be meaningless if we lost our memories, and these are the province of libraries and archives.

In addition, we still have a far piece to go before gaining recognition as the historical society of the entire state. Obvious progress in that direction has been made, and the merger with the State Capital Museum is only one example. Problems linger. A resident of Federal Way, I feel as comfortable going north to Seattle as heading south to Tacoma, but I am aware of the competitiveness between the two communities. Some Seattleites adopt a patronizing attitude toward those living in “the City of Destiny,” and sensitive Tacomans are properly resentful. This isn’t the only division. In most states, tensions exist between urban centers and the hinterland. For many years I lived in Ashland, Wisconsin, on the shores of Lake Superior, and we used to laugh at how much farther it was from Madison to Ashland than from Ashland to Madison. And here the spine of the Cascades, in addition to providing great beauty, literally divides us east from west.

Some of us have commented on the “Balkanization” that has been the bane of Washington state historical societies. It seems unlikely, at least in the foreseeable future, that this will be entirely eliminated, but we can surely assuage the more debilitating effects. In that connection, we should appreciate that a strong state historical society poses no threat to local groups. On the contrary, a state society can lead the way, offering advice and assistance, and all will benefit. One need only look at Midwestern examples. We might also study our situation as concerns historic preservation and the State Archives. Might they not function better under a coordinated umbrella?

Any mention of our talented and extremely dedicated staff has been avoided, in part because I consider them all good friends and fear that by mentioning one I might unintentionally forget another. I have this unfortunate habit of referring to the troops as “elves.” I trust that all understand that I do so lovingly, and ours is by far the merriest band I have known.

Before closing, however, I must acknowledge one particular elf—Marie DeLong. Marie has the rare capacity to make everyone around her feel better. We all look forward to her presence. But even Marie has made an occasional error, such as occurred a few years ago in her minute-taking. In consecutive meetings of the board, she misrepresented my attendance, once recording my presence when I was absent and once marking me absent when I was present. Subsequently offering a correction to the minutes, I wondered aloud, “Is it better to be absent and not noticed, or to be present and not noticed?” I have yet to receive an answer, although Peter Simpson, at his final meeting as president of the board, gave me a reversible sign, one side reading “I AM HERE,” and the other, “I AM NOT HERE.” It has been my great pleasure to have been “HERE” on nearly every occasion for the past nine years. Thanks to Howie, thanks to David, thanks to Phil Ashby, and thanks to all of my colleagues.

Charles Twining is consulting historian for the Weyerhaeuser Company and a three-term member of the Washington State Historical Society Board of Trustees.
They Staggered as if They Were Drunk

Alaska has long been a region noted for its geological activity. Volcanic eruptions and earthquakes are commonplace along the northern section of the Pacific Ocean’s ring of fire. Few experienced it who do not remember the Good Friday earthquake of 1964. Half a century earlier there was a series of substantial quakes that shook the region for much of the month of September 1899. In intensity as well as duration, several of these earthquakes rank not only among the strongest on record in North America but also in the world up to that time. The impact on the region was immediate and profound.

Yakutat in 1899 was a small fishing village of about ten frame houses inhabited by 100 or so Tlingit natives and about 30 white inhabitants. The village was served by a branch of the Sitka-based Mills Brothers store, a post office, and the Swedish Evangelical Covenant Mission with its attendant school and orphanage. The lure of gold had brought some prospectors to the area, as well as the beginnings of resource-exploiting industries, including a small sawmill established by the missionaries and a fish saltery on the Ankau Lagoon.

During the early days of September 1899 the region began to experience a dramatic series of earthquakes. Up in Disenchantment Bay, a body of water ringed with towering peaks and tidewater glaciers, there were two parties of prospectors searching the sand and gravel for platinum and gold. They had been camping since June 20, 1899, on the alluvial plain just east of the Hubbard and Variegated glaciers. On the southeast side of the glacial stream, known locally as Johnson Creek, were camped Dr. L. A. Cox, S. Cox, and Captain Tom Smith, an inside passage pilot. On the other side, closer to the glaciers and the waters of Disenchantment Bay, was the campsite of Tom Bullman, Albert Flenner of San Diego, Jack Fultz of Louisville, Kentucky, Andrew Johnson, formerly second mate of the steamer Dora, and Dwight Stevens, a former Seattle newspaperman.

At three in the afternoon on Sunday, September 3, 1899, the first of the severe earthquakes struck the region. While not severe enough to make it impossible to stand, it certainly caught the men’s attention. The prospectors in the Flenner-Fultz party rigged up a crude seismograph by suspending their hunting knives in such a way that their points were touching. Whenever there was even a slight tremor, undetectable by the men, the points of the knives would jingle. During the following week there were a number of minor shocks that surely registered on this simple instrument. Jack Fultz later noted that the noticeable shocks appeared to coincide with the extremes of the tide, “generally two distinct shocks a day, one at high tide and one at low tide.”

The morning of Sunday, September 10, was a typically rainy one, and the prospectors counted 52 minor shocks on their makeshift seismograph. At about eight that morning a shock so violent occurred that some of the men were thrown to the ground. The alders swayed and bent in rhythm to the tremors. The shaking, described as circular in motion, lasted nearly 90 seconds. It was followed by a series of aftershocks every few minutes.

In the afternoon (variably reported as 12:15, 1:30 and 2:15, but officially recorded as 12:22) another shock occurred. Described by Dr. Cox as the “King Bee of them all,” it dwarfed all the previous tremors. In attempting to leave his tent, S. Cox was thrown over the stove and into a corner. His brother and Captain Smith barely managed to hold onto the tent poles in order to maintain their balance. This quake also lasted about 90 seconds, “the ground cutting some of the queerest capers imaginable.” In addition to the same circular motion that had accompanied the earlier earthquake, this one was accompanied by an up and down motion.

As the quaking of the earth abated, the stunned and shaken prospectors in both parties gathered outside their tents in the rain. Behind and above the campsite was a small lake. Fed by the runoff from the glaciers, this lake was about two acres in area. Weakened by the shock, the perimeter of the lake gave way and the water swept down upon the men...
below, bringing with it dirt, debris and boulders. The men of the Flenner-Fultz party bore the brunt of this deluge. They immediately abandoned their tents and ran for their lives.

Only moments later this deluge was followed by one from the other direction. The shaking of the earth under the waters of Disenchantment Bay had created a water wave that washed up on the beaches where only moments before the prospectors had been resting peacefully in their tents. "In a moment men and tents and boats, and all kinds of camp belongings were mixed up in the muddy stream and sent seaward to be met by a tidal wave forty feet high which drove the lake water back upon the land. . . ."

Miraculously, no one was drowned, and the party was tossed back onto the beach by the tidal wave. The floods of water from both the bay and the lake, coupled with the rain, the tremendous crashing of icebergs off the sea cliff of the Hubbard and Turner glaciers, and the roar of avalanches in the mountains behind them, created bedlam for the men on the beach. The confused and dazed prospectors in both camps were unsure whether to run for high ground or attempt to salvage what they could from their campsites.

In the Smith-Cox camp, Captain Smith had decided to return to his tent to salvage what he could. As he began gathering up some blankets, he heard a roar from the direction of the bay. He left his tent just in time to see a second wave, "fully twenty or thirty feet high" and accompanied by geysers of water, bearing down on the campsite. Smith managed to get out of his tent just as the wave smashed into the cook tent some 13 feet closer to the water. "Don't waste any time, but run for your lives and don't stop short of the hill!" he shouted to his companions as he fled for high ground. Once safely situated among the alders on the hill behind their campsite, the party made a shelter with the alder brush and lit a fire. While offering little in the way of warmth in the pouring rain, it did serve as a signal for members of the other party of prospectors.

The other party of men, separated from the high ground by Johnson Creek, ran toward that stream only to find it too deep and swift to cross. They ran back to their campsite, but in their fear again ran for Johnson Creek. A change in the course of the stream had caused it to separate, allowing them to wade waist deep to the other side. One of the men likened the event to Moses' parting of the Red Sea. Once across they joined the other men around the fire, soaking wet with only the clothes on their backs. Two of the men had even lost their coats. Moments later the stream resumed its original course and was again impassable.

When the ground had stopped shaking and after the danger from the water had seemed to pass, the eight men took stock of their situation. The Smith-Cox party was able to salvage a few pounds of cornmeal, flour, and some bacon, all of it soaked. There were also a few canned goods, a tent, and some wet blankets. Their little 12-foot skiff was found in the trees behind the beach, her painter neatly wrapped around an alder branch by the action of the waves. Nearby they found a gold pan with three trout in it. The fish were among the hundreds thrown upon the shore by the tidal waves. "The tide is out and the table's set!" exclaimed Captain Smith. The other party's supplies were a total loss and their boats completely destroyed.

Isolated and alone on the shore of Disenchantment Bay, the men prepared for the first night after their ordeal. Dr. Cox later wrote:

Imagine, if you can, one's feelings under such conditions; then add to that the continual reports of the ice breaking off the glacier, the roar of the great landslides down the sides of the mountains every little while, the noise of the swollen mountain streams tumbling down loosened boulders [sic], continuous

\[\text{Storehouse and store of the W. W. Mills Company at Yakutat, Alaska, c. 1906. R. W. Beasley, the storekeeper, lived in the house.}\]
rain, an occasional earthquake, and then the uncertainty of what was to come next—then you can form some idea of our situation that night. . . . Here we were between two glaciers, either of which it was impossible to cross, everything belonging to us swept away . . . and on the wrong side of the bay to foot it to Yakutat. . . . We were like mice in a trap.

The salvaged goods were taken up to the new camp on the hill, and a supper of bacon and corn dodgers was prepared. Fearful of a repeat of the day’s events, the men spent the night tied to the alder trees with strips of cloth torn from their clothing.

Surrounded by mountains and glaciers, the only way the men could get to Yakutat, some 40 miles away, was by boat. The next morning the three men of the Smith-Cox party took the surviving skiff and headed for Yakutat for help. Out in Disenchantment Bay they discovered a drifting canoe. They retrieved it and returned to their comrades on the beach. The badly damaged canoe was repaired and the entire party, with their meager supplies supplemented with fish thrown ashore by the tidal waves, set off for Yakutat.

The journey to Yakutat was a difficult one. With two large tidewater glaciers discharging into Disenchantment Bay, that body of water at the best of times is often filled with icebergs of varying sizes. Added to that, the vast amount of ice that had been broken off the glaciers during the earthquake and blown against the shoreline resulted in the bay being severely clogged with drifts of ice. At times the boats had to be hauled out of the water and carried over some of the larger floes.

It took most of the first day to cross the opening of Russell Fjord. Camp was made between two mountain streams, probably somewhere near Point Gilbert. Frequent landslides around this campsite made it necessary for the men to keep their goods packed and ready for a quick escape. At about three in the morning a landslide altered the course of one of the streams, and soon the camp was awash in water. The boats were quickly loaded and the men again on their way to Yakutat. Because of the heavy seas, the little boats began to ship too much water, and the men again had to land and cache much of their supplies. They then made it as far as the Indian sealing camp at Point Latouche, where Disenchantment Bay opens up into the larger Yakutat Bay. Here, adverse sea conditions again forced the men to delay their progress. They further lightened their load and on the morning of September 14 resumed their voyage.

Once beyond Point Latouche the men could see the extent of the damage caused by tidal waves. It appeared that at some places the waves had swept as high as 60 feet up the banks. On Knights Island, according to Albert Flenner, the trees were “swept flat and piled as if by a cyclone.” The gnawing fear that the village of Yakutat might have been wiped out set in. Finally, at six o’clock that evening, the eight prospectors reached Yakutat. There they found most of the inhabitants living in tents on the hill behind the town. This hill became known as “Shivering Hill.” Their safe arrival was a relief to their Yakutat friends who had feared for their safety. Jack Fultz was so shaken by his experiences that he retrieved his trunk, which he had stored at Yakutat, and appealed to Captain Colton of the revenue cutter USS McCulloch for passage to Seattle. Because the McCulloch was a government vessel, Fultz had to sign on as one of the crew and be discharged on the vessel’s arrival in Seattle.

In the village of Yakutat the two giant quakes also had a great impact. The first shock, on September 3, according to Mills Company storekeeper Richard Beasley, “lasted long enough to enable me to run out of doors and to watch people falling on the beach.” The trees and flagpoles swayed with such force that Beasley feared his would snap off. The shaking was such that Beasley suffered a headache and a case of nausea that lasted three days. That many suffered from nausea was confirmed by the Reverend Albin Johnson of the Swedish Evangelical Covenant Mission at Yakutat. C. E. Hill, a Seattle surveyor staying at the mission, reported that the house shook so violently that the door swung back and forth before slamming shut. Dishes rattled on their shelves and a table moved.

On Sunday morning, September 10, numerous minor tremors were felt. At 7:40, according to Beasley, the first big jolt struck. The storekeeper made for the door of his room,
but the shaking was so strong that he had to hold on for half a minute, “the vibrations so strong that I could not move my feet.” C. E. Hill was jolted from his sleep and immediately ran out of the building. There he was joined by the other inhabitants of the village who had also run from their homes. For the duration of the event they were able to watch the trees sway and the houses creak. The mission bell clanged loudly. When the shock had subsided, it was discovered that none had taken the time to dress before fleeing their houses, so all returned home to do so.

Because of the frequent aftershocks that followed the morning jolt, Reverend Johnson cancelled the normal Sunday service. He was afraid of what might happen should a sharp quake strike with the villagers crowded into the mission. However, Chief George, the leader of the Yakutats, chided the missionary: “Are you afraid, Johnson? Now we must go to the church and pray to God for help.” “Come to the church,” the missionary replied. For the duration of the service there was not one noticeable tremor.

At 12:15 that afternoon the second and larger quake struck. Once again the inhabitants were thrown to the ground and the trees and buildings began to sway. One house was even knocked off its foundation. Again the chaos was highlighted by the clanging of the mission bell. Aground on the mud near the village, the schooner Crystal, owned by a Mr. Johnson, began rocking. The Crystal, which had been sitting upright in the mud, had been knocked over onto her side during the September 3rd earthquake. Storekeeper Beasley noticed how the women were falling and the men “staggered and rolled as if they were drunk.” After the quake Beasley’s store “looked as if a bull had been in it. The shelves nearly cleaned of canned goods. Kettles, pails, and lanterns had been shaken off the nails overhead and were on the floor...”

The quake was followed by a water wave ten feet high that broke on the reef in front of the village with “a report as if it had been rent asunder with dynamite.” Had the reef not absorbed much of the power of the tidal wave, the village would have surely suffered severely. In the bay there formed a great many whirlpools that spun the driftwood around faster than the eye could see. One such whirlpool swept away a chute at the sawmill.

The day following the earthquake most of the inhabitants of Yakutat remained camped on the hill behind the village. The Indians had moved most of their belongings from their homes on the beach to the safety of higher ground. Even the missionary, Albin Johnson, and the other whites had abandoned the village for the safety of the hill. Fearful of fire, they used candles instead of oil lamps.

Only Beasley remained in the village. He refused to evacuate the Mills Company store. Preparing for the worst, he tied a skiff to his back window, in case the waters rose around his store, and readied a bag of provisions in the event a hasty evacuation was required.

Among those who experienced the earthquakes firsthand, most attributed them to some new volcanic activity in the

Yakutat, Alaska, c. 1904. The little village would have appeared much the same as this when the earthquakes rocked the region in 1899.

Stephen Gee, shown here in 1921, was prospecting the beach sands on Khantaak Island when the earthquakes struck.

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Map of Yakutat and vicinity showing measurements, change of level and inferred fault lines. Prepared for USGS Professional Paper #69.
St. Elias Mountains. Beasley, in a letter to his employers in Sitka, made note of a smoky haze covering the mountains. John Fultz later reported, “For two months prior to the disturbances we had observed what appeared to be smoke ascending from a mountain, that appeared to us across the third peak of Mount Logan. Whether it was really smoke or we were never able to fully ascertain, but that is what we called it. . . . We believe that time will demonstrate that some Alaskan volcano on that part of the coast has broken out, and that the disturbances were precursors of it.” It was later determined that the disturbances were not volcanic, but tectonic in origin, related to the continual uplift of the mountain range.

On September 12 the steamer Dora made her regular call at Yakutat. C. E. Hill booked passage to Seattle. It was reported that Reverend Johnson, fearful for his wife's safety, also wanted to leave but was dissuaded by the Tlingits in his congregation. When the Dora left she took with her the first news of the earthquakes to reach the outside world. This included Beasley’s letter to W. R. and W. P. Mills of Sitka, owners of the Yakutat store.

On September 17 the McCulloch rounded Ocean Cape and Point Carrew and entered Monti Bay. In the ship's log Captain Colson noted some changes in the harbor's entrance. On board was a contingent of territorial officials, including Governor John G. Brady, Circuit Court Judge Johnson, a U.S. marshal, a deputy district attorney, a court clerk, and Reverend Sheldon Jackson, the commissioner of education. Also on board was W. J. Lampton, a correspondent for the New York Sun. As they approached the anchorage in Monti Bay they noticed the tents on the hill behind the village and speculated that there had been a new gold strike in the hills behind Yakutat. Having been at sea, heading back to Sitka from St. Michael, the passengers and crew of the McCulloch had not felt the earthquakes. They devoured the various accounts of the earthquakes from the inhabitants of Yakutat, as well as the accounts of the prospectors, who had not yet returned from Disenchantment Bay when the Dora had called. Reverend Jackson predicted that when a thorough exploration of the region was concluded, “there will be found many physical changes.” The McCulloch sailed with a more comprehensive account of events than had the Dora.

Some of the physical changes wrought by the earthquake were immediately noticed. Point Turner, a peninsula on Khantaak Island, across from the village of Yakutat where the old village cemetery was situated, had settled into the water, submerging a portion of the cemetery. C. E. Hill and some others rowed out to Khantaak Island on September 14. There they were able to row over portions of what had been the cemetery. They later rowed out to Ocean Cape, where they found large furrows in the sand about four feet apart and four or five feet deep.

Also destroyed was a gold mining operation established on Khantaak Island by Stephen Gee. Gee had been working the sands of Khantaak Island by washing them in sluice boxes, drawing water from a lake on the island. The earthquake caused the lake to break open, washing out much of Gee’s equipment. The subsequent water wave from the bay completed the destruction of the mining equipment. It is almost certain that other areas of uplift or submergence were also noticed by the natives, who were surely intimately familiar with their surroundings.

It was not until six years later, however, that the exploration anticipated by Reverend Jackson was undertaken. In the summer of 1905 Professor Ralph Stockman Tarr, a noted glaciologist and geologist from Cornell University, accompanied by another geologist of note, Lawrence Martin, arrived at Yakutat to study the region’s many glaciers. In the course of their examination of the glaciers, Tarr and his associates noticed signs of recent change. On the southeast side of Yakutat Bay the land had risen 7 to 10 feet. On the other side, this uplift was measured at 40 to 47.5 feet. There were also areas of submergence of shoreline ranging from 5 to 7 feet. Suspecting that these changes were connected to the 1899 earthquakes, and desirous also of following I. C. Russell’s route across the giant Malaspina Glacier, Tarr organized a second expedition for the following season.

Some of the changes in level associated with the 1899 earthquakes were dramatic. According to Professor Tarr, in fact, the “changes in level are the greatest recorded in historical times, the maximum uplift amounting to over forty-seven feet.” The most dramatic change of all, however, was discovered when Tarr and party began their attempt in 1906 to retrace Russell’s route across the Malaspina Glacier. When the route was surveyed during the 1905 season, the glaciers that combine to form the Malaspina appeared to be relatively smooth and no difficulty in crossing was anticipated. The following year, however, these glaciers, beginning with the Atrevida Glacier, had undergone a radical transformation. Recent advances in the preceding year had rendered the glaciers impassable due to heavy crevassing.

Unable to cross the Malaspina as planned, Tarr decided to further study the effects of the 1899 earthquake on the Yakutat region. Signs of changes in level were found in many places. Among these changes was a sea cave on Haenke Island, situated 18 feet above the water line. On September 12 the steamer Dora made her regular call at Yakutat. C. E. Hill booked passage to Seattle. It was reported that Reverend Johnson, fearful for his wife's safety, also wanted to leave but was dissuaded by the Tlingits in his congregation. When the Dora left she took with her the first news of the earthquakes to reach the outside world. This included Beasley’s letter to W. R. and W. P. Mills of Sitka, owners of the Yakutat store.

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Tarr relied on a number of methods to measure the changes. One such method was measuring what Tarr described as the biological evidence. Wherever the rocks were uplifted, the remains of barnacles, mussels and occasionally limpets were usually evident. "It seems doubtful whether barnacles have ever served as an evidence of faulting, as they have done along the shores of Disenchantment Bay."

To measure the uplift by means of this biological evidence, Tarr would measure the height between the highest living barnacle or mussel, and the highest dead sea life. This measurement was made with a Locke hand level and a graduated rod. Some of the readings were even confirmed with a barometer.

Another source of evidence of uplift included raised shoreline benches and the parallel lines of driftwood along some of the beaches. The benches were caused by wave action gradually carving a notch in the rocks. After the uplift caused by the earthquake, some of the benches had been raised above the level of the sea. By measuring the height between the older, higher line of driftwood on the uplifted beaches and the current line, a reasonable measure of their uplift could be reached.

In addition to measuring the effects of the earthquake, Tarr also had to establish that the changes in level were, in fact, attributable to the September 1899 earthquakes. This dating was accomplished with the aid of the new plant life taking root on the recently uplifted areas. Growing on the old, higher beaches, which were formerly exposed to inundation by sea water, were alder, willows and other land plants. Alders were cut down and their rings counted. This evidence indicated that no trees had more than five rings and some only two or three. This indicated that the changes had taken place no longer than five years previously, the known date of the earthquake. Also, the fact that the uplifted areas showed little sign of weathering confirmed their recent origin.

This evidence was further corroborated with the evidence previously collected in 1890-91 by Israel C. Russell. Certain reefs visible in 1905 and 1906 were not recorded by Russell, indicating that they were not exposed at the time of the his visit in 1890. Photographs taken during the Harriman expedition, which had left Yakutat only a few weeks before the earthquakes, and also by the Canadian Boundary Surveys in 1895 also did not show some of the changes that were evident when Tarr visited the region in 1905 and 1906.

The final bit of corroborating evidence, of course, came in the testimony of those present at the time of the earthquake. Indians and whites alike, who were intimately familiar with the area, were among the best witnesses of change.

The change was not limited to the uplift of the rocks in the region. There were also areas of submergence, such as happened at the cemetery on Khantak Island. These areas of settling were the ones described as unconsolidated deposits, where the shaking caused the sands or gravels to settle.

In addition to the physiological changes, Tarr noted several examples of water wave damage. As noticed by the prospectors who had survived the earthquakes and tsunamis in Disenchantment Bay, Logan Beach, along the eastern shore of Yakutat Bay, exhibited classic signs of tsunami damage. The beach and the area behind it were totally wrecked by waves, and the beach littered with debris.
In all, after making over 100 measurements, Tarr estimated that over two-thirds of approximately 150 miles of coastline was affected by the earthquakes.

What intrigued Tarr the most, however, was the dramatic changes discovered in the glaciers that fed the Malaspina. Tarr was certain that these changes were also attributable to the earthquakes in 1899. Whereas most Alaskan glaciers had been in retreat in 1905, a number of them showed signs of a surge between 1905 and 1906. In the course of his investigations, Tarr noticed a great many more avalanche scars on the mountains of the St. Elias region than were noticed in other areas along the inside passage. This led Tarr to suspect that the earthquakes were responsible for a great increase in the amount of snow dropped onto the snow reservoirs feeding the Variegated, Haenke, Galiano, Atrevida and Marvin glaciers in 1899, amounts that would normally take years to reach the glaciers. This in turn resulted in a surge in these glaciers a few years later. When Tarr returned to Yakutat in 1909, he found these glaciers again passable. The surge had, apparently, run its course. Because the advance was apparently confined to a ten-month period between Tarr's visits of 1905 and 1906, he was convinced that the origin of the surge was seismic. Climatic changes would not account for such dramatic surges.

Tarr summed up his thoughts with his earthquake advance hypothesis. "We have inferred that so great was the sudden increase of snow and ice in the glacial reservoirs that a wave of advance was started of far greater vigor than variations in precipitation could cause. Since the unusual supply ceased as abruptly as it came, the advance quickly ran its course and the glaciers soon resumed their former condition." This hypothesis gained wide acceptance for decades. When a similar surge failed to materialize after the Good Friday earthquake of 1964, however, the hypothesis lost some favor.

That the earthquakes at Yakutat were massive there is little doubt. Professor Tarr sent out over 600 questionnaires to people in Alaska, including most government officials, postmasters, teachers, missionaries, cannery managers, and many others known to have been living in Alaska at the time of the 1899 earthquakes. Judging from the responses, Tarr determined that the quake had been felt by people as distant as 480 miles, possibly even 730 miles. At Lake Chelan in Washington state, 1,200 miles south, ripples were reported on the surface of the lake on a calm day. "Allowing for the difference in times at different longitudes, plus the time of transmission, makes it possible this wave action [was] a result of the Yakutat earthquake." That it might also have been a minor local quake triggered by the Yakutat quake cannot be ruled out.

Even more sensitive seismographs from as far away as Argentina, Belgium, Italy and Japan recorded the events. In fact, according to Lawrence Martin, the shock waves originating in the Yakutat Bay region fanned out all around the globe: "No seismograph known to have been in operation in September 1899 failed to record these shocks if that type of instrument was capable of registering them."

Tarr and other geologists calculated that the epicenter of the September 3rd earthquake was in the vicinity of Cape Yagataga, about 100 miles west of Yakutat. The September 10th earthquake was centered at Yakutat Bay. Modern estimates of the earthquakes give the September 3rd event a magnitude of 7.9 on the Richter Scale. The September 10th earthquakes were estimated to have had a magnitude of 7.4 and 8.0, far greater than the one that would cause so much damage in San Francisco in 1906. Other earthquakes that month had estimates ranging from 6.9 to 7.4.

Aftershocks continued to be felt at Yakutat. Two on September 23 were estimated at 6.9 and 7.0. These aftershocks continued on into the winter. According to Beasley, some of these aftershocks were severe enough to rouse the inhabitants of Yakutat from their beds at night. He noted occurrences on December 14, 20 and 28, January 12 and 27, and February 16, but as they continued on into the winter, "...[I] got so used to them that I stopped taking account of them." That the aftershocks continued throughout the winter was confirmed by Reverend Johnson. None, however, could match the tremor that occurred on the afternoon of September 10. Even the oldest residents of Yakutat could not remember an earthquake of equal magnitude.
Between 1929 and 1933, when Washington was the nation's leading lumber producer, the state's annual output fell by two-thirds. In the farm and ranch country east of the Cascades the price of wheat dropped during that same time from 67 cents a bushel to a crippling 38 cents—less than what it cost most growers to raise it. Mortgage foreclosures, unpaid and overdue taxes, and a rapidly rising tide of joblessness created a sense of desperation.

Some of Washington's unemployed workers clustered under bridges or wherever else they could find shelter. One of their largest encampments was Seattle's Hooverville, a community of shacks fashioned from tar paper, tin and packing crates that sprawled across the city's tide flats. Most of the several hundred residents of Hooverville were homeless men—local authorities had decreed that no women or children would be permitted to live there. Many dwellers had once worked as loggers, fishermen, hardrock miners, bridge carpenters, sewer diggers, laborers, and others who supplied muscle to build the modern Pacific Northwest.

Adding to the state's unemployment woes was the arrival of thousands of refugees from the Dust Bowl of the parched Great Plains—commonly called "Okies" and "Arkies"—who mistakenly hoped to find some relief in Washington and the well-watered Pacific Northwest. During 1936 alone, an estimated 10,000 farm families fled the northern Great Plains for Washington and neighboring Oregon, Idaho and western Montana. Were it not for the subsistence doles newcomers received from state and federal officials, many might have starved. Ironically, Washington itself experienced severe drought and dust storms in the early 1930s: the massive tempest of April 21, 1931, began in eastern Washington and blackened the sky from Pullman west to Aberdeen and south to Roseburg, Oregon, with swirling dust.

The combination of falling tax revenues and rising unemployment reduced Washington's state government to near poverty, and economy became the watchword. In 1931 when Governor Roland H. Hartley refused to provide money to celebrate the bicentennial of the birth of George Washington, the Daughters of the American Revolution filed suit.
American Revolution protested vigorously and blamed the governor's Canadian birth for his unpatriotic stand. Unmoved, Governor Hartley responded that the state lacked “even money to carry letters about it.”

A major beneficiary of the malaise of the early 1930s was the Democratic Party. In the wake of the Great Depression, voters in Washington embraced the Democrats as never before. When Herbert Hoover, a Republican, ran for president in 1928, he carried every one of the state's counties; only four years later, when he ran for reelection, he lost every county. Rightly or wrongly, many voters blamed Hoover for the hard times.

Riding the crest of the Democratic tidal wave that swept across Washington and the nation in 1932 was Franklin Roosevelt, who promised Americans a “New Deal.” Exactly what a New Deal entailed, neither Roosevelt nor anyone else could say. Only this was certain: after the president-elect took office in March 1933, each day brought dramatic new developments, beginning with his proclamation of a bank holiday to halt the panic that threatened to destroy the nation's banking system.

Apart from World War I, the federal government had never before been so involved in so many aspects of American life as during the era of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. For Roosevelt, the New Deal would seek nothing less than to recreate the personal opportunity formerly associated with the nation's vanished frontier. During his last year as a student at Harvard he had taken a course called “American History: The Development of the West” under Frederick Jackson Turner, the famous historian of the frontier.
Federal relief efforts dated from the so-called Hundred Days when Congress created the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, headed by the lean and sometimes brusque Harry L. Hopkins.

There was more than a hint of Turner's frontier thesis in Roosevelt's 1932 campaign speech to the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco when he observed: "A glance at the situation today only too clearly indicates that equality of opportunity as we have known it no longer exists. Our industrial plant is built; the problem just now is whether under existing conditions it is not over-built. Our last frontier has long since been reached, and there is practically no more free land. More than half our people do not live on the farms or on lands and cannot derive a living by cultivating their own property. There is no safety valve in the form of a Western prairie to which those thrown out of work by the Eastern economic machines can go for a new start." Later, the New Deal sought to address these unpleasant economic realities.

During the 1930s Washington residents grew familiar with a host of new abbreviations—CCC, PWA, WPA, AAA, NRA and many others—each one standing for a federal agency charged with implementing a portion of the president's program. The New Deal's imprint on Washington took many forms, some as awesome as the Grand Coulee Dam—frequently described as "the biggest thing on earth"—and others as ordinary as new roads and trails through national forests, concrete sidewalks, picnic shelters and post office murals.

The common thread running through many New Deal programs was work for the unemployed. The Civilian Conservation Corps, for instance, put thousands of young men to work on reforestation projects. In 1933 the Public Works Administration, with an appropriation of more than $32 million, began construction of Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams on the Columbia River to create thousands more jobs.

At the start of construction on the two dams, President Roosevelt called national attention to Washington and the Pacific Northwest as a promised land. One speech contained these stirring words: "In this Northwestern section of the land, we still have an opportunity for a vastly increased population. There are many sections of the country, as you know, where conditions are crowded. There are many sections of the country where land has run out or been put to the wrong kind of use. America is growing. There are many people who want to go to a section of the country where they will have a better chance for themselves and their children—and there are a great many people who have children and need room for growing families. Out here you have not just space, you have space that can be used by human beings—a wonderful land—a land of opportunity."

Less spectacular than Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams but no less vital to maintaining the Pacific Northwest as a land of opportunity were the myriad projects funded by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). One of the largest New Deal agencies, the WPA fostered projects that were usually small in scale and sometimes consisted of little more than leaf raking, or so a chorus of critics claimed. Certainly its goal was to provide immediate relief to the unemployed, as distinguished from the goals of long-term recovery and reform of other New Deal agencies.

Federal relief efforts dated from the so-called Hundred Days (March 9-June 16, 1933) when Congress created the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, headed by the lean and sometimes brusque Harry L. Hopkins. In 1935 Hopkins was named to head the new Works Progress Administration, an independent agency that Roosevelt
created by executive order on May 6 and Congress funded with the record sum of $4.7 billion. The WPA, unlike the FERA, provided work relief administered by the federal government rather than funds for a dole administered by individual states.

Roosevelt stipulated that WPA programs must be useful. He underscored Hopkins's call for programs that could be initiated quickly and could put a large percentage of each federal dollar spent into the hands of the laborers themselves. Further, any program funded by the WPA should not compete with private employment and should conserve the skills of the workers. Unemployed actors and writers, for example, should best be employed in programs of the Federal Theatre Project, the Federal Writers' Project, the Federal Music Project, and the Federal Art Project—all WPA-sponsored—and not by raking leaves or building sidewalks.

The peak years of the WPA, 1935-1938, occurred during Hopkins's tenure. During this period it provided work to as many as three million jobless annually and spent most of the $10.7 billion distributed from 1935 to 1943. In all, this sprawling and sometimes unwieldy agency employed some eight million people, the average worker remaining in the program for slightly more than a year.

Officially, the WPA focused on low-cost, short-term projects that employed large numbers of workers and did not exceed a ceiling of $25,000. Giant projects such as Timberline Lodge in Oregon and the San Francisco Zoo nonetheless made a mockery out of any ostensible funding cap.

Whether the projects were big or small, WPA wages were barely sufficient for subsistence. Many truly impoverished Americans never qualified for WPA work; even for those who did, the WPA bureaucracy could be terribly inefficient, often causing them to complain about late or incorrect paychecks. It was the inefficiency of work-relief, more than anything else, that produced a rising tide of criticism. Among the popular complaints was that the agency's initials really stood for We Poke Along and that workers spent most of their time leaning on shovels.

Two verses from a song titled "Leaning on a Shovel" (from the WPA's Federal Theatre Project) used humor in an attempt to answer critics of Roosevelt and his New Deal agencies:

Among the popular complaints was that the agency's initials (WPA) really stood for We Poke Along and that workers spent most of their time leaning on shovels.

Grand Coulee was one of the largest New Deal projects. Transmission lines connect Bonneville and Grand Coulee Dams, 1942.

BELOW: WPA nurseries were located in 13 public schools and served underprivileged populations. WPA nursery school, c. 1939.
Vocational training included formal classes in large-scale cooking. WPA cookhouse, c. 1940.

Putting People to Work: The WPA in Washington 1935–1943

Although widely criticized for fostering projects that were small in scale, the goal of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was to provide immediate relief to the unemployed. This distinguished the WPA from other New Deal programs focused on long-term recovery and reform.

The Washington State Historical Society has put together a traveling exhibit highlighting the accomplishments of the WPA in Washington. The exhibit is on view from February through May 1997 on the fourth floor of the Legislative Building, on the Washington State Capitol Campus in Olympia. Featuring 30 previously unpublished images from the WPA photographic collection of the Washington State Historical Society, the accompanying text was written by noted Western historian Carlos Schwantes. This traveling exhibit is available on a rental basis to schools, libraries and malls. For more information, call 206/798-5873.

Here we stand asleep all day
While F.D. shoos the flies away
We just wake up to get our pay
What for? For leaning on a shovel.

Miles of roads and highways, too,
And schools and buildings bright and new—
Although it may seem odd to you
We did it—by leaning on a shovel!

The WPA (Work Projects Administration after 1939) wrote a bold signature across the United States. It constructed new buildings; its artists were responsible for murals in public buildings like post offices and libraries and for traveling art exhibits; and its actors took federal theater projects even to corners of the nation. In sum, before this federal work-relief program ended in 1943, employees of the WPA had improved 572,000 miles of rural roads and repaired 85,000 public buildings across the United States, built 78,000 new bridges and viaducts, laid 67,000 miles of city streets, and 24,000 miles of sidewalks; they had also created 8,000 parks, 350 airports, and 40,000 buildings.

As impressive as WPA statistics are, they offer only a hint of the variety in the quarter-million different projects undertaken by WPA workers who did everything from fixing children’s teeth to planting oysters. In Spokane the WPA even offered a class in placer mining to help the unemployed find gold in the mountains of the Pacific Northwest. The Federal Writers’ Project put unemployed novelists and other writers to work producing a series of state guidebooks, including Washington, A Guide to the Evergreen State, sponsored by the Washington State Historical Society and published in 1941. Even today, this massive compendium offers valuable historical information as well as a window on the now vanished world of Washington on the eve of World War II.

Hard times altered the course of Washington politics, and federal, state and local governments responded to the Great Depression with a variety of programs like the WPA to provide relief or stimulate recovery. But real prosperity remained stubbornly elusive until the eve of World War II. The Depression decade dramatically increased the involvement of the federal government in the lives of all Washingtonians, but the new departures of the 1930s pale in comparison to the impact of World War II, the event that more than any other hastened Washington’s coming of age.
No administration prior to that of Franklin D. Roosevelt so effectively used photography to promote and salute its programs. Certainly there had been crusaders with cameras well before this time—notably Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine, who focused on such problems as city slums and child labor. A big change occurred after 1935 when Roosevelt appointed Columbia University economics professor Rexford Guy Tugwell assistant secretary of agriculture; and it was Tugwell who enlisted the aid of photographers to help promote a controversial and expensive program of aid to farmers.

Tugwell recruited a former protégé named Roy Emerson Stryker to administer the new Resettlement Administration (later the Farm Security Administration). As a young economics professor at Columbia, Stryker enlivened his classes with photographs he hoped would help urban students better understand the plight of rural America. Though no photographer himself, Stryker, as head of the Resettlement Administration, recruited a remarkable group of talented camera artists that included Walker Evans, Ben Shahn, Russell Lee and Dorothea Lange, most famous for her images of Dust Bowl refugees. Together they created an invaluable collection of pictures—“a pictorial documentation of our rural areas and rural problems,” in Stryker's words, that even today provides the basis for popular perceptions of America during the New Deal years.

The photography of the Farm Security Administration was unabashedly propagandistic. Its main purpose was to convince middle-class Americans that the nation's poor were impoverished but dignified people. When World War II made poverty too downbeat a subject to boost the nation's morale, Stryker admonished his staff that too many images on file “now paint the U.S. as an older person's home and that just about everybody is too old to work and too malnourished to care much what happens . . . . We particularly need young men and women who work in our factories . . . . Housewives in their kitchen or in their yard picking flowers. More contented-looking old couples . . . .”

Photographs of the Farm Security Administration are both famous and enduring because of their propagandistic intent. They emphasized compelling subject matter and boldly used artistic techniques of lighting and composition to manipulate the emotions of Americans. Their consistent message was that the Great Depression brought hardship and suffering to many Americans; they sought to win popular support for New Deal programs. The photographic record of the Works Progress Administration, on the other hand, while further documenting life during the 1930s, was intended mainly to chronicle WPA activities without overtly manipulating the viewer.

Collectively, the photographs of the WPA in Washington do have a message. They reveal the many creative ways that the federal government provided work relief to the unemployed. Theirs was a positive message much needed at a time of widespread gloom, bewilderment and national uncertainty. As such they did not document any criticism of federal work-relief programs, criticism that would in later decades swell into a general distrust of federal programs; instead, these photographs seek to deflect criticism of relief by underscoring the nation's prevailing work ethic.

In response to the Great Depression, Americans refused to remain idle or to resign themselves to a new era of personal privation and public misery. Despite the hard times, men and women were still willing to work, and in their work there was personal and national hope that would ultimately lead to economic recovery.

If nothing else, the WPA photographs reveal a valuable sense of community in the face of widespread adversity. This sense of community is a sentiment largely forgotten by Americans during the more prosperous decades of the late 20th century.
The Origin of the Northwest's First School of Marine Science

By Victor B. Scheffer with Richard M. Strickland

The University of Washington School of Oceanography is one of the finest marine science facilities in the world. It carries on research and education in laboratory complexes at Seattle and Friday Harbor, operates two sea-going vessels, and yearly brings in research funds amounting to millions of dollars.

Oceanography materialized rather suddenly after Thomas Gordon Thompson (1888–1961), professor of chemistry, began in the late 1920s to campaign for an oceanographic center in the Northwest. His efforts led in 1930 to a design for a consortium to be called the University of Washington Oceanographic Laboratories (UWOL). A substantial grant from the Rockefeller Foundation allowed the university to turn the design into reality.

I was present at the creation of the UWOL and was one of Thompson's first students. His research agenda included all aspects of Northwest waters—their living and nonliving components, physical and chemical properties, waves and currents, and geologic basins. Early UWOL scientists carried on research at sea mainly on the little 75-foot M/V Catalyst; now they can cruise on the 274-foot M/V Thomas G. Thompson. The Catalyst was the first oceanographic vessel based in the Northwest. I was privileged to be aboard on her first open-sea cruise, to waters off the Alaska coast in 1932.

Antecedents: Friday Harbor, 1904–1929

In the summer of 1904 about 15 men and women, with zoologist Trevor Kincaid and botanist Theodore C. Frye, camped among the fir trees and madronas near Friday Harbor. Thereafter, summer classes were held yearly in makeshift laboratories called simply the Marine Station. Not until 1909–10 would students occupy a built-to-order facility. In 1920 a splendid plot of land became available—an unused 484-acre military reservation adjoining two miles of waterfront north of Friday Harbor. Here the Puget Sound Biological Station (newly named) found a permanent home in 1923. It offered an idyllic lifestyle to students and faculty. All slept in wood-floored tents and dined on food that was "wholesome and plentiful" at $5.50 a week. The aims of the new station were to teach marine biology to elementary schoolteachers and advanced university undergraduates, and to provide a field laboratory for visiting scientists. However, the station was poorly equipped for basic research.

Oceanography Finds a Place in Academia

The years after World War I brought a reawakening of marine science in America. Scripps Institution of Oceanography was founded at La Jolla, California, in 1925. An influential group of
to the University of Washington

meanwhile, on the University of Washington campus new buildings were rising rapidly. Planning was in progress to upgrade the Puget Sound Biological Station, although funding to that end was uncertain. What more likely source of money than the Rockefeller Foundation, which had professed strong interest in marine science? In 1925, when Wickliffe Rose of the Rockefeller Foundation stopped at Friday Harbor on a three-month tour of North American marine laboratories, University of Washington President Henry Suzzalo made the first request for funding. In 1928 his successor, M. Lyle Spencer, again sought Rockefeller Foundation funding, requesting $646,000 for construction and research equipment at Friday Harbor and for construction of a marine science building on the Seattle campus. The foundation’s president, Max Mason, while waiting for the NAS Committee on Oceanography to report, turned down the request.

Although the report was still pending, its contents had “leaked.” Planners at the university agreed that they must embrace the new oceanography if they were to win a Rockefeller Foundation grant. Foundation advisers had been favorably impressed by the research potential of the Friday Harbor facility, less favorably impressed by its past
emphasis on education (over research), and still less by the research qualifications of its director, T. C. Frye. Fortunately, the university already had a faculty member, T. G. Thompson, who was widely known to oceanographers for his studies of sea water chemistry and who had been cited in the NAS report. Equally important, he showed leadership potential.

President Spencer persuaded the university's board of regents to create, on March 29, 1930, the University of Washington Oceanographic Laboratories (UWOL), with Thompson as director. This consortium would borrow its faculty from existing departments, absorb the Puget Sound Biological

Lowering a plankton net from the MV Catalyst. 1935.

In 1920 a splendid plot of land became available—an unused 484-acre military reservation adjoining two miles of waterfront north of Friday Harbor.

Station, and downgrade the College of Fisheries (created in 1910) to a department in the College of Arts and Sciences. Research would replace education as the main thrust of marine science at the university. Predictably, these projected changes brought repercussions. Thompson admitted to Spencer that "there has been a decided anvil chorus [from zoology upperclass students] against the chemist [himself] you appointed... I am just sitting tight and not saying a word."

When Spencer invited Max Mason to visit the university in 1930, prospects for foundation money seemed so bright that Spencer submitted a new request—this time for more than $1.5 million. Mason and Frank Lillie came to Seattle in March 1930 and cruised the San Juan Islands during one of those calm, sun-filled breaks in spring that occasionally bless the Northwest. One of the visitors was heard to exclaim, "Where have you been hiding this place!"

Unfortunately for the university, Mason’s subsequent report was less sunny. He wrote that the University of Washington’s plan was overly ambitious, poorly designed and based on unreliable cost estimates. He told Spencer not to ask again for money until the plan had been better formulated. To that end, Mason granted $2,500 for Thompson to tour marine labs in Europe in the summer of 1930.

After Thompson’s return in the fall, Spencer submitted a new request, this one calling for only $250,000. Of this sum, $200,000 would be spent for a campus building and $50,000 (over five years) for leasing a research vessel. An additional $50,000 for equipment was to come from the state legislature. The revised request was quickly approved, and T.G. (“Tommy”) Thompson went into action.

Even as ground was being broken in early 1931 for the campus building, the Great Depression was deepening. Such was its effect on prices that building a research vessel became a more attractive option than leasing one. In 1932 the Rockefeller Foundation upped its award to $265,000 to meet the additional cost of a new vessel.

Classroom instruction began in the academic year 1931-32—among the first of its kind in America. I recall that our "textbook" for Oceanography 101—Oceanographical Chemistry—was a set of proof sheets of articles on the chemistry and physics of sea water, written by Thompson and Robinson and published in 1932.

A Home Base for the UWOL

The UWOL was designed to operate from three facilities: a home base combining offices and laboratories on the

Professor John E. Guberlet and bottom dredge aboard the MV Catalyst, 1935. The slats serve as a sled beneath the net.

Lake Union edge of the Seattle campus, a research vessel, and expanded field laboratories at Friday Harbor. In 1931 John Graham drew plans for the home base. A low bid of $137,000 was accepted; the building was completed in April 1932 and dedicated on June 15. Robert A. Millikan, famous for having isolated the electron, gave the dedicatory address.

Thompson described the new building. Sea water came in by barge from Puget Sound and was pumped into a 1,000-gallon, rubber-lined holding tank near the roof. About 45,000 gallons, sand-filtered and cooled to 48 degrees, circulated through the research aquaria. The building had ten private laboratories.

The First Research Vessel

Plans for a research vessel were drafted by Rowlands and Strickland, naval architects. The keel was laid in 1931 at the Lake Union Dry Dock and Machine Works where, on May 14, 1932, the ship was launched. The daughter of faculty member John Guberlet swung the christening bottle, said to contain waters from all the oceans, and the Catalyst slid down the ways. I heard a photographer ask for a replay in better light but Thompson demurred: “Sorry, it might bring bad luck.”

The Catalyst was a beautiful ship. Her frame was made of steam-bent oak, her planking from Alaska yellow cedar; the deck and cabinets were teak, the keel Douglas fir, and the heel Australian ironbark. A fender of ironbark, two feet wide and an inch thick, girdled her at the waterline. Her overall length was 74.7 feet, beam 18.8 feet, draft 9.3 feet, and gross weight 92 tons. To minimize vibration she was lightly powered with a diesel engine of only 120 HP at 450 RPM. “It costs,” wrote Thompson, “slightly less than five cents a mile to operate, exclusive of salary and wages.”

Her most intriguing feature was an on-deck laboratory that could accommodate seven scientists. One evening when the ship was at dock on the campus for an oceanography open house, I saw two small boys looking in through a laboratory window, studying the rows of chemical reagents. Said one, “They sure have a lot of medicine!”

The Catalyst carried plankton nets, water-sampling bottles and light-penetration instruments, all of which could be lowered on 15,000 feet of stainless steel wire. A heavy bottom dredge could be dragged on 2,000 feet of half-inch wire rope. When the ship was fit for service in 1932 she had cost about $60,000.

Attractive at first glance, the Catalyst did have drawbacks. She had virtually no hold, so that gear and supplies had to be stowed on deck—on one long cruise, a beef that had been wrapped in cheesecloth and lashed to the rigging turned stale before the cook could use it all. And in a strong side wind, the ship rolled through an arc of nearly 90 degrees.

The Catalyst on the Open Sea

On August 8, 1932, the Catalyst left Seattle for a cruise to Southeast Alaska and the open North Pacific. She carried five faculty members, six graduate students (including myself) and a crew of four (including Captain Christian T. Larsen and Frank S. Melder, engineer).
George B. Rigg, age 60, was the oldest of the lot. He was an able scientist but not an able seaman. One morning the captain glanced out the galley window and saw green trees passing by. He rushed to the wheelhouse and found that Rigg was steering by the compass, seemingly unaware that the channel had turned a corner.

During the cruise the chemists took water samples for analysis of variations in temperature, acidity, dissolved oxygen, chlorinity, electrical conductivity and other parameters. The physicists used a spectrophotometer to measure the scattering of daylight underwater. The zoologists deployed a dredge that scraped the sea floor and gathered up organisms such as crustaceans, mollusks, worms, hydroids and starfishes. Once, when Guberlet was sorting a fresh haul that had been dumped on deck, he discovered a new species of sea cucumber. A closer look, however, showed it to be a pink sausage from the galley! The botanists played a minor role, mainly collecting phytoplankton for later study.

Upon arriving at a sampling station in Queen Charlotte Sound on August 21, the Catalyst drifted for several hours at night. Soon she was visited by Beal's petrels, disoriented by a brilliant deck light. Guberlet and fellow faculty member Robert C. Miller reported the event. “Everyone busied himself throwing birds overboard in order to keep the decks clear enough to walk about... There were more than fifty on deck at one time, while there were scores or hundreds circling about the boat, uttering their quavering cries.”

The ship stopped briefly at Prince Rupert, Ketchikan, Juneau and Skagway, then left sheltered seas for the long gray swells of the Gulf of Alaska. When farthest from land she was cruising in waters over 1,000 meters deep, above the continental slope. Here a full gale struck without warning. The Catalyst drifted helplessly or ran dead-slow ahead with a sea anchor trailing for three days and two nights. All crew and passengers were seasick.

When one of the graduate students fell into a coma, the ship turned east, toward the shelter of Indian Cove. Not soon enough did we learn that he was diabetic and at the point of death, having concealed his condition from all on board except a close friend. He did not live to see land.

The stout little Catalyst is still in service. In 1944, during World War II, the navy had requisitioned her, then had returned her in 1948 to civilian hands. She passed through at least ten private ownerships and, in 1995, was berthed at Port Townsend, Washington, as a tour boat for Pacific Catalyst, Inc.

Sixty-seven years have passed since oceanography came to the University of Washington. The School of Oceanography, with a faculty of 75, is now offering 17 undergraduate and 51 graduate courses. The school's researchers routinely cruise the world ocean, studying it via satellites in space and submersibles on the ocean floor. Thomas Gordon Thompson became in 1951 the university's first fellow of the National Academy of Sciences. It was an honor befitting a pioneer.

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AUTHORS’ NOTE
To all who lent manuscripts, photographs and recollections to enrich this narrative, the authors are deeply grateful.

Friday Harbor Laboratories, University of Washington, c. 1978.
Mary Richardson Walker

MISSIONARY, WIFE, MOTHER

By Joyce W. Prairie

It has been said that she was the third white woman to cross the Rockies into the Oregon Country. Perhaps she was. Certainly Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding were the first and second, but in the next group of missionaries to cross the continent there were, in fact, four women accompanying their husbands. Placement in line diminishes neither her importance in the opening of the Northwest to American settlement nor the strength of her character.

[Image of a landscape]
When Mary was at Kent's Hill, she discovered that while she might “audit” classes she could not take examinations or gain credits for her work.

She was born Mary Richardson on April 1, 1811, on the coast of Maine. One of nine children born to Charlotte and Joseph Richardson, she married Elkanah Walker in her quest to become a missionary, and bore him six sons and a daughter. She died at the age of 86 in Oregon.

As a young woman Mary attended Maine Wesleyan Seminary, then taught school and became a missionary. In 1838 she traveled by horseback across the continent and established with her husband a mission at Tshimakain (present-day Ford, Washington) where she lived for nine years among the Spokane Indians. After 1847 she lived, for the most part, as a farm wife in Forest Grove, Oregon.

Thanks to the careful, literate diary Mary kept for most of her adult life, we may now intimately share her story and see, just a little, into her soul.

What was there in the home in East Baldwin on the coast of Maine and in this family of Richardsons that produced in Mary the dreams, daring and persistence that determined her character? They were poor people, though perhaps no more or less than their neighbors, but the farm home kept food on the table. The Richardsons respected education. Mary's mother was the first schoolteacher in the town. Her father had taught school, too, and became a deacon of the Congregational Church.

The two elder sons of the Richardson family graduated from Bowdoin College. The third taught school, and the fourth became a doctor. Mary and her younger sisters Charlotte and Phebe were students at Maine Wesleyan Seminary at Kent's Hill, Readfield. Being female, they received no diplomas, but they qualified themselves as teachers. Indeed, when Mary was at Kent's Hill, she discovered that while she might "audit" classes she could not take examinations or gain credits for her work. One day, according to family legend, she said to her professor, Meritt Caldwell, "Professor, how do my papers compare with those the young men hand in? I just want to know." His answer was, "They are better, much better. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Mary?"

In the time that Mary was growing up, young ladies were, generally, strictly limited in their activities. In A Gift Book for Young Ladies, they are directed to the "right amusement" beyond garden and field, "an occasional ramble with a friend or with a small party in pursuit of rare flowers . . . ." The Richardson family, somehow, according to Mary's granddaughter Ruth, "was a jolly bunch. . . . life was free and easy." Mary wrote in her diary about the joys of picnics in the Maine woods, of an apple cutting in the Cooper shop, "It was well conducted. We had no kissing." It appears that the Richardson children planned their lives, did their courting and directed their education pretty much on their own, with more guidance than direction.

Mary, whose childhood was spent in this home where education was revered and children were encouraged to think independently, did her chores—caring for chickens, pigs and calves, churning, weeding, gathering vegetables, picking berries, garnering nuts, cleaning pigeons and tripe—but decided firmly, "I was meant for nobler work than this." She then began to dream of becoming a missionary. "At the age of nine or ten," she recorded later, "my mind first became interested in the cause of missions . . . ."

Perhaps the clearest picture that remains of this determined, independent young woman comes from a neighbor.
on the occasion of Mary's departure in 1838 for the mission to the Oregon Country, "Well, if that isn't just like Mary Richardson to go dashing off across the plains on a wild buffalo!"

Mary, in her diary, suffered her religious faith:

I feel quite discouraged. I have been reviewing my life, particularly since I indulged a hope that I had experienced a change of heart [conversion]. . . . I am just as prone as ever to indulge in vain and wicked thoughts, to forget God and the high calling with which I am called. I am still the same stupid, indifferent creature . . . . A kind of Skepticism [sic] seems to bind my mind in chains of darkness from which I see no way to deliver myself.

This is an ongoing struggle: her compulsion to follow the faith and harsh criticism of the weakness she sees in herself. Her religion was not merely one aspect of her life and being—it was the core of her life, her identity.

Thus driven, Mary made her decision to pursue the missionary path in December 1836. It appears at the time that her choice was made as an alternative to a marriage proposal. "Ought I bid adieu to all my cherished hopes and unite my destiny with that of a meag [sic] farmer with little education and no refinement. In a word shall I to escape the horrors of perpetual celibacy to settle down with the vulgar. I cannot do it." To marry the farmer would have meant giving up her life-long dream of being a missionary. She opted for the dream.

Mary wrote to the Mission Board of her qualifications and intent:

I [am] at home in the schoolroom, nursery, kitchen, or washroom or employed with the needle. I am wont the hardest duties on my self to lay and the public good not private interest to consult. I am aware that I possess an aspiring mind. But I have endeavored and I have [achieved] some success to cultivate a spirit of humility; to be willing to do something and be nothing if duty required.

There was at this time, also in Maine, a man named Elkanah Walker. He had professed conversion in a revival in 1828 and entered a seminary. Though he, too, was determined to become a missionary, his lack of a wife proved a serious handicap. But just as the Mission Board had notified Mary of few opportunities for unmarried ladies, it notified Elkanah of Mary: "You ought by all means to have a good, healthy, patient, well-informed, devotedly pious wife. There
They loaded at Independence “one hundred sixty pounds of flour, fifty-seven pounds of rice, twenty-five pounds of sugar and a little pepper and salt.”

is a Miss Mary Richardson . . . who has offered herself to the Board but we cannot send her single . . . I should think her a good girl. If you have no body in view, you might inquire about her.” He was sent to bear a letter of introduction to her and to give it to her “if he were pleased with what he saw,” and this he did.

The following day he offered himself to her, “You have been recommended by Mr. Armstrong.” Mary suffered doubts, for there was another gentleman in the picture at the time, but piety won out: “I feel that however strong is my inclination to love [unnamed suitor] it would be sinful to do so. I feel, too, that however little I feel inclined to have “W” [Walker] it is my duty to do so. I have gone so far that I cannot go back without forfeiting my Christian character.”

So saying, she provided a measure of the depth of her determination to follow the missionary path.

Mary and Elkanah shared two days together and then ten months of letters. He visited once more the following winter, and there was some tension. Elkanah wanted Mary to accept the notion of woman’s posture at the feet of the lordly male. He wrote to her, “I would . . . recommend to you to read some good book in Female Education . . . you need more of refinement than you do . . . sciences. All you need is a little more finishing to make you an honor to your sex and a worthy prize to your intended.”

What proved to be a lifelong challenge was thus offered to Mary.

On March 1838 he came for her. Elkanah was 33, Mary nearly 27. Their union, they strongly believed, was directed by the hand of Providence. It preceded a genuine love but was made happy in common purpose and strengthened by their strong faith. They were married in a brief ceremony after the Mission Board determined quite suddenly that they were bound not for Africa but for the Oregon Country as missionaries to the Nez Perce and Flathead peoples. They were to be in Boston in a week. Mary packed her small trunk and shipped other possessions around Cape Horn. They visited his family briefly and were off to Boston and then, by carriage and boat, to Independence, Missouri. Their wedding journey lasted nearly six months and 3,000 miles and ended at the Whitman Mission.

They took with them 25 mules, 12 cattle, including 2 fresh milk cows, and a light one-horse wagon, and were accompanied by three other missionary couples and a caravan of the American Fur Company. They loaded at Independence “one hundred sixty pounds of flour, fifty-seven pounds of rice, twenty-five pounds of sugar and a little pepper and salt.”

This was expected to last until they reached the buffalo country where they would live mainly on fresh buffalo meat and pemmican. On the trail Elkanah bemoaned the uninterrupted diet of buffalo meat and tea. They relied on calomel (a purgative) or bleeding for any ailment. They had two tents and a curtain to separate families. For fuel they usually used buffalo chips.

For Mary this trip of 1,900 miles was made riding sidesaddle and, although she never said so directly, pregnant. “My circumstances are rather trying; without mother or
They arrived at the mission at Waiilatpu on August 29. The sister, can I survive it all? ... I cried to think how comfortable father's hogs were."

Mary's journal of that trip includes many descriptive passages of the landscape, terrain, wildflowers and wildlife. Her interest in science, particularly geology, botany and mineralogy, is clearly demonstrated in her diary:

On our right, snow-capped mountains. Saw a herd of antelope . . . a large herd of buffalo . . . passed mountains that appeared as if they had been macadamized . . . collected a variety of plants . . . saw yellow violets and strawberries . . . collected gooseberries . . . traveling on a dry sea . . . passed bluffs [that] resemble statuary, castles, forts, temples . . . as if Nature tired of waiting the advance of civilization . . . the rock is a coarse granite, in which quartz predominates . . . the minerals are interesting but I have to ride over most of them without picking them up."

In her diary Mary discloses a bit of the stress of newly-wed life:

Should feel so much better if Mr. W. would only treat me with some cordiality. It is so hard to please him . . . if I stir, it is forwardness; if I am still, it is inactivity . . . I am almost certain that more is expected of me than can be had of one woman.

The missionary party left the American Fur Company, which by treaty was not allowed to travel farther west, at Fort Hall (Pocatello) on the Snake River and was joined there by an escort from the Hudson's Bay Company. The Walkers' first child, Cyrus, was born there on December 7, 1838. Mary wrote the narrative of mothers:

About . . . nine I became sick enough. Began to feel discouraged, felt as if I almost wished I had never been married. But there was no retreating; meet it I must . . . just as I supposed the worst was yet to come, my ears were saluted by the cry of my child. 'A son' was the salutation. Soon I forgot my misery in the joy of possessing a proper child.

Mary energetically pursued her role and responsibilities as a missionary, telling of Sunday worship services at the chief's lodge, of her frustrations in working to learn the language, of teaching female "decorum" to an Indian girl she called Kwantpester and of making a first attempt at teaching. "I gave them a lesson in geography on an egg shell which I had painted for a globe."

And the site where they established the mission as "one of nature's most sweet and peaceful scenes . . . a perfectly level prairie valley . . . surrounded by lofty pines, [and] at the foot of a lofty hill, nature pours forth one of her sweetest little fountains, which in the language of the natives is called 'Tshimakain.'"

She was removed from family and friends by a continent, removed from neighbors by days and weeks and without tools, equipment or furniture.

Her new home consisted of two cabins, each approximately 14 feet square, at first with neither window nor door, a roof of boughs and clay, and chimneys built for the fireplace. The floor was beaten earth covered with pine branches. Beds were platforms nailed to the walls; mattresses were made of straw. There she set about to make a home and keep a house and family:

I spent the day cording my bed and setting our little room to rights. Got a boy to help me mend the chimney. Put up mats, traded berries, boiled brine, picked over feathers . . . harvesting corn and pumpkins today . . . husked the corn . . . dipped sixteen doz. candles . . . out of patience this morning on account of the miserable old door and the cats and the Indians; first one and then the other would knock out a piece and the wind came in without the least ceremony . . . I nailed it together as well as I could . . . milked the cow . . . collected eggs . . . baked six loaves of bread . . . churned and made a cheese . . . washed and cleaned furniture . . . repaired the plastering and painted chairs . . . filled my feather bed.
shortcomings as wife, mother and missionary. Having been rebuked by her husband one day, she wrote:

_I am almost in despair and without hope of his ever being pleased or satisfied with [me]. . . . I can never, with all my care, make myself what he would like me to be._ And, on another day, "Have been thinking much on the prospects of doing good among these Indians . . . I feel to reproach myself for my indolence and want of zeal in acquiring the language and trying to do something for them."

A daughter, Abigail, was born at Tshimakain in May 1840: "Awoke about four a.m. Rose at five, helped about milking . . . had scarcely time to dress and comb my hair. Before eight was delivered of a fine daughter." A second son, Marcus, was born two years later:

_Rose about five. Had early breakfast. Got my housework done about nine. Baked six loaves more of bread. Made a kettle of mush and now a suet pudding and beef boiling . . . I have managed to put my clothes away and set my house in order._

_Nine o'clock, was delivered of another son._

Three more sons were born to the Walkers at Tshimakain: Joseph in 1844, Jeremiah in 1846, and John in 1847.

Mary taught and disciplined her children. "Cyrus disobeyed in going to Mr. E's house without permission. I tied him to the table leg. I had occasion about sunset to give my children a little whipping upon which Miss Abigail ran off and offered protection. Big Head (variously called Cornelius and Old Chief) reassured them, "Believe me, the Spokane Indians will never kill their teachers." They remained through the winter, earning the confidence and respect of the Spokanes, but across the continent the Mission Board reached a decision to close all the remaining missions. Accompanied by a volunteer militia, the Walkers removed to the "Lower Valley" in the spring. There was sadness at leaving the peaceful valley home and disappointment in their mission. Mary noted, "We have been among them [the Indians] nine years & yet I know of no one in this tribe who can be considered pious [saved]."

The Walkers settled, with their six children, on the West Tualatin Plain in Oregon. Their last son, Levi, was born there in 1852. Mary thus became a farmer's wife in much the pattern she had rejected in Maine—tending the garden, feeding and clothing her growing family. She learned to manage a cook-stove: "I wonder if I will be able to cook anything in it." She found old friends, made new ones and was an active force in the construction of an academy (presently, Pacific University at Forest Grove). Elkanah suffered long years of poor health and continued his pattern of preaching, traveling from one small settlement to another for services.

Mary Walker was a woman of faith—not the faith of Sunday, but the faith of living. She was a woman of courage—not the courage of daring, but the courage of meeting each day's challenges headlong. She was a woman of science—not the science of text and lab, but the science of the earth as she discovered it. She was a woman of words—not words of idle chat, but words of careful thought and painful introspection. She was a woman of industry and determination. She was a woman of love, of her God, of her family and a place called Tshimakain.

Joyce W. Prairie was an eastern Washington school principal in the Mary Walker School District for several years and there became interested in the character and story of the district's namesake.
When civilization and barbarism are brought in such relation that they cannot coexist together, it is right that the superiority of the former should be asserted and the latter compelled to give way. It is, therefore, no matter of regret or reproach that so large a portion of our territory has been wrested from its aboriginal inhabitants and made the happy abodes of an enlightened and Christian people.

—Luke Lea, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Nov. 30, 1852

The Chehalis River treaty council in February and March 1855 was the last in a series of conferences held in western Washington Territory involving Native American and federal negotiators. Policymakers intended these councils to be the vehicles through which Indian land title in the area bounded by the Cascade Mountains and the Pacific Ocean and extending from the Canadian border to the Columbia River would be extinguished. Following congressional ratification of the treaties, Indian service officials would remove the aboriginal population to reservations and begin the formal process of assimilation.

Charged with carrying out the federal government’s aims was Isaac Ingalls Stevens, the young, indefatigable, dogmatic territorial governor and superintendent of Indian Affairs. In fact, Stevens is best remembered for his administration of Indian policy. The perceived one-sided nature and authentic long-term significance of the negotiations have made him a controversial figure on whose tactics and abilities historians have offered widely divergent opinions. At best, historians have portrayed him as a realist who, considering the ethos of the times, did everything reasonably possible to aid what had become a subordinate, moribund people; at worst, they have depicted him as an unprincipled egomaniac who used bluster, intimidation and fear to bully Indian leaders into signing treaties the provisions of which were either misrepresented, poorly understood, or both.

Historians have extensively documented the circumstances surrounding the Chehalis deliberations. In just a two-month span Stevens concluded five treaty councils. The last meeting took place on the lower Chehalis River, near the site of present-day Cosmopolis. Stevens sought to join the Quinaults, Queets, Lower Chehalis, Upper Chehalis, Satsop, Lower Chinooks, Wakhialums, Cowlitz and Kalhalloquas (Willapa) on a single reservation that the Indian Department would establish on the Olympic Peninsula. To preserve tribal autonomies, the native delegations protested vigorously against a general consolidation. In doing so, tribal headmen prescribed as an essential precondition to signing the treaty federal commitment to create several local reservations. The negotiations became gridlocked. In sum, Stevens and the native leaders failed to reach terms, and the council disintegrated in acrimony.

An examination of Stevens’s handling of Indian policy at Grays Harbor provides a case study in diplomatic inefficacy. His one-size-fits-all strategy ignored the disparate desires and characteristics of Pacific Northwest native
peoples. In particular, the Chehalis council was a patchwork affair. Remnants of a collection of small, diverse and often distant bands participated. Some lived in the interior, others by the ocean; some supplemented primary diets of salmon with shellfish, others hunted wild game; some spoke languages of Salishan linguistic stock, others Chinookan or Quileute; some shared boundaries, others lived over 100 miles apart.

In failing to grasp fully such variations, the orations Stevens delivered at Cosmopolis became essentially boilerplate, consisting of phrases borrowed either whole or piece-meal from other councils and recycled to garner a quick submission. Other than names and boundaries, little distinguished the terms offered at Chehalis from those outlined in previous negotiations. Together with the ethnological differences of the southwestern peoples, Stevens's banal approach proved disastrously ineffective and contributed significantly to Chehalis becoming the only council west of the Cascades where a treaty failed to result.

One should not conclude, however, that Stevens's conduct derived from either innate insensitivity or inherent desire on his part to inflict injury on southwestern Washington's native population. While it is one thing to criticize his shortcomings as a negotiator, his strategy for the Chehalis council, or the policy he tried to advance, it is quite another to impugn the motivation that lay behind his actions. There is no evidence to suggest that he considered the reservation system to be anything but a sensible, humane plan to provide native people with controlled, secluded environments in which to live, as federal officials prepared tribal members for future integration. However, in subscribing to Commissioner of Indian Affairs George W. Manypenny's view that reservations be very limited in number, Stevens, like Manypenny, operated on the faulty assumption that American Indians would perceive as beneficial a course undertaken by the national government ostensibly to benefit white settlement and to promote commercial opportunity.

Stevens's stubborn determination to conclude a treaty that in substance and purpose strictly followed the enunciated policies of the Indian Affairs office in Washington, D.C., transformed the council into what became a zero-sum game for southwestern Washington peoples. Tribal groups could either appease the federal government and accept an unwanted treaty, or refuse and face Stevens's ire and a precarious future in an increasingly white, alien world.

Yet questions remain. To what extent was Stevens aware of native opinion before the council? Why did Stevens turn down the Indians' demands? How important was it for him to gain a treaty at Chehalis? What role did alcohol play in the council's collapse? After the aborted negotiations, what did Stevens envision would happen to those native peoples who attended the council?

Despite Stevens's capable performance in concluding treaties ahead of the Chehalis council, reports from the field plainly forewarned that the coastal and interior peoples of southwestern Washington would be uncooperative. The first hint of trouble appeared in September 1854 when Indian agent William Tappan informed Stevens that the Indians were prepared to present a united front against the government. Tappan offered multiple causes for their stance, not the least of which derived from the 1851 never-ratified Anson Dart treaties. Congress's refusal to accept those agreements had nurtured feelings of suspicion and resentment. A tribal headman who had participated in the previous negotiations even
produced a signed copy of one of the treaties, which Tappan forwarded to Olympia for the governor's inspection. Tappan also discovered that local rum sellers, many of whom were former or current employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, had used subterfuge to sway native attitudes. Obviously perceiving federal control and government reservations as operating against their interests, the liquor dealers circulated the false rumor that the Americans planned to gather tribal members aboard large ships, transport them to an isolated island somewhere in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, and leave them to starve. If nothing else, acceptance of this apocryphal story suggests that the southwestern Washington peoples held some level of distrust for the Americans.

Strong hostility against moving any great distance had become firmly entrenched by early 1855. The Cowlitz advised Tappan that they would relinquish their land but go no farther than Camas Prairie, south of present-day Centralia. Neighboring peoples balked at traveling even that far. Nor did tribal members exhibit much interest in sharing a reservation. Fundamental differences in language and habits undergirded their intransigence. The Lower Chehalis expressed a fear of the people to the north, and although the Quinault River ranked second only to the Columbia as a salmon producer, a perceived paucity of resources also worried them.

In short, most tribes rejected the Olympic Peninsula as the site for their future home. And when Tappan advanced Grays Harbor as an alternate location, it elicited no more enthusiasm. "What shall we eat?" the natives wondered. A frustrated Tappan apprised Stevens that despite naming every place that he "could invent," the southwestern peoples refused to consent to any location that would "answer as a reserve for more than one band." Foreseeing "no chance" for an amiable removal, Tappan presciently concluded that the Indians' intractableness would eventually compel Stevens simply to choose an area and force the native population to go there.

The number and location of reservations became the critical issues affecting the Chehalis negotiations. Stevens's intention to remain strictly within the established guidelines of the Indian Affairs office certainly influenced his decision to offer only one reservation. Yet, within limits, he possessed the authority to deviate from policy. Perhaps other factors were in play. For example, southwestern Washington contained some of the best soil and potential farmland in the territory. In terms of settlement, this may have rendered the region too valuable—Stevens said that he included several reservations in the Medicine Creek treaty because he considered the land to be of poor quality—for the federal government to apportion it even fractionally as an Indian reservation. Stevens's secretary at the Chehalis council, ethnologist George Gibbs, acting as secretary of the treaty commission, characterized the soil as "particularly, exceedingly rich." It could support a population on a par with that of the Willamette Valley, he conjectured, and become the "finest part of the territory." Accordingly, removal of the region's original occupants to the Olympic Peninsula would open for homestead an immense area of Indian-free land.

More significantly, successful transplantation of the southwestern Washington peoples—in this instance a convenient blend of coastal and interior groups—to the isolated northern coast would pave the way for the future aggregation of all western Washington Indians there. Thus the federal government and Stevens could realize their long-term goal of disposing of local reservations and removing native peoples to what one commissioner of Indian Affairs enthusiastically termed a "grand" Indian colony.

Stevens little heeded the pessimistic reports emanating from the southwestern portion of the territory in the weeks preceding the Chehalis council. Convinced before and several days into the
negotiations that a steady regimen of paternalistic persuasion could carry the day, he would realize his error only in the end. Nonetheless, Tappan’s statements show in hindsight that Stevens should have approached the Chehalis council with trepidation. He should have informed Commissioner Manypenny of impending trouble and devised other strategies. Perhaps the creation of three reservations—one located in the interior where the Chehalis reservation is today situated, another at Grays Harbor, and the Quinault reserve—represented a basis for compromise. Instead, Stevens’s undervaluation of native opposition left him flat-footed when the government’s overtures proved unacceptable.

The more Stevens heard from Tappan, the fewer concessions he seemed willing to allow. His initial plan had actually called for two reservations, one to fit the Cowlitz and Upper Chehalis and another above Grays Harbor—probably at the Quinault River’s mouth—for the Lower Chinooks, Lower Chehalis and Quinaults. As mentioned, the Olympic Peninsula’s potential as an Indian domicile had captivated Stevens for some time. Its bays and streams too small for river traffic and soil too poor for large-scale field agriculture, he believed that the northern coast offered little to entice white settlement. On the other hand, the region abounded in Indian staples of fish and berries. As early as December 1853 the governor had advised Commissioner Manypenny that this would be a good place to put native peoples. A year later, Stevens’s intentions came into sharper focus. In December 1854 he penned the following note to Tappan:

It has suggested itself to me that all the saltwater Indians of your district could be united with the coast Indians south of Cape Flattery in a reservation north of Grays Harbor, say on the Quinault River, and the remaining Indians either be placed on a single reservation on the Columbia River, or taken from the river altogether and united with the Yakimas.

Oblivious to aboriginal sentiment, Stevens further narrowed his terms in February 1855. He would remove all southwestern peoples to a reservation to be established somewhere between Grays Harbor and Cape Flattery. Based on Tappan’s gloomy reports, however, Stevens dared not divulge his intentions early at Cosmopolis; he knew that the tribes would not endorse them.

Other than wanting to appease federal policy, Stevens’s rationale for constricting the provisions of the treaty are not clear. Some historians have argued that he did so because the Chehalis council weighed insignificantly in his mind compared to crucial negotiations looming east of the Cascade Mountains. Southwestern Washington native peoples were relatively inconsequential, the argument goes, and thus the governor viewed the Grays Harbor council as ancillary to the others. Stevens’s actions, overriding philosophy and personality seem to indicate otherwise, however. Although the southwestern bands were indeed smaller—both in population and in the acreage they had to offer—than, say, those tribal groups who assembled at the Walla Walla council, Stevens regarded his treaties as the parts of a larger piece. Moreover, it would have been inefficient to bring some native peoples under treaty while leaving others outside federal control. Finally, Stevens’s tenacity precluded him from not always pushing all-out to accomplish any task over which he had responsibility. Stevens therefore devoted nearly as much time, when native resistance forced him to, conferring at Cosmopolis as at the previous four councils combined.

In part, Indian opposition manifested itself in indulgence in alcohol. The latter has often been blamed for the council’s falling apart. Doubtless Stevens hoped that his rebuke of Tleyuk, the Lower Chehalis head chief, would leave such an impression. Two issues merit consideration: First, was the consumption of liquor the sole stimulus behind Stevens’s ostentatious reaction? Second, how did alcohol impact the Chehalis council’s chances for success?

Carcowan lived in a village at the
southern entrance to Grays Harbor near today's Westport. For untold years he had served as the head chief of the Lower Chehalis. An elderly man in 1855, he surrendered his authority to his son Tleyuk (A-Spark-of-Fire) and assumed a position of senior statesman. George Gibbs noted that Carcowan had been the “principal chief” of the Lower Chehalis but his son, Tleyuk, “now claims, in his place, to be the head of the tribe.”

Without question, Carcowan, Tleyuk, and the Lower Chehalis violated Stevens’s commandment forbidding alcohol. James Swan, an aide to Stevens at the Chehalis council, recalled that Carcowan “smuggled some whiskey into the camp, and made his appearance ... quite intoxicated.” The governor, “very much incensed,” placed him in custody. Although obviously angered at this disturbing development, Stevens calculated his response. Neither wanting Carcowan’s behavior to destroy the council nor willing to ignore drunkenness, Stevens let the Lower Chehalis headman address the assembly upon regaining sobriety and delayed another day before taking further action. No documentation exists to support such an hypothesis, but one could conjecture that a disgruntled Carcowan became intoxicated solely in order to sour the negotiations.

Stevens would likely have served his cause better had he reacted differently to Carcowan. In light of events that occurred later, he might have picked this as an opportune time to exclude the Lower Chehalis from the council—he would have had some justification—and continue with those more malleable groups. A couple of factors prevented him from doing so. First, the three factions that comprised the Lower Chehalis stood tightly aligned against the treaty; that is, Tleyuk’s band of 82 Lower Chehalis, another 120 North River peoples, and 15 Shoalwater Bay peoples.

Of those headmen from north of Grays Harbor who spoke in council, Chahlat wanted to maintain ownership over a salmon fishery, a tidal prairie, all the whales that beached on shore, and any shells or other ocean-based bric-a-brac that washed up on his lands; Motelis—claiming ownership of a “large” land area and several small rivers—intended to die on his lands; and, Makahu hoped to unite with Tleyuk on a reservation at Grays Harbor. Banishment of Tleyuk’s people could very well have induced a mass exodus of the united Lower Chehalis. The second issue relates closely to the first: Stevens probably thought that failure to convince the coastal Lower Chehalis to go north would make the interior peoples that much more intransigent.

If not drinking alcohol, then, the only blame rightly attributable to the Lower Chehalis for the council’s demise lies in their actions of Thursday, March 1. As the third day of formal negotiations approached, several scheming Hudson’s Bay Company employees had recited to Tleyuk a version of the incredible story that “it was the intention of the United States government to put them all on board steamers, and send them away out of the country, and that the Americans were not their friends.” That fabrication, combined with his father’s arrest and realization that the reservation (with its inhabitants over whom he hoped to serve as head chief) would not encompass Lower Chehalis lands, prompted Tleyuk to act defiantly in Stevens’s presence and to withdraw support for the treaty.

Stevens’s relationship with the Lower Chehalis hit bottom after a last-ditch effort to salvage the quickly deteriorating proceedings failed. Stevens’s relationship with the Lower Chehalis hit bottom after a last-ditch effort to salvage the quickly deteriorating proceedings failed. Stevens had arranged for the tribal headmen to visit him in his tent Thursday evening. While nearly all of the delegations were by now pressing the governor to yield more than he felt he could, the Lower Chehalis were beginning to comport themselves in ways—besides drinking—that played havoc with his sense of protocol. According to Swan, Tleyuk had heard enough of the government’s proposition. Hence, he voiced “some insolent remarks [in Stevens’s quarters], and peremptorily refused to sign the treaty, and, with his people, refused to have anything [more] to do with it.”

Later Thursday night Tleyuk and the Lower Chehalis showed their disgust by mocking Stevens and the treaty commissioners. Swan explained that “they behaved ... very disorderly ... firing off guns, shouting, and making a great uproar.” Stevens, a former military officer not prone to ignoring insubordination, particularly of this sort, dissolved the council the following morning.
Sketch of the Chehalis River treaty grounds drawn by James Swan. Governor Stevens tried to dictate the terms of a treaty here but failed. He proved no match for a delegation of southwestern Washington tribal leaders skilled in diplomacy.

It was not so much their conduct but the Lower Chehalis’s motivation that had proved wholly unacceptable. Unknown to Stevens, tribal leaders late Wednesday (February 28) had devised a counterproposal to break the deadlock in negotiations. The native delegations had resolved that five groups—the Cowlitz, Upper Cowlitz, Upper Chehalis, Satsop, and certain mountain peoples (remnants of the Kwalhioquas)—would unite on a single reservation, its boundary extending ten miles from the mouth of the Black River to the lower end of Smith’s Prairie. In addition, all native peoples west of the Wynoochee River, except the Quinaults, would consolidate. The plan excluded three bands—the Chinooks, Wahkiakums and Quinaults—with whom the federal government would have to negotiate separately.

Introduced Thursday morning, the offer backed Stevens into a corner. To this point, strictly speaking, he had insinuated falsely that the location of the proposed reservation was a mystery since the American government would select where it should be. More specifically, several times he had made it known that he preferred an Olympic Peninsula reservation but that the council minutes, which contained the natives’ request for multiple reservations, would be forwarded to Washington, D.C., so that the “Great Father” could render an impartial verdict about which proposal to accept. Stevens failed to mention, however, that for two years he had promoted the Quinault River, that as both the envoy of the federal government and the official mouthpiece of the commissioner of Indian Affairs he had tremendous influence with the “Great Father,” or that Article Two of the proposed treaty already called for one reservation to be located between Grays Harbor and Cape Flattery.

Stevens now saw no alternative—he would have to admit what in all likelihood had become obvious to everyone present: the reservation would positively be established as stipulated by the terms of the draft treaty. This confession weakened Stevens’s position by showing him to have been less than candid—he had advised Yowannus, the Upper Chehalis head chief, that he would possibly locate the reservation in the interior, near Grand Mound Prairie. The proposed treaty also ignored the wishes of all tribal groups except the Quinaults—the reservation would undoubtedly be placed on their land.

Despite its implications, Stevens’s admission was not unintentional. The Indians’ proposal had harmonized not at all with his ideas. Tappan’s earlier warning, that the federal government would have to dislodge the southwestern peoples from their lands against their will, suddenly became very apparent. Thursday afternoon Stevens told the native delegations conclusively that they would either have to relocate voluntarily to a reservation of the national government’s choosing or face involuntary removal.

Feigning ignorance that the headmen had placed an offer on the table, Stevens acted as if he had no inkling of tribal desires. He informed the delegations that “the Great Father does it for them because they have no will of their own.” Then he contrasted what he perceived to be his more moderate program with the harsher ones carried out elsewhere; he introduced the “California” system (a policy never imposed in Washington Territory), which called for the summary expulsion of native peoples from their homes at the discretion of the federal government, leaving tribal members with neither land nor treaty.

Native leaders became more steadfast in the face of Stevens’s threats. Tleyuk bitterly opposed what was now the governor’s admitted intention to send the Lower Chehalis to the Olympic Peninsula. He confronted Stevens with the stark reality that he had journeyed all the way up the coast to Cape Flattery and found no fertile land; to the contrary, he had discovered the region to be nothing but “stones.” Realizing the disadvantage of going head-to-head against an adversary vastly more familiar with the attributes, or lack thereof, of the Olympic Peninsula, Stevens declined to dispute Tleyuk’s assertion; rather, he offered only the half-hearted concession that tribal members could graze their horses on any prairie lands not owned by settlers.

Upper Chehalis subchief Annannata picked up on Tleyuk’s line of questioning. Referring to the Medicine Creek treaty that allowed for three reservations, he demanded to know why other Indians had been granted reservations in their own country while the southwestern tribes were not. From the native perspective, this point was crucial. Annannata, son of the noted and
recently deceased Upper Chehalis headman Sennetea and the grandson of Wakwinam, remarked perceptively that his people “had already yielded a great deal. Five bands who knew but little of one another had all agreed to come to one place.”

Ninety-three-year-old Cowlitz head chief Kishkok agreed. He expanded on Annannata’s strikingly accurate premise; he suggested that it had not been the whites who had sacrificed for the sake of the treaty but the native delegations. It was they who were relinquishing “the whole of [their] country.” Kishkok would consent to the treaty, but only reluctantly and without the support of all Cowlitz. At least one other tribal headman would not sign and was urging Kishkok to do the same.

Evidence not in the official record suggests that opposition to the treaty may have been even more substantial than has previously been thought. Queen Sally was an influential and vocal Lower Chehalis/Willapa leader. She was the widow of Chenamus, who was the eldest son of deceased Lower Chinook head chief Comcomly. After Comcomly died in 1830, Chenamus served as head chief until his death in 1845; Queen Sally died in 1860. Queen Sally attended the Chehalis council and, according to George Gibbs, “put in her oar” with considerable effect against a removal. Her stance indicates that together the Lower Chehalis, Lower Chinooks and Willapas formed a formidable coastal coalition blantly hostile toward the treaty. So strong were their convictions that, as the tribal delegations were dispersed at the council’s conclusion, a Lower Chehalis healer shot a young Queets headman for having supported Stevens’s terms. The Indians’ rebuttal placed Stevens squarely on the defensive. From now on the native delegations would see him at his diplomatic worst.

Yowannus was “a poor man . . . of ‘royal’ lineage.” The Upper Chehalis had passed over Sennetea’s direct descendants and made him head chief, at least in part because tribal members believed he would vigorously oppose any treaty that required relocation outside Upper Chehalis boundaries. Now Yowannus was reaffirming the Upper Chehalis willingness to occupy a common reservation. Stevens, however, would have none of it; he retorted that the resolution wholly represented an impossibility. Two settlers were already living on the land selected and other Americans owned a sawmill next to the creek the native peoples wanted.

Stevens’s disposition continued to deteriorate. Tribal headmen were pressing him to retreat from his position while refusing to budge from theirs. In a telling statement borne out of both frustration and impatience, Stevens pleaded at one point far into the discussions: “I want them to listen to what I say. They don’t listen but repeat the same thing.” He then threatened the Indians with the California system again; from Annannata he demanded to know how they would like that policy carried out where [the government] did not ask them, but simply put them on a reserve? Alarmed at such a thought, Annannata emphatically responded, “No, indeed!”

The governor was unrelenting at this late stage. He repeated his previous ultimatum: either move willingly or be forced onto a reservation without the privileges of a treaty. “It comes to that finally,” he bluntly but accurately admitted. Tleyuk responded combatively: The Indians could not “understand anything about it.” In shatters anyway, the negotiations broke off.

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After the stalemated Chehalis council, Stevens's original intention had been for Indian agent Michael Simmons to meet in the spring or summer of 1855 with the Quinaults and Quileutes. He considered this no arduous task since he had already consented to a treaty at Cosmopolis. Concurrently, he would continue the treaty process east of the Cascades.

When he returned to Olympia from the Blackfoot council, Stevens planned to reopen negotiations with the Chehalis and other southwestern nontreaty Indians. He wrote to Commissioner Manypenny from the Bitterroot Valley in July that he anticipated little difficulty in bringing all under agreement except the Lower Chehalis and Lower Chinooks. Congress would have to provide specifically for the resettlement of those bands, he advised, by "ordering their removal and making the necessary appropriations." Stevens was surely correct on the last point. Lower Chehalis resentment toward the federal government remained strong. At Grays Harbor in March 1859, members of Tleyuk's band murdered Annannata after they learned that he had served as a guide to Indian Affairs officials.

Stevens soon found reason to revise his treaty-making plans. Simmons's conclusion of the Treaty of Olympia—negotiated with the Quinaults, Quileutes, Queets, and Hohs on July 1, 1855, signed by Stevens in Olympia on January 25, 1856, and ratified by Congress on March 8, 1859—buoyed the governor to entrust him with responsibility for mediating with the Chehalis. In an August 31 dispatch sent from Fort Benton, Montana, Stevens asked Simmons if he could convince the Upper Chehalis and adjacent Indians to accept terms that allowed for one or two reservations. In concluding the communication, the governor wished Simmons "success" in the anticipated council.

The Yakima War destroyed any chance of that happening. Indian agent Andrew Bolon was killed three weeks after Stevens wrote to Simmons. Another option, to merge the Upper Chehalis with the Nisquallys, also came to nothing because of the onset of hostilities. As Stevens lamented to Commissioner Manypenny later, "the breaking out of the war [had] marred" his plans.

The change in course proved permanent. After the fighting stopped, Stevens felt that he lacked the authority to reopen talks. In responding to a settler's suggestion in January 1857 that the federal government treat again with the southwestern peoples, Stevens said that he would pursue no such undertaking with the Cowlitz or Chehalis, or any other group for that matter, until the Indian Office ordered it. Those instructions never came. Not expecting an offer to treat approaching anytime soon, if ever, the Upper Chehalis forfeited title in 1864 to nearly a million acres in exchange for federal recognition of a small executive order reservation.

Although in many ways it seems otherwise, Stevens was not an enemy of the American Indian. He genuinely believed his treaties to be the best protective and defensive measure tribes had to combat white emigration, which had weakened them permanently and would continue to diminish their bargaining position. A more sophisticated negotiator, of course, would have found a solution satisfactory to both Indians and federal policymakers. On the other hand, a less principled one would have forced removal to the Quinaults River at any cost. Considering the level of native resistance, the Chehalis council's only real chance for success depended on Stevens's manipulating policy and then exercising his personal influence with Commissioner Manypenny and Congress to ensure ratification of the treaty. Such strategy apparently required more than Stevens was willing to give.

In his analysis, the refusal of the southwestern peoples to come under treaty constituted a drastic miscalculation on their part, one formed out of a severely distorted view of reality. When agent Michael Simmons lectured the Indians that they were "half asleep," he did so in an attempt to persuade them to reconsider their circumstances. Unfortunately, the treaty left too much unsettled about what the native peoples' futures would be. Simply put, Stevens was unable to convince the southwestern delegations that life on an Olympic Peninsula reservation would equate closely with life as tribal members then knew it living on their own indigenous lands.

Other factors influenced negatively as well. Although the southwestern Indians stood on the high ground in a moral sense, Stevens realized that justice amounted to little at the bargaining table. Probably figuring that tribal distinctions would eventually have to be dissolved for assimilation to occur, Stevens also viewed the native groups as more homogenous than they were. And always in the back of his mind loomed the Anson Dart treaties. Congress had refused to ratify those documents for reasons strikingly similar to what the native delegations were now proposing: too many reservations to hold too few people. Stevens hoped that a single reservation on the Quinault River would correspond positively with what he perceived to be the southwestern peoples' urgent need to come under treaty. At Cosmopolis, competing ambitions rendered the two positions irreconcilable.

Cary Collins is a doctoral candidate in public history at Washington State University. The focus of his current research is the Chemawa Indian School of Salem, Oregon.
During the decade before World War I, before automobiles became a reliable means of transportation in Washington, motorcycles were hugely popular. In 1911 there were more than 100 makes of motorcycles nationwide, each vying for dominance in a rapidly expanding industry. By 1920 only a handful of manufacturers remained.

The Pope motorcycle in this photograph, taken at Johnson's Garage in Tenino about 1915, may have been in the garage for repairs or recently purchased by the owner, Leslie Johnson. The cycle is obviously the center of curiosity with the younger crowd at the garage. Note the bicycle-type seat, the pedals for starting and braking, the swept-back handlebars and absence of a headlight.
The old adage, "Don't take any wooden nickels," is probably pretty good advice. However, there are exceptions to just about any axiom, and Tenino, Washington, proved to be one of them.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s wooden money became legal tender in Tenino and, although no nickels were produced, the uniqueness of its wooden emergency money became famous all over the world. The experiment proved that currency does not have to be in paper notes or metal coins to be accepted when it is backed both by reasonable assets and public trust.

The Citizens Bank of Tenino closed its doors in December 1931—one of many across the nation and of more than 1,000 in the fourth quarter of that year. The closing of the bank in the small town in southern Thurston County was a devastating blow to the community. Depositors lost access to their accounts and local businesses faced a grim Christmas season, not to mention an even tighter economy in 1932.

Tenino Independent editor Don Major had always been interested in the use of scrip in emergency situations and suggested to the chamber of commerce that they print scrip to be issued based on the assignment of a percentage of the funds in a depositor's account. The merchants would in turn accept the chamber-backed scrip until the receivers of the bank had liquidated its assets and released the proceeds. Almost all of the town's businesses agreed to accept the scrip at face value.

The Tenino Chamber of Commerce conferred with the receivers and were assured that they could comfortably accept assignments by depositors of at least 25 per cent of their accounts if they wished to try their experiment with scrip. (The receivers eventually paid off nearly 95 cents on the dollar, far better than the national average.) Based on this assurance the chamber decided to take the plunge and printed paper scrip in the denominations of 25 cents, and one, five and ten dollars. The 25-cent scrip was printed on buff ledger paper, while the larger notes were produced on lithographed coupons. All were signed by three chamber board members: Dr. F. W. Wichman, the local doctor; Dr. Al Meyer, the dentist; and Mr. Major, publisher of Tenino's weekly newspaper. Depositors, anxious to have access to at least part of their savings, were happy to join in the economic experiment and signed over portions of their accounts to the chamber.

The idea worked admirably but received little attention elsewhere. It was not until editor Major was printing his personal Christmas cards a week or two later that the idea of wooden money was born. Major, always interested in trying out new ideas, was printing his cards on a new product called "licewood," a thin cedar veneer that was being produced in the Grays Harbor area. As he was printing on the veneer he had the idea to use one of the scrip forms to print a wooden 25-cent piece as a gag. The next
Tenino's Depot Museum

The Tenino Depot Museum in the Tenino City Park was originally situated on the Northern Pacific main line before being moved to the park in the early 1970s. The unique sandstone depot was built in 1914 for the opening of the NP's Point Defiance line. The depot was operational until the mid 1960s. The museum not only has a fine display of Tenino's wooden currency of the Depression days and later, but has a working print shop that features the original press used to print it. Also in the museum is a fine collection of artifacts and photographs that illustrate the town's long history.

The Tenino Depot Museum is open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, from noon to 4:00, May through Labor Day.
morning he walked across the street to the Jiffy Lunch, ordered a cup of coffee and tried to pay for it with the wooden quarter. The proprietor balked at first, but then decided it was a rather interesting method of payment. Besides, all he could lose was a cup of coffee and twenty cents in change! The transaction set off a chain reaction that soon made the little town of Tenino famous all over the world.

The wooden quarter story spread around town quickly, and a few chamber members began to see the merits of the idea. They decided to have Major print a few more pieces and see how they were received.

Only a few pieces were printed in December 1931, more as curios than as prospective legal tender. These original pieces proved to be very fragile utilizing a single thickness of the slicewood. The thin cedar veneer broke rather easily along the grain when not handled carefully, so it was decided to laminate two pieces of slicewood with a sheet of bond paper between them for added strength. The lamination idea worked well and, with the original pieces of “lumber jack” getting considerable local comment, the Tenino Chamber of Commerce decided to print a completely new issue of scrip on wood using basically the same format as the paper scrip.

In February 1932 the first official issue of laminated wood currency, consisting of 25-cent, 50-cent and one dollar denominations, hit the streets. It wasn’t long before the Tacoma News Tribune sent down a reporter to do a feature story on Tenino’s battle to fight the Great Depression and the unique currency being used as cash in its stores. The Tribune gave the story a big spread and sent it out on the wire service where it was picked up and reprinted worldwide. Suddenly Tenino was “on the map” and the chamber office was flooded with requests to buy examples of its wooden money.

The fame continued, and soon the Tenino experiment was noted and recorded in The Congressional Record, with chamber officials following up by sending a sample set to President Herbert Hoover at the White House. The Tenino issue also was approved by the Comptroller of the Currency, making it the first “legal” wooden money in the history of the nation. Universal News photographers came to Tenino in March. Their coverage appeared in theaters across the country, sharing film footage of the Japanese occupation of Shanghai and the legendary Australian race horse Pharlap winning the Turf Classic at Agua Caliente. Sales of the wood money skyrocketed as requests from collectors and the curious swamped the chamber’s mailbox. A number of city slicker entrepreneurs popped up to offer their sales expertise for a piece of the action, but they were promptly turned down.

Meanwhile, Don Major was happily printing wood and keeping his print shop busy. Not so happy were Drs. Wichman and Meyer who with Major had to sign each piece with no remuneration at all for their services. With issues of 1,975 pieces in February, 4,255 in March, and 5,900 in April, they were all getting writer’s cramp, but at least Major was getting paid for printing the wooden currency.

“Dr. Wichman and I weren’t very happy with the arrangement,” Meyer said in an interview in the 1980s. “It was taking an awful lot of our time.” The chamber rectified the problem by offering the signatories a small fee for their services; later issues appeared with printed signatures.

All told, 36,975 pieces of “official” wooden money were printed in 1932 and 1933, with the latter issues of a different size and design. By the time the “emergency” was over and wooden money ceased to be legal tender, the chamber had sold over $11,000 of its “lumber jack” and had to redeem less than $1,000. With the proceeds, the chamber of commerce bought the building formerly occupied by the failed Tenino Citizens Bank, assisted the unemployed, and lent money to a local sandstone quarry operation as well as aiding with other civic projects. The experiment in emergency economics ended up paying big dividends.
The three chamber of commerce members whose signatures appeared on all of Tenino's Depression scrip—(left to right) Dr. Al Meyer, Don Major, and Dr. F. W. Wichman—pose in front of Citizens Bank with elderly Tenino pioneer T. F. Mentzer.

It should be noted, however, that the original paper scrip continued in circulation in Tenino until the liquidation of Citizens Bank was completed. Dr. Meyer commented that while the wood scrip received all the publicity, the paper scrip was actually more often used in local transactions. Most of the wooden quarters, halves and dollars ended up in the hands of souvenir hunters and collectors, and the majority of it was never in general circulation in the local stores.

Among the more notable people to add the Tenino wooden money to their collections were Egypt's King Farouk and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. Specimens went to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and to a number of banking museums around the world. Stories about the experiment in wooden currency were featured in national and international economic journals, magazines such as The Literary Digest and The National Pathfinder, and in major newspapers worldwide. Syndicated columnist Bugs Baer joked that Tenino should print its wooden money on slippery elm to prevent hoarding. All of this publicity brought in thousands of mail orders for the unique currency.

Tenino's success with wooden scrip attracted interest from other Washington towns. Blaine issued a series of round wooden pieces featuring the Peace Arch on the obverse in denominations of 5 cents, 10 cents, 25 cents, 50 cents and one dollar. South Bend issued "Willapa Harbor Currency" in 25-cent, 50-cent, one-dollar, five-dollar and ten-dollar denominations, and Olympia came out with "oyster money," a 25-cent piece of wood in the shape of an oyster shell. Several other Washington municipalities also issued wood pieces, but none after Tenino's issues of 1932 and 1933 was ever recognized by the federal government as legal tender. Since the Great Depression many types of wooden money have been printed for hundreds of community celebrations and events across the country, and those issues have also become popular collectors' items. Tenino, however, takes great pride in the fact that its original issues are considered the most valuable and desirable of them all.

The final "official" Tenino currency was printed in April 1933, but the town was not through with wooden money. In 1935 Don Major's press was turning out wooden tax tokens for a one-fifth-cent state sales tax passed into law before the state could provide the necessary tokens to implement it. About 50 different tax tokens were printed for various Tenino businesses—the most famous coming from staunch Republican Don Major's Tenino Independent. The Independent token featured a donkey printed in red with the caption, "Is My Face Red!" The tokens are quite scarce now and few collectors can boast a complete set.

Not willing to give up on a good thing, Tenino has, over the years, successfully issued many other pieces of non-official wooden money for a variety of community fundraisers. The Tenino Depot Museum still uses the original printing press and has an extensive exhibit of original and subsequent issues of wooden money.

This unique scrip, which evolved almost as a joke but grew into a literal gold mine and publicity coup, took a small rural town from the Depression doldrums and put it on the map to stay. Sixty years later the Tenino Chamber of Commerce is still receiving inquiries about its famous experiment in economics and fending off collectors hoping there are still a few pieces lying around the office. The last few redeemed pieces were sold years ago at face value and are worth many times that today.

Arthur G. Dwellely is retired publisher of the Tenino Independent and a former member of the Washington State Historical Society Board of Trustees.
COWΛTZ Memories

The article by Bruce Weilepp (“Slow Boats, Fast Water”) in the Winter 1996-97 issue of COLUMBIA brought memories. My father, Grant Gleason, was a boy being raised along the Cowlitz River when the Chester was hauling farm produce to Kelso and Portland. He mentioned many occasions of farmers hauling sacked potatoes to the river’s edge and waiting sometimes several hours for the Chester to make a landing. The boat’s crew and the farmers would quickly load the produce aboard.

Another product that was shipped by boat was cream. The cans were loaded by means of the farmer throwing the can so a boat hand could get it aboard. My father related how one can was missed by the deck hand and floated down the river. Sometime later it was reclaimed in a drift and put back aboard. It should be remembered that all the cans had the lids wired on. The cream that was sent down the river was probably sour as there was no refrigeration. Practically all butter was made from sour cream.

Fuel for the steamboat was secured by men cutting logs and stacking them on the riverbank. Several such log stations were to be found along the river.

Harry D. Gleason, Olympia

Correction

Society member Eckard Toy of Mount Hood-Parkdale, Oregon, reports an error in the Roger Daniels article in the Winter 1996-97 issue of COLUMBIA. On pages 36-37 Daniels describes the Hood River valley as having “1,400 fertile acres of pear and apple orchards.” According to Toy, the valley’s orchards of pears and apples total nearly 15,000 acres.

Additional Reading

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

They Staggered as if They Were Drunk


Uncle Sam’s Response to the Great Depression


Oceanography Comes to the University of Washington


Mary Richardson Walker


Negotiations or Dictations?


Wooden Money


In a broad-ranging and fascinating chronological work, Northwest journalism legend Lucile McDonald's life comes alive under the organization of her son Richard as editor. Gathered from Lucile's copious notes on her own career, A Foot in the Door is arranged into two parts: Part I covering the years 1898-1932, and Part II the years 1942-1966. The work gets a lot of its punch from being told in Lucile's own words. Much of the time the reader is immersed in this "you are there" treatment, feeling McDonald's hurt at her early disastrous job at Marshfield (Coos Bay) and her later triumphs at the Portland Oregonian and the Seattle Times.

The book benefits greatly from McDonald's simple, frank style. While noting that many male editors were sexist, she also mentions others who were fair to and accepting of female reporters, citing key editors who gave her a hand up. But McDonald clearly felt that it was the two world wars, with their drain on available manpower, that really created opportunities for women in journalism.

Thanks, no doubt, to her refusal to quit in the face of adversity, McDonald developed her own intuitive cleverness in getting the story, often going around closed doors rather than attempting to break through them. When faced with a reclusive Thomas Edison who disliked giving interviews, McDonald submitted her interview in questionnaire form, getting the information she needed and scooping the other reporters. Initiative was a McDonald hallmark.

Lucile McDonald's forthrightness, combined with her copious note-taking during this fascinating period of Northwest history, makes this book a good read. She made her name interviewing many of the region's most famous pioneers, thus serving as a crucial link between oral histories of the past and written records of the present.

In Rites of Passage, author Walter Crowley sets himself an ambitious goal: to state exactly why so many young people in the 1960s "tuned in, turned on, and dropped out." Crowley admits that it seems a bizarre and far-off world in which psychedelic drugs, "be-ins," underground newspapers, riots, wars, cultural and political revolutions, and demonstrations for almost anything were part of the accepted and normal lingua franca of the day.

Crowley concentrates on giving the reader a blow-by-blow account from inside "the Movement." Based on his own experiences as well as an exhaustive culling of past issues of Seattle newspapers, the book becomes almost numbing at times, recounting seemingly endless stories of demonstrations, protests and revolutionary rhetoric without any pause for interpretation.

Crowley's attempt at the end of the book to list the legacies of the decade quickly becomes a case of too little too late and a matter of assessing the results of the times rather than the purposes and motivations of the participants. Crowley is right to see the resurgence of grass roots political activism as a legacy of the 1960s; but he is far less persuasive when he blames drug laws for causing the "pandemic of illegal drug use," or when he pronounces "the Movement" as being responsible for the end of de jure racism. Perhaps such simplistic assessments are the reason he neglects his earlier promise to answer the "why" of the decade. His obvious gift in retelling his personal account of these years would have benefited from a more in-depth analysis than it received.

Michael McKenzie teaches ethics, philosophy and religion at Northwest College in Kirkland, Washington.

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You shall walk two paths ... yours and that of the White Man. Pick up those things from the White Man’s path that you can use.” Author Ben Smith employs these words of Crazy Horse, the legendary Sioux warrior, to introduce his readers to the biography of regional Indian education leader Emmett Oliver. In Two Paths, Smith tells the story of how his Quinault Indian friend rose from a humble birth in 1913 near Willapa Bay to become an influential leader in Indian education.

Writing in a reasonable, almost conversational style, Smith recounts Oliver’s early struggles with school: he dropped out twice, and was forced to “ride the rails” to reach Oklahoma when he decided to enroll in an Indian junior college. But Oliver followed a personal credo of “fish or cut bait,” and he persevered through school, eventually to become a successful Coast Guard officer, an innovative high school teacher, a counselor, and an athletic coach for both white and Indian teams. His career included working with Indian students at the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of Washington, and as Supervisor of Indian Education for the state of Washington.

Two Paths is an excellent resource for those interested in the philosophy and history of education, particularly Indian education. Oliver’s own experiences in the educational system and his efforts as a professional to improve education for Indians offer the reader important insights into the real world that challenges educators today. The book is also a good primary source for historians of the 20th century Indian experience. This reviewer personally liked the story of how his Quinault Indian friend rose from a humble birth in 1913 near Willapa Bay to become an influential leader in Indian education.

Reviewed by Eric Thomason.

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

Sometimes, no matter how dynamic the prose, certain subjects simply cannot be fully described by printed words. Happily, several Pacific Northwest firms now specialize in an alternate medium, that of video tapes, to tell stories that could not otherwise be told. A recent release from Stephen Sadis and Dan Fields, in association with Perpetual Motion Pictures in downtown Seattle, proves the point. “The Seattle-Tacoma Interurban Railroad” (1996, 45 min., $24.95) is a delightful, nostalgic look at the high-speed, electric railway that once connected the Twin Cities of the Northwest. Shown on PBS-TV, the tape can be purchased from the Tukwila Historical Society. Hundreds of old photographs are skillfully intertwined with the memories of rail historian Warren Wing to bring this story of the Puger Sound Electric Railway to life. For 26 years, beginning in 1902, millions of passengers used this 38-mile-long light rail system. Less than six months after the opening of Highway 99, however, ridership dropped off to the point where the line folded. Sadis, Fields and Wing tell an interesting story of transportation, the coming of rural electricity, and urban sprawl.

John Sabella & Associates, also of Seattle, an experienced producer of instructional videos, has created two excellent documentary videos about salmon fishing. “The Days of Salmon Traps and Fish Pirates” (1995, 30 min., $19.95), narrated by Stan Tarrant and produced by Bob Thorsen in conjunction with the Whatcom County Parks and Recreation Foundation, examines the most controversial form of salmon fishing. The paucity of Pacific Northwest film footage forces the producers to include scenes from Alaska, but the impact for the viewer is the same. “The Great Age of Salmon” (1994, 29 min., $19.95), with the same narrator and producer, is a product of the Whatcom Museum of History & Art. Featuring film footage that dates from 1926—some of it taken aboard a windjammer—Sabella this time presents the story of the Pacific American Fisheries Company of Bellingham, which sent fleets of fishermen to Bristol Bay, Alaska. Taken together, the two videos offer a solid hour of insight into the labor of Washington fishermen who looked north to fill their nets and traps.


Address all review copies & related communications to:

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Eric Thomason lives and works on Mercer Island where he is the director of religious education at St. Monica's Parish.
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<td>Washington Transit Advertising</td>
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<td>Leo Whiteford</td>
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<td>Dr. John H. Whitmer</td>
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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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WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, Washington 98402
206/798-5902; fax 206/272-9618

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS

The Organization of American Historians was founded in 1907 "to promote historical study and research in the field of American history" Constitution of the Organization of American Historians, Article II. Today the OAH continues to work toward this goal and remains an important vehicle for scholarship in American history. The Organization publishes the Journal of American History, Magazine of History, OAH Newsletter, and the Annual Meeting Program. Benefits of membership include discounts on all OAH publications, an insurance program, discount on Annual Meeting registration and travel, and the opportunity to apply for the OAH MasterCard, which carries many additional benefits.

Members receive the quarterly Journal of American History and OAH Newsletter, in addition to the Annual Meeting Program.

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http://www.indiana.edu/-oah
New Deal programs like the Works Progress Administration fostered projects aimed at putting Americans back to work. These two gentlemen worked on the Five-Mile Township street improvement project (c. 1940), one of many such efforts undertaken throughout Washington. See related article beginning on page 14.

AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

Bainbridge Island Historical Society
Ballard Historical Society
Bigelow House Preservation Association
Central Washington Agricultural Museum
Challum County Historical Society Museum
Cosmopolis Historical Society
East Benton County Historical Society
Edmonds-South Snohomish County Historical Society
Emmons Plateau Historical Society
Enumclaw Historical Society
Ferris Meeker Historical Society
Firecrest Cross and Heritage Association
Fort Nisqually Association
Fort Vancouver Historical Society of Clark County
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Friends of the Humanities
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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 Pierce County Historical Society
South Sound Maritime Heritage Association
Spanaway Historical Society
Summer 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
Wickaninnish Boat Foundation
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