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FRONT COVER: Alaska gold rush poster, 1899. One of a series of posters advertising ships departing from Puget Sound for Alaska, collected by Washington State Historical Society secretary Edward N. Fuller. (Special Collections, Washington State Historical Society) BACK COVER: The Klondike gold rush lured some 100,000 people from all over the globe. Pictured are stampede dogs and their dogs hauling supplies along the trail from White Pass to Lake Bennett. It’s likely the supplies, as well as the dogs, were acquired in Seattle, which became known as the “gateway to the Klondike.” (Aashel Curtis Collection, Special Collections, Washington State Historical Society) See related story beginning on page 24.
WHILE REVIEWING the roster of articles in this summer’s issue, I was struck by how thoroughly representative they are of the broad pattern of Washington history and our own editorial preferences. In this regard, I refer to the oral history of Wobbly Eugene Barnett, Lawrence Cebula’s analysis of Lewis and Clark’s journals, women’s history by Margaret Gribskov, Chuck LeWarne’s reflections on the suburbanization of modern Washington, Carl Schlicke’s bit of eastern Washington military history, and a piece by J. Kingston Pierce commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Klondike gold rush. Great themes all.

When I first assumed the responsibility of editing this magazine, John McClelland expressed concern about our being able to keep the pipeline full of articles. Well, the flow continues, and I trust you will enjoy this issue as much as any.

Speaking of rosters, I'm pleased to present the following list of individuals and organizations who were honored at the Society's annual meeting in May—truly an all-star cast of award-winning historians and volunteers:

JOHN M. MCCLELLAND, JR., AWARD for the best article in Columbia Magazine
Stephanie Lile

CHARLES GATES AWARD for a contribution to the Pacific Northwest Quarterly
Cary Collins

DAVID DOUGLAS FELLOWSHIP for local history development
Aleta Zak and Chris Elrich

ROBERT GRAY MEDAL for lifetime achievement
Keith Murray

R. LORRAINE WOJAHN AWARD for volunteer service at the WSHS Research Center
Sylvar Klee

PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP AWARDS for contributions to multicultural understanding
Angel Lombardi
Peter Campbell

JEAN RICHARDS AWARD for volunteer contributions to the State Capital Museum
Grace Marohn

WASHINGTON STATE HISTORY MUSEUM ROLL OF HONOR for contributions to the building of the new museum
W. W. Philip
Reflections on the Evolution of an “Edge City”

By Charles P. LeWarne

SOMETIMES I PICTURE Norman Rockwell walking down Main Street in the town where I grew up, puffing on his pipe as he tips his hat to friends and occasional strangers, pausing to converse with more than a few, maybe even sketching Dr. Brobst in his home doctor’s office. I am sure the famed illustrator never visited my hometown, but now I realize that it was his kind of place. Spreading out from Main Street, modest frame homes appeared amongst vacant fields and small wooded lots. Here and there a church steeple peeked above fir trees and maples. The red brick rectangles of our grade and high schools faced each other across—School Street, of course. People knew each other. Life was neither exciting nor dull. Yet, my hometown was as comfortable and secure and friendly as any small town might be in the 1930s.

The small town of my childhood was Bellevue, Washington. Yes, that Bellevue, with over 100,000 residents, glass-encased high rises, fashionable boutiques, architect-designed homes, and parking garages infested with BMWs. A condominium has replaced my family’s bungalow on the southwest corner of 100th Avenue Northeast and Northeast Fourth Street, and four blocks north the soil of our wartime Victory Garden lies buried beneath the multilevel Bellevue Square parking garage. The four school buildings I attended have not been merely demolished but eradicated. The shell of the building that was my parents’ ten-cent store has been enlarged into an Italian ristorante on a schizophrenic Main Street torn between quaintness and sophistication.

My generation has lived through and expected change—

ABOVE: A thriving Main Street, c. 1947. By this time Meta Burrows’s Lakeside Drug, the hub of Bellevue social life, had moved a couple of doors down from its original location on the corner of Main and School streets.
Students and staff pose at the Main Street School, which later became Bellevue's first city hall.

A PIONEERING PHASE THAT began in 1869 saw a tiny village rise along Meydenbauer Bay on the eastern shore of Lake Washington. By 1886 the place had become "Bellevue," a not uncommon French corruption of "beautiful view." A few stores, churches, schools and community clubs served the needs of the developing town.

By the time of my childhood Bellevue was well into its second life, a small town similar to thousands of others across the nation that have been romanticized and ridiculed by the likes of Hamlin Garland and Sinclair Lewis, by radio soap operas, Norman Rockwell paintings and Andy Hardy movies. In the 1930s many locals commuted daily to the city just across the lake, but few would have called Bellevue a Seattle suburb. It was a distinct place, a small town that seemed separate from the larger world.

On one corner of Main Street and Bellevue Avenue (now 100th Avenue Northeast) stood a frame grade school enlarged since its 1892 beginnings, on another corner the three-story Masonic Hall, and on a third the European-style Wegner's Inn that catered to round-the-lake tourists. The fourth corner held a couple of decaying vestiges of early stores. From that intersection Main Street sloped eastward four blocks past a medley of storefronts and connected building blocks to Bill Stennett's Shell station on Lincoln Avenue (later 104th Northeast and now Bellevue Way Northeast). On up the hill the Gothic outlines of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church marked the south end of the ridge east of town while the boxy bell tower of the Congregational Church defined the north end. Townspeople mainly lived north and west of these axes, some in fine homes on the slope above the bay, most in simple frame structures. Everyone knew or thought they knew or at least knew about everyone else. The passage of years may have romanticized memories and softened the reality of life during the Great Depression, but Bellevue was nevertheless a good place to grow up, better perhaps than we realized.

Where Main Street met School Street (now 102nd Northeast), Meta Burrows's Lakeside Drug Store was everybody's meeting place. There we took our prescriptions and purchased household necessities. But the dominant feature at Meta's and the center of town activities was the long soda fountain counter. For youngsters a stop there was a special treat, but on those round red stools oldsters gathered to visit, gossip and doubtless conduct business and reach agreements on civic affairs. Who can know all that transpired there? Many city centers of today seem contrived and artificial, but for Bellevue in the 1930s and 1940s, the natural heart of the town was clearly Meta's fountain; did not similar shrines dot the nation?

In the basement below the drug store giant printing presses rumbled and whirred amidst sights and smells of sticky black ink when Al and Elinor Whitney put out the Bellevue American once a week. Bill Crooker's grocery across Main Street was better organized and more modern than the crowded jumble at Henry Stream's market farther down. Most families probably shopped at both; owners and clerks knew us all, maintained credit accounts, and delivered. For that rare meal out, adults might visit Mae Carter's tearoom on the first floor of her Victorian gray home, which boarded whaling men from the little fleet that wintered on the bay. Families more likely devoured hamburgers, French fries and milk shakes in booths at Mrs. Mennefee's down around the corner. Ed Jenson's small barber shop, with its red and white pole out front, looked as if it had come straight out of a nursery book; Louis Contento's shoe repair shop was pungent with the odor of polish ingrained in the woodwork; and we learned to endure pain in the narrow dentist's office. But to kids the most foreboding and interesting storefront on Main Street was the tavern, its door cracked just enough to emit the aroma of stale beer and tobacco smoke; what mysterious goings-on took place behind those painted green windows?

Houses were scattered among vacant lots, small orchards...
and berry fields. The wooded lot next to my house was a place to hide out, build camps and pick wild blackberries, trilliums and hazelnuts. We had Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls and school activities, and we played with friends, but organized games or leagues were unknown. On the fringes of town and in the rich soil of Mercer’s slough were small truck farms, many run by Japanese Americans, and Sydnor’s blueberry farm shone purple on the eastern hillside each summer. When the little whaling boats, repaired and clean, took off for Alaska each spring, we who stayed home felt a personal tie to the distant northland.

The big yearly event was the Strawberry Festival, held on a June weekend. Its fame attracted thousands of out-of-towners, including the governor, Seattle’s mayor, and a well-remembered Indian chief in full regalia. The Women’s Club hulled gallons of local berries, which they spooned over shortcake and topped with real whipped cream. A royal court of high school girls reigned over festivities that included motorboat races and carnival rides. At Sunday dusk the Strawberry Festival ended with glorious fireworks sometimes sponsored—as the familiar orange logo at the finale revealed—by the Shell Oil Company.

Civic pride bristled when Bellevue was identified as being just south of Kirkland or north of Renton, larger towns we were linked to by automobile roads. The trip to Seattle by passenger launch or auto ferry could be an event. During my childhood the ferry docked at Medina, two miles away by car or an elderly blue bus. Then came a 20-minute ferry ride to Leschi Park on Seattle’s lakeshore and the cable car that clanged and jolted over hills and a trestle or two to Second and Yesler. Watching the conductor struggle with clutch and brake levers was sheer entertainment. Conventional streetcars continued the journey uptown.

Our community had its share of social divisions, quarrels, jealousies and a tiny collection of busybodies and characters. Yet we who lived in small-town Bellevue knew who we were and what we were and that we belonged. Life carried a sense of identity along with security and certainty. I remember mothers nodding heads one September that third grade would be a good year because we would have Miss Rudolph, and everyone expected to learn high school math from Mr. Odle. The mythology of small-town America usually brings to mind villages in New England or the Midwest. In the far Northwest, Bellevue was as representative of small-town America as a community could be.

World War II brought change. Over 50 Japanese-American families, including good school friends, were moved away, to their loss and ours. The old Main Street school housed a small army unit, the former whaling dock became a Coast Guard station, and a strange aircraft warning tower appeared atop Downey’s Hill north of town. The tiny Houghton shipyard five miles up the lakeshore expanded beyond belief and employed many Bellevuites, including women, while others traveled south to the Boeing B-29 plant at Renton.

A SINGULAR EVENT PRIOR to Pearl Harbor combined with postwar adjustments to bring about unimagined permanent change. In the summer of 1940 a four-lane highway on floating concrete pontoons linked the east side of Lake Washington to Seattle. Eastsiders had urged its construction and we proudly thought it “our bridge.” That bridge and the end of the war helped turn small-town Bellevue into Bellevue the suburb of the metropolis across Lake Washington.

On March 26, 1953, the Bellevue American announced Bellevue’s incorporation with the headline “WE’RE A CITY.” But a small item on that front page made the transition personal: “Death Takes Audrey Smith.” All my young life “Aunt Audrey” had lived kitty-corner from our house. She was that strong and sturdy person at the heart of numerous town and family activities. We ran to this registered nurse with cuts, bruises, aches and pains, sure that she would know what to do. Her front bedroom periodically became a maternity room where many Bellevue babies, my younger brother among them, were born. Audrey Smith organized and led the Camp Fire Girls in Bellevue, helped found a local league of Seattle’s Children’s Orthopedic Hospital, and aided in wartime civilian defense. But her primary role rested in being a source of advice, solace, medication, strength and cheering up. Every small town, I suspect, has such a person, but they became harder to distinguish in citified suburbs.

This 40-acre fruit and flower farm became the site of the Surrey Downs neighborhood, and the barn became The Surrey Playbarn theater. Some of the poplar trees still stand.
During the 1920s and 1930s ships of the American Pacific Whaling Company fleet wintered on Meydenbauer Bay.

More than formal political action, her passing alerted me that Bellevue was no longer the small town I had known.

After the war families across America had turned away from Depression and wartime deprivations to begin new and better lives, often outside but close to large cities. The post-war dream of a single family home with a two-car garage, a barbecue pit and a basketball hoop surrounded by gardens seemed easily possible on the east side of Lake Washington. There ample and attractive land was only a bridge and modern highway away from Seattle; Bellevue was as close to downtown as many residential districts within the city.

New housing was highlighted just north of traditional Bellevue by a development appropriately named Vuecrest. This planned subdivision covered 80 acres on slopes Pat Downey had homesteaded and where Japanese and American truck farmers had recently raised berries and vegetables. The hillside offered an all-embracing view of lake, city and mountains. Previously, views had rarely been considered essential to homesites; our conventional homes faced each other across streets. Now view became central to the design of a neighborhood where roads wound in circular contours below the crest of the hill, with many homes positioned for the best viewspots. The main entrance identified Vuecrest as a special place: rounded brick walls invited drivers up a gently curved roadway with shrubbery in the median. Water, sewer and underground power lines—but not sidewalks—were integrated into the Vuecrest scheme.

Architect-designed houses were required to meet certain restrictions. Often more expansive than those we had known, their construction blended brick, wood and glass, and many had dramatic hidden entrances, low roof overhangs and wide windows. Gardens were carefully landscaped. Developments like Vuecrest would soon become commonplace, but in the late 1940s the concept of a pre-planned and refined neighborhood was new—radically different from small-town Bellevue.

Many who moved to Vuecrest and similarly planned neighborhoods were young professionals just starting careers and families. Unacquainted with one another, they first sought to create the sense of community longtime residents had taken for granted. To most older residents, the newcomers scarcely seemed part of the "real" Bellevue, for their focus tended toward Seattle. Yet these new residents would substantially alter their adopted community.

The shopping area changed. Early on, longtime resident Jim Ditty built a cluster of stores and Kay Neumann a lumber yard and builders' supply store on opposite corners of an intersection a quarter mile north of Main Street. These stores aimed to serve automobile customers in contrast to the traditional Main Street, which was amenable to walkers. As close as they were, the two developments were not designed to accommodate easy pedestrian traffic between them.

Near that same intersection the Burrows and Warren families had lived and raised apples for several generations. But the family of Miller Freeman, a wealthy Seattle publisher and eastside resident, envisioned a large shopping center on
this property. Frederick & Nelson, Seattle’s leading department store, branched into suburbia to locate the flagship store of the new Bellevue Shopping Square, which boasted of space for 500 cars. On the perimeter appeared the Bel-Vue Theater, our first permanent movie house, and the Kandy Kane, a coffee shop that rivaled and then replaced Meta’s fountain as the meeting place of Bellevue business people. The most striking feature of the perimeter was the Crabapple, a notable restaurant that attracted diners from throughout metropolitan Seattle. The entrance circled an ancient madrona tree. Its limbs reaching out to greet people and twinkling with thousands of lights each Christmas, the madrona came to symbolize the new Bellevue, even more than the Square’s official symbol, a “forest spirit” hewed from cedar by Dudley Carter.

“[D]edicated to the belief [that] people living in the suburbs and country are entitled to the same conveniences of cities without the inconveniences of cities,” the Bellevue Shopping Square aimed to answer every retail need. An early addition was the Food Center, which advertised “one-stop food shopping,” soon joined by clothing stores, a pharmacy, a camera shop, an appliance store, a barber shop, and eventually J. C. Penney’s. One of the nation’s earliest shopping centers, Bellevue Square was a prototype of later ones and was eventually transformed into an elegant indoor mall.

The surge of population and business necessitated further change. Bellevue extended across hills to outlying areas where new housing and business districts appeared. Streets were surveyed and paved and sewer, water and power lines constructed. Bellevue’s streets seemed perpetually torn up as one aspect of the new infrastructure was built upon another. During the war the Overlake School District (now the Bellevue School District) had been formed by merging the high school with seven elementary districts. In 1949 a new high school building sprawled along a hillcrest southeast of downtown, and several dozen secondary and elementary schools and a community college were soon built.

Suburban Bellevue took on an air of pleasant sophistication as its small town atmosphere evaporated. A golf course abandoned during the Great Depression was exhumed and given new life, and a second was built east of town. In 1948 a one-time barn became The Surrey Playbarn, one of the Northwest’s early community theaters. The former Strawberry Festival was a wartime casualty; an arts and crafts fair that started in Bellevue Square boasts of being the granddaddy of similar events sprinkled throughout the region. At the head of Meydenbauer Bay, where city people had come to Wildwood Park for outings in early days, the newly prosperous built a yacht club. Riding clubs and “horsy” neighborhoods appeared in vanishing rural areas. “Over the bridge to gracious living,” beckoned a promotional brochure. Yet, the old Bellevue was more than a vestige; old-timers might long for the former, simpler time, but many hesitantly entered into the newer activities, proud that their community had been discovered.

When Bellevue Incorporated in March 1953, it had 5,940 residents. By 1960 there were 13,000, and over the next decade the population increased more than fourfold, making Bellevue the fourth largest city in the state. The population reached 80,000 by 1980 and passed 100,000 in the mid 1990s. Annexations stretched city boundaries and added citizens as Bellevue acquired whole new subdivisions—Lake Hills being the largest—and crept east to touch Lake Sammamish. As early as 1956 Bellevue received “All-American City” recognition for ably handling rapid growth. But its orientation remained toward Seattle. Automobiles commuting across the floating bridge replaced the former ferry run, and morning and evening runs of the Overlake Transit System were crowded with Seattle workers. In 1963 a second floating bridge linked nearby Evergreen Point with Seattle. Interstate 405 later sliced through Bellevue and en-
An aerial view shows home construction on the curving streets of Vuecrest.

abled north-south drivers to bypass Seattle while enhancing eastside travel.

Perhaps Bellevue was predestined to pass from small town to suburb, but the most recent phase—that of a relatively self-sufficient metropolis or “edge city”—was not inevitable. Bellevue was rapidly outgrowing its strictly suburban orientation to become a distinctive metropolitan center; it dominated the east side and influenced other cities, including Seattle. New subdivisions, often planned with meticulous care, burgeoned east of downtown as did shopping centers highlighted by the Crossroads. Complexes of businesses and office parks sprang up. The construction in 1956 of the Puget Sound Power and Light headquarters in downtown Bellevue introduced an era of multistoried office buildings, but its four stories were soon dwarfed. Puget Sound Power and Light also foreshadowed the presence of other firms headquartered in Bellevue. Downtown developed a cluster of sleek high rises, some on hillside settings that accentuated their height. Indeed, “downtown” spread dramatically up and over the ridge to the east, then downward toward the I-405 freeway. New businesses stretched along the Bellevue-Redmond Highway—abbreviated in these hurried times to Bel-Red Road—and around the intersection of the I-405 and I-90 freeways.

There were other urban symbols. First-class hotels and a convention center appeared just off I-405 along with a distinctive city hall. The weekly Bellevue American, mainstay of the small town and suburban eras, merged in 1976 with a Kirkland newspaper to become the daily Journal-American, a sturdy alternative to the old-time Seattle dailies. Overlake Hospital, which opened in 1960, expanded into a major regional facility. And there was the burgeoning of fast-food restaurants, gas stations, used car lots and mini-malls. The erstwhile suburb also had its own ring of suburbs. Residents no longer needed to go to Seattle for the daily necessities; indeed, Seattleites increasingly came to Bellevue to work and shop, and for medical attention and other services.

The 1990 census confirmed impressions that Bellevue’s population had become increasingly cosmopolitan. During the 1980s the minority population increased at twice the general rate until almost 15 percent of the people and one of every four school children were of minority races, largely from Asian and Pacific Island countries. Over 11,000 residents spoke a language other than English, and almost half of those had limited English-speaking ability. The city established a Cultural Diversity Task Force that few would have thought necessary a few years earlier.

Distinctions between neighborhoods of greater and lesser affluence became more noticeable, but home ownership remained high. Along the lakeshore and in such suburbs as Medina and Hunts Point, new homes were increasingly palatial. However, neighborhoods such as Lake Hills, built during the suburban era, marked much of the community, their ranch style and split-level homes clustered on winding streets and ubiquitous cul-de-sacs. Near downtown, condominiums and large apartment buildings often catered to a citizenry older than the general population. But if the median household income in Bellevue ($49,831 in 1996) was comfortably higher than King County as a whole, more and more citizens lived below the poverty level. Growth presaged other problems of increasing traffic, crime and educational needs for adults. Moreover, business people and planners now voice the worry of older cities—that Bellevue’s “downtown” has come to lack a sense of identity.

Changes in the workplace were arguably even more defining. Traditional suburban areas had been “bedroom communities” emptied each morning by commuters bound for work, shopping and school in the nearby metropolis. By the middle 1980s demographers noted a new trend: more and more eastsiders were remaining there to work in stores, office buildings, distribution centers and light industries. Both established firms and new ones opened corporate headquarters.
in Bellevue, including several of the region's largest. Before it crossed city lines to Redmond, Microsoft began its rapid climb to software supremacy in Bellevue. Moreover, Bellevue became a popular destination for shopping, dining and entertainment as well as host of conventions and trade shows. Bellevue has the business and the busyness to suggest it is a city in its own right. One could—and doubtless many people do—live, work and play in its environs without ever going to the larger city whose high rises are visible on the western skyline.

A 1991 BOOK BY Joel Garreau, a Washington Post journalist specializing in urban sociology, popularized the term “edge city” to describe a new urban center close to a well-established city but having distinct urban characteristics and a high degree of self-sufficiency. Garreau’s “full-blown Edge City” had to:

- Contain at least five million square feet of office space and 600,000 square feet of retail space,
- Have a workday population that marks the location as primarily a work center rather than a residential suburb,
- Be perceived locally as an end destination for a wide mix of daily activities including work, shopping and entertainment,
- Have been essentially residential or rural 30 years earlier.

Garreau identified 123 edge cities across the United States, but in Washington only Bellevue met his criteria. As if to confirm the choice, the author in 1991 keynoted a three-day conference on the “Emerging City” at Bellevue’s new luxury hotel, the Hyatt Regency.

The complex known as Bellevue Place includes the Hyatt Regency Hotel and dominates downtown Bellevue in the 1990s.

A stroll along today’s Main Street helps define the Bellevues I have known. Main Street languished while suburban growth shifted the town’s business and social center northward. Now “Old Bellevue” is experiencing a renaissance. It remains only two lanes wide with parallel parking spaces, but one is quickly caught up in the rush of traffic. Venerable buildings stubbornly remain among those of later origin. A massive condominium complex engulfs the McKee Block where seven storefronts retain their familiar images. Main Street shops are upscale and fashionable. One can buy an espresso in several, including the old bus garage, Louis Contento’s former shoe shop, and the present-day tobacco store where Pentecostals once held Sunday worship.

The 1892 school building that later housed offices of the newly incorporated city was replaced in 1965 by a Chevron station. The 1916 structure that was my father’s hardware store before my time is now a bicycle shop painted a brilliant green. Up the street, Mae Carter’s old house is obscured behind a nondescript building from the 1950s; a used book store occupies the front room where she served meals. Meta’s Drug Store has long been occupied by The City of Paris, which sells elegant bath furnishings. A few blocks north, School Street has been closed and the buildings we attended torn down to make way for “Downtown Park.” This expanse of lawn, footpaths and gardens centering around a gently flowing, circular canal and a broad waterfall may well become the refreshing and elegant park in the heart of a metropolis that its designers intended.

Toy’s Cafe, long ago the Bus Station Cafe, is the oldest continuous business on Main Street. Two doors away, family members still operate the Bellevue Barber Shop that Norman and Ward Russell opened in 1947; their collection of high school yearbooks lines one wall. Across the street in its old location the tavern from my childhood retains its former role, but with a difference. It has expanded a storefront west from the original corner. Large clear windows have replaced the dark green panes and create an open, airy atmosphere where young professionals and college students enjoy tostadas and Mexican beer beneath an array of hanging piñatas. Perhaps the tavern as much as anything symbolizes the changes in the Bellevues I have known. The ghost of Norman Rockwell visits Bellevue today only where his illustrations grace prints, coffee mugs and greeting cards in upscale shops.

Charles LeWarne, a retired high school teacher from Edmonds, is author of three books and numerous articles on Washington history and a trustee of the Washington State Historical Society.
EUGENE BARNETT was one of eight members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) convicted in 1920 of murder as a result of a 1919 Armistice Day raid on the Centralia, Washington, IWW hall by American Legionnaires. Jailed in 1920, he was released in 1931. A decade after his release, probably sometime in the first half of 1940, Barnett visited the San Francisco Bay area where he met Ben Légère, a Wobbly and One Big Union (the Canadian equivalent of the IWW) activist. At that time, Légère worked for one of the New Deal cultural relief organizations and had access to recording equipment.

Légère recorded Barnett’s 34-minute account of the Centralia events. This may well be the earliest recording of a unionist discussing his involvement in a labor struggle. During the Centralia affair four members of the American Legion were killed and Wobbly Wesley Everest was lynched. Centralia became a prominent labor case equivalent to the turmoil over the Sacco and Vanzetti and Mooney-Billings cases.

Substantially different views existed during the trial and continue to the present day. Barnett’s recording, what would nowadays be referred to as a recorded oral history or “vocumentary” (vocal documentary), represents Barnett’s—and the IWW’s—experiences and perceptions of the Centralia affair.

What follows is a partial transcription (approximately 50 percent) of the Barnett recording. This transcript focuses on Barnett’s experiences in Centralia, at the trial of the Wobblies, in jail, and after his release from prison. Full transcriptions and cassettes of the recording are available at the library of the University of Washington, the Labadie Collection of the University of Michigan, the Walter P. Reuther Archive of Wayne State University, and Special Collections at the University of California, Santa Cruz and the Washington State Historical Society.

At the conclusion of the transcript is a report on the provenance of the recording and a follow-up interview with Barnett in Spokane on June 5, 1961.
EUGENE BARNETT'S CENTRALIA CONSPIRACY TRANSCRIPT

FRIENDS, I AM Eugene Barnett, one of the victims of the Centralia Conspiracy. The Centralia Conspiracy is an important case in labor history. It was a raid on a union hall, the Lumber Workers Industrial Union of the IWW, on November the 11th, 1919, by a group of vigilantes organized by the Southwest lumber barons of the state of Washington to break up the union there and drive it out—the lumber trust had decided that the union was becoming too strong for them.

[Barnett describes how he first encountered unionism when his father was recruited as a strikebreaker during the miners' strike of 1918 and was put to work as a boy in the mines. He explains how he became a strong union man before he moved west.]

When I came on out there in 1910, I found that the loggers up in the state of Washington were working 11 hours a day. They were sleeping 40 men in the bunkhouse, double-deck bunks on the wall. Just one little window—just one sash—not really a window, but just half a window, for a bunkhouse. You'd open the door and open the one sash and that's all the ventilation you got. You worked all day in the rain, you came in at night and hung your soggy clothes up around the one stove in the center of the room with wires going out from it in all directions like a spider web, and they hung there and steamed all night. And you slept there in that steam. That's the only bath you got. There was no other facilities for one; you got your steam bath there every night.

There was no place to wash your clothes. If you wanted to wash up, the only thing you could do was go out and hunt up an old coal oil can on Sunday and boil up your clothes like a hobo down in the jungle. There was no place to wash. No place to take care of it. If you moved from one camp to another you had to go with your roll of blankets on your back. You looked like a bunch of snails going down the highway.

So when the loggers began organizing, trying to build an industrial union for to do away with those conditions, I was strong for it. And I did everything I could to further the union idea and help build it up.

In 1919 when the lumber barons in Centralia decided to run the union out of Centralia, I was secretary of the United Mine Workers local at Kopiah, 11 miles out of Centralia. And they held a meeting in the Elks Club there about three weeks prior to this raid and selected a committee that gave F. B. Hubbard, the president of the Southwest Washington Lumbermen's Association there, power to create a secret committee to devise ways and means of running this union out of town. And they were so sure of themselves that they went and published an item in the daily newspaper there telling of this, telling how he had been empowered to select his own committee for this purpose.

On November 11th, the day the raid occurred, I was in town that afternoon. Happened to go in by accident, I had even forgot that it was Armistice Day. I had been out coyote hunting, out there in the hills, the previous few days because we were on strike. The national coal strike of 1919. It began November the 1st and I was out on that, all the miners were on a strike at that time. So I hadn't been taking much interest in what was going on and hadn't been keeping track of the days. I was going out and having some fun with my hounds out in the woods, chasing coyotes, enjoying myself, enjoying a vacation which the worker seldom gets only when he is on a strike or something like that. Of course it was a vacation without pay, but nevertheless I was enjoying it.

So I went into town that day and was visiting with a friend in a hotel adjoining this hall when [several words indecipherable]. I saw the parade come up the opposite side of the street. I saw them park two armored trucks out there, which they planned to load the men they took out of the hall in, as they had done on a previous occasion some months before when they raided another hall about two blocks from
there. They parked an army truck there and took the men out of the hall and they lifted them by their ears like they were loading hogs, and loaded them into this truck. Took them down between Centralia and Chehalis and forced them to run the gauntlet. Run between two lines of men armed with brass pipes and clubs and rubber hoses and whatever they had. If they had nothing else, they'd take a kick at them or plug them with their fist. Use whatever they had to beat them up and run them out. Told them to go on toward Chehalis and forced them to run the gauntlet. Took them down [between] Centralia and Chehalis and forced them to run the gauntlet. Run between two lines of men armed with brass pipes and clubs and rubber hoses and whatever they had. If they had nothing else, they'd take a kick at them or plug them with their fist. Use whatever they had to beat them up and run them out.

So they planned the same thing for this day. Before ever the trouble started, I saw men in the ranks of this parade with ropes and guns and gas pipes, so I knew what was coming. You could feel it there. They parked an army truck there and whatever they had. If they had nothing, they'd take a kick at them or plug them with their fist. Use whatever they had to beat them up and run them out. Told them to go on toward Chehalis and keep on going, not to come back.

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AS THE MARSHAL of the day rode on back along the ranks giving orders, these fellows who had turned around in ranks would make false starts. It wasn't the right order. They were waiting for a given order and when it came, Fred Cormeer, the marshal of the day, blew a whistle and they converged on the door of that hall from both ends of this contingent that had stopped there. Came in a wedge shape right for the door, and they smashed the doors and windows, and the first man that stepped inside the hall was shot down.

When I saw them attack the place, I thought there was going to be a fight, I didn't know that anyone in the hall had guns. I'd been in there a short time before and I hadn't seen any guns. There was only four or five men in the hall. So it was as much a surprise to me as to anyone when the shooting started. When I saw them make the attack I threw my coat, pulled it off and threw it on a sewing machine in the lobby of the hotel and started for the door. But before through a partitioned door back there, to come into the back of the hall, try to get in behind the boys and surround them. They was coming in there with guns, one fellow had a hand ax. So they came in and they broke this door with the hand ax . . .

While they were coming in, there was a man came in there who owned a grocery store there, Bill Scale. He is dying with cancer up there now, got one eye eat out and his ear off. I saw him not so long ago. And he came in through there, and I was acquainted with him because I traded at his store at one time. He had a grocery store there in town. So I told him to warn these fellows to be careful with the guns because the proprietor's wife had gone into the back and the way they were coming in there, their mouth drawn like horse hairs and everything, you could see that they were scared and I figured even if a chipmunk moved, why, they'd be apt to shoot. So I told him to tell them to be careful with those guns. He looked at me but he didn't make any reply. So the next fellow come in, a big strapping young fellow in sailor's uniform with a big navy coat. I told him myself to be careful, that there was a lady back there. He looked at me and made no reply but went on through.

So when they broke through in there, they found that the boys had ran out the back of the hall. Wesley Everest, the man who had been shooting from inside the hall, was a returned soldier himself. He was wearing his uniform that day and he was shooting with the gun that he had brought back from France. He'd been cited for bravery over there and had been denied his medal because they'd found that he was a radical. He told the boys that day, he said, "I fought for democracy in France and I am going to fight for it here." He said, "The first man that comes in this hall, why, he's going to get it." So he made his stand right in the middle of the floor that day.

After he ran out the back they chased him, shooting at him and him shooting back at them. They ran about a quarter of a mile from there, ran down to the Skookumchuck River. And he started to wade the river but
for some reason or other he turned around and come back. Came back on the bank and he said, "If there is an officer in the bunch, I'll surrender; if there's not, lay off of me."

They attacked him and he killed Dale Hubbard down there, nephew of the president of the Southwest Washington Lumberman's Association, the man who had planned this raid. Then his gun jammed and they overpowered him. He started—[hesitation]—he threw his gun in the river when it jammed and started to fight with his fists but he was no match for eight or ten men. So they overpowered him, put a hair rope around his neck, tied it behind an automobile and drug him back into town behind an automobile. They drug him down within a half block of the city jail and hung him on a telephone pole. There was people there clawing at him, jabbing him with bayonets, and no one in that crowd except one little woman that weighed about 90 pounds had nerve enough to say anything or do anything. Her daddy was a union man, a railroad man. So she slapped some of their faces, told them what a bunch of cowards they were, and pulled him down.

They took him and threw him in the corridor of the jail. He was unconscious from the beating and dragging and everything, and he lay there all afternoon. That night about eight o'clock, the mayor of the city turned the lights out all over the town, and while it was in darkness the mob went in and got him again. A man who is said to be a prominent doctor there used a razor on him, castrated him, like you would an alley cat, if you'd be that cruel. Then he washed his hands on the lawn of Timberman's, on Timberman's lawn there at a hydrant, and they went on down and hung him on a wagon bridge that crosses the Chehalis River about, oh, about a mile out of town.

Later in the night they came back, turned their headlights on the body, shot it full of holes, cut the rope, and let him fall in the river. Then they divided up the rope among themselves as souvenirs. I was back there a few years ago and they told me that some of the businessmen there still have their piece of rope. They show it around to special friends once in a while; piece of rope that Wesley Everest was hung with. Three days later the assistant attorney general came over there and he said, "We've got to get that body." He said, "If the unions get a hold of it, mutilated the way it is and get pictures of it in the Union Record and the other labor papers, why they'll have us pictured as a bunch of morons all over the United States." Says, "So we have got to get it." So they drug the river and got the body. Brought it up there and took some of his fellow workers out of the city jail there and forced them to bury him there out there along the railroad tracks.

That was the "unknown soldier's" grave he got for fighting for democracy here in his own land, fighting for the right of the workers to join a union of their own choice without the boss's permission, to do away with rotten conditions and long hours and low wages... .

AFTER THAT, EVERY man in that community that was considered anywhere sympathetic to the organization at all was arrested and thrown into jail on one pretext or another. Mrs. McAllister, the proprietor's wife in whose hotel I was when this happened, was arrested and placed in jail, and she was kept there for 27 days trying to make her say that I wasn't in there. She was an old lady, born in Missouri. She was 60-odd years old, but still they kept her in jail 67 days trying to make her lie. [Discrepancy between 27 and 67 days] But she was made out of too stern a stuff. When the trial came along, why she came up and told the truth...

So I was locked up and when the case was brought to trial I was charged with being the man who did the actual killing of

"Before ever the trouble started, I saw men in the ranks of this parade with ropes and guns and gas pipes, so I knew what was coming."

Warren O. Grimm, the vigilante for whom we was tried. We was tried for one man, there was four men killed there that day of the vigilante group and we were tried for one of them, for Warren O. Grimm. The prosecution tried to place him down at the intersection of the street instead of in the doorway leading the raid where witnesses for the defense said that he was and where I saw him.

At this trial they had a special school for their witnesses, about a block from the courthouse, where they trained them to go through different pantomimes and different things to say certain things. For instance,

FORT LEWIS SOLDIERS, 1920.
Guarding the Montesano courthouse during the Wobblies' trial.
PROVENANCE OF THE BARNETT RECORDING
by William H. Friedland

EUGENE BARNETT was a man of many facets; among other things, he was a miner, lumber worker, construction worker, craft worker and taxidermist, fix farmer, dictionary salesman, songwriter, poet, cartoonist and storyteller. He was also a member of the IWW and, between 1920 and 1931, a “class war prisoner” in Washington State Penitentiary at Walla Walla as a result of the Centralia events of Armistice Day 1919. Sometime in 1940 he made a recording of his experiences in the raid on the IWW hall in which four American Legionnaires were killed and Wesley Everest, an IWW member in the hall, was lynched. This addendum provides information on the discovery of the Barnett recording.

I found the original records at the headquarters of the IWW in Chicago, Illinois, around 1951-52. At that time Joe Glazer and I were recording our second album, Songs of the Wobblies, for Labor Arts, our self-created recording label. Joe was education director of the United Rubber Workers in Akron, Ohio, and I was working as an international representative of the United Automobile Workers in their Research and Engineering Department in Detroit. We had been brought together by Bill Kemsley, the education director of the Michigan Congress of Industrial Organizations Council and a great aficionado of workers’ culture and for whom I had previously worked as assistant education director for several years.

As we prepared to make our record, I happened to be in Chicago and dropped by the IWW headquarters with the hope that I might pick up some items such as silent agitators [these were gummed-label stickers that Wobblies could stick up on job sites urging fellow workers to join the IWW] to use in the program notes. My memory is that I talked to the general secretary of the IWW.

When I happened to mention recordings, the person I spoke to said that the Wobblies had some records. He searched and came up with a cardboard carton in which there were eight records. He didn’t know what they were about and there were no labels on the records. They were 78-rpm discs, obviously the product of a studio recording and not of a commercial character. I
The average prisoner serves about a year on parole in Washington, but being an extra bad man, being a union man and not guilty in the first place, I had to serve three years on parole.”

in the state penitentiary at Walla Walla. I served 1½ years of that sentence, and came out of there in May 1931 to take care of a wife that was dying with a cancer.

They would go to my wife and to my mother and they would tell them the same thing, that if they'd come down there and get me to quit the union why I could be out. They'd say, “Gene’s all right, but he got in bad company.” But I told them that I was in the very best company I could get in. I was in there with union men and there's no better men on the face of the earth.

The average prisoner, criminal, serves about a year on parole in the state of Washington, but being an extra bad man, being a union man and not guilty in the first place, I had to serve three years on parole. My wife died about nine months after I came out. I brought her back to Clarkson, Washington, and buried her there alongside her mother, and then I went back to work in the mines, but one of the first tasks I had when I came out of there was to help reorganize the local up there.

Centralia was not an isolated case. There’s cases like this coming up every day.

asked if I could borrow the records, promising to return them. He agreed and I carried them back to Detroit.

After I returned to Detroit I discovered that there were two identical copies of Barnett’s narration. The records were not in great shape. The UAW’s radio studio personnel edited the cleanest parts of each copy and made a single recording, which was put on a 33-rpm disk for me. This became my personal property. The original records were returned to IWW headquarters in Chicago along with the metal printer’s cuts of silent agitators that I had borrowed to illustrate the program notes of the Wobbly album.

In 1956 I left Detroit for Berkeley to work on my doctoral degree and met Archie Green, who was living in San Francisco. Archie was working as a carpenter but was already heavily involved with his “labor lore” research. I played the Barnett recording for him, and we decided that this was the kind of story that should have wider circulation for labor historians. Archie later encountered Ben Léglère, who had made the original recording.

The transcript of the recording was made at Cornell University when I was on my first academic appointment in the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations. However, neither Archie nor I had done anything to move the recording into a public venue.

In May 1995 Archie and I were mulling over various aspects of labor history and agreed that, even if we could not move the Barnett recording into broader circulation, we would archive the recording and relevant materials in a number of libraries where they would be publicly accessible. The material now resides at the five depositories mentioned earlier, including WSHS.

The cassette tape on file was made from two sources. I had the original record made for me by the UAW. Over the years the original disc developed a “bubble” in the first five minutes, which precluded copying. Fortunately, I had made at home an incomplete cassette recording of the tape’s first 26 minutes. The cassette that has been archived was made from my “original” disc and my cassette copy. Although there is a discernible difference in the recording quality between the two sources, both are clearly audible.

POLITICAL PRISONERS. 1923.
Fund-raising postcard by Barnett, drawn in Walla Walla state prison.

We are on the eve [1940] of another world war now, and there will be plenty of Centralias come up as this thing goes on and the struggle becomes more intense... So hold your unions together and build them bigger and build them stronger. That
is your one hope and your one salvation. Everything that we've got in the world today that is any good has been won by the union and has been won by a struggle and blood. Someone has had to pay for it. You don't get anything for nothing; if you do, it isn't worth having.

So I say to you once more to fight for your union, be loyal to it and build it up.

REVISITING GENE BARNETT—A REFLECTION
by Archie Green

IN RETURNING AFTER four decades to an unfinished project, I am reminded painfully of my haphazard journey from waterfront shipwright and building-trades carpenter to academic folklorist and advocate for public cultural programs. While still at the trade in San Francisco I had collected books, sound recordings and related ephemera on labor history. In the 1950s I had corresponded with Bill Friedland in Detroit and Joe Glazer in Akron concerning their Labor Arts discs. Thus, when Bill arrived in Berkeley for graduate studies, we shared experiences and hopes.

Among the treasures Bill brought from Michigan, I particularly valued the "life-story" recording made by Eugene Barnett, a Centralia Massacre survivor. Like other history enthusiasts, I "knew" Centralia through the writings of John Dos Passos, Ralph Chaplin and Louis Adamic. Gene's voice on his "vocumentary" brought a tone of exciting authenticity to complement my reading.

WITH THE introduction of LP albums (1948-50), it became feasible to group and reissue 78-rpm recordings of labor songs. However, labor-education staffs and commercial producers alike sadly neglected oral histories and field documents by trade unionists. In 1956 Bill and I resolved to make a start with Barnett's narrative by releasing it in LP format. What kept us from completing this task? In 1959 Bill traveled to Africa for field work and then on to Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations. That same year I put my toolbox away and enrolled in library school at the University of Illinois.

By the time Bill returned to California (Santa Cruz), I had found work as a folklorist and moved about from Washington, D.C., to Austin, Texas, and points between. Retiring in 1982, I returned home and renewed visits with Bill. We had both been productive and involved in family and community life. Over the years we gave scant attention to the Barnett project.

In 1995 Bill queried me on the possibility of depositing copies of Barnett's "vocumentary" with a parallel account in a history journal. Of course, I agreed—40 years was long enough to be burdened by an unresolved effort. Immediately, we faced difficulty in reconstructing the genesis and chronology of the original discs. Neither Bill nor I had any knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the original 78-rpm records he had found at IWW headquarters—a matter of potential concern to scholars.

Fortunately, I had donated my papers and field tapes to the Southern Folklore Collection, University of North Carolina. Among these tapes I could retrieve two cassettes made from reel-to-reel tapes during a visit I had made to Eugene Barnett in Spokane on June 5-6, 1961. [Copies of the interview tapes, but not transcripts of same, have been archived in the libraries where the Barnett recording is available.] Literally, these tapes brought bittersweet feelings to the surface. Barnett, a lifelong labor partisan, had paid "class-war dues" in Washington's penitentiary. He represented a platonic figure for labor activists: Blue Ridge Mountain native, Appalachian coal miner, Northwest logger, United Mine Workers rank-and-filer, Wobbly, Walla Walla prisoner, poet, cartoonist, craftsman, stubborn idealist, true believer.

Why had I neglected his story? How many similar tales remain buried in faulty memory and archive file? I cannot turn the clock back, but by joining Bill Friedland in salvaging a bit of Barnett's narrative, I touch a second mystery. Barnett's wife, ill with cancer, had begged Washington's governor to grant her husband freedom. Out of jail, he turned to silver-fox farming. After Mrs. Barnett's death, Gene sought help from friends in the labor movement. On a trip to San Francisco in 1940, nominally to sell fox farm shares, he met a pioneer Wobbly, Ben Légerè, himself a survivor of labor struggles in the East. During New Deal years, Ben, on relief,
had access to a recording studio (either the State Relief Administration or the Works Project Administration). He persuaded Gene to go to the studio in “free time” (an evening or weekend) to record a life story.

MEMORY IS A sieve; many particles slip away, a few remain. About 1958 I met Ben Légère, probably in Berkeley. I do not recall a formal interview nor any details; however, he did tell me that, indeed, he had made the Barnett “vocumentary.” Also, he gave me Gene’s address in Idaho. Correspondence led me to Barnett, and, in time, a visit with him in Spokane, where he confirmed that Légère had made the 78-rpm discs and that he had received a set from Ben.

Barnett recalled for me that Légère had described his relief job as making records of past political speeches for the Library of Congress. Evidently, Ben held both elocutionary and technical recording skill. He may have left personal papers noting the nature and date of his SRA or WPA work as well as his meeting with a Centralia “class war” veteran. As of the time of writing, I have been unable to establish Légère’s work location. We suspect he may have made the recordings at a studio sponsored by the WPA, the Library of Congress and the University of California, Berkeley, Department of Music. This studio was involved in recording folk music in California between October 1938 and March 1940 and employed 35 workers. (See Sidney Robertson Cowell, “The Recording of Folk Music in California,” California Folklore Quarterly, Vol. 1 (1942): 7-23.) Regardless, we are in Légère’s debt for Barnett’s story.

While seeking graphic art in Chicago’s IWW headquarters, Bill Friedland chanced upon the Barnett discs. He guarded, re-recorded and transcribed the discs out of a sense of their utility within the labor movement. My meeting with Légère was fortuitous in that I had no prior knowledge of his relationship with Barnett. Ben gave me Gene’s Idaho address. We corresponded; upon my first vacation at the University of Illinois, I tracked him to Spokane and made a few hours of tape detailing his life story beyond the facts and feelings of the studio session with Légère.

During my one meeting with Barnett he reflected that a man only lived after death when he had done something worthwhile in life. Viewing his prison years as unjust and vindictive incarceration by the state, he also saw his own role as exemplary for rebels. Gene’s 1940 disc continues to testify to the beliefs of those fellow workers who sought a polity more humane than that dealt them by industrial capitalism.

Despite extensive empirical and ideological commentary on Centralia, its story will be told again and again, if only out of the need within a community to confront and revise a troubled past. Having given himself entirely to the aspirations of working people, Eugene Barnett now adds a few chips to the Centralia mosaic. Beyond the grave, his personal narrative contributes to public memory.

During my one meeting with Barnett he reflected that a man only lived after death when he had done something worthwhile in life.

William H. Friedland is professor emeritus at the University of California, Santa Cruz. In earlier years he was an auto worker and engineer and a worker education representative with the Michigan Council of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Archie Green, professor of folklore retired from the University of Texas, is author of Only a Miner; Wobblies, Pile Butts, and Other Heroes; Songs about Work; Call’s Head & Union Tale. Presently he focuses on labor lore, vernacular music and public cultural policy.
Harbingers of Change

European Influences in the Aboriginal Northwest as Seen through the Journals of Lewis and Clark

Paul Kane's "Horse Race Among the Black Foot Indians." Though a few Northwest Indians did not use the horse, those that did quickly made the animal a centerpiece of their cultures.

By Lawrence H. Cebula
nearly a century. Plateau natives had embraced and adapted themselves to these new influences and were actively reaching out for further contacts with the world beyond the Plateau when Lewis and Clark arrived.

The arrival of the Corps of Discovery in 1805 marked the end of the Plateau's protohistoric era. This period can be defined as the gap between the time when European influences and effects reached a region and the time when Europeans arrived to colonize. Across the Americas, European influences in the form of horses, trade goods and exotic diseases were exchanged along native trade networks far in advance of European settlement. This period was usually one of wrenching change for native peoples and has figured prominently in recent ethnographic literature for many regions. The journals of the Lewis and Clark expedition, rich in ethnographic detail, provide a lens through which to view the protohistory of the Columbia Plateau.

Horses were the first harbinger of protohistoric change in the inland Northwest. Lewis described the "immense numbers" of equines owned by some Plateau tribes as "lofty, elegantly formed, active and durable," and some of them "fat as seals." The half wild herds between The Dalles and the Snake River especially impressed Sergeant Patrick Gass, who declared he had seen "more horses, than I ever before saw in the same space of country." Horses were acquired from New Mexico via Shoshone middlemen, and most Plateau natives had enthusiastically adopted their use by the mid 18th century.

The resulting revolution in transportation helped shift tribal boundaries, expand the seasonal rounds for subsistence, and increase and reorient native trade. Tribes of the southern and central Plateau whose main trading relations had been with coastal tribes now turned their attention to the south in an attempt to acquire more horses and trade goods. Lewis and Clark discovered that connections between the Plateau and the Spanish settlements of New Mexico and California were surprisingly direct. On several occasions members of the expedition observed horses with what they took to be Spanish brand marks; mules—almost certainly bred by Spanish New Mexicans—were reported as well. Northwest natives selectively acquired those bits of Spanish material culture and equine science that met their needs. Several members of the expedition noted that the Indians constructed their saddles according to the Spanish design. The Nez Perces demonstrated the Spanish method of gelding, which the captains judged "preferable to that practiced by ourselves."

Smallpox was the second major catalyst of protohistoric change to arrive in the Northwest. Plateau and coastal Indians alike were ravaged by smallpox at least twice before Lewis and Clark's arrival, first in the 1770s and again around 1800. Pockmarked survivors of the epidemics show up in several journal entries. Lewis noted how the disease "has destroyed a great number of natives in this quarter" and speculated that "the late ravages of the small pox may well account for the number of remains of villages which we find deserted on the river and sea coast."

How great were the population losses from these protohistoric epidemics? It is impossible to say, since we may never know how many Indians lived on the Plateau before the epidemics. Pre-Columbian population estimates depend heavily on guesswork and inference and cannot be considered reliable. The usual estimate is that 30 percent of Plateau Indians died in the 1770s and another 10 percent or so in 1800-1801, for a total population loss of around 40 percent. But such estimates do not allow for the possibility that native populations may have partially rebounded from their losses by 1805. Such recovery can be surprisingly quick. An otherwise healthy population experiencing a modest annual population increase of 1 percent could recover from a loss of 40 percent of its population in 35 years, and with a 2 to 3 percent growth rate, in as little as ten years. The speed of recovery depends on native fertility—which brings us to consider another disease topic.

Venereal diseases, which can severely reduce fertility, were common on the peripheries of the Plateau. When some expedition members formed dalliances with Shoshone women, Lewis worried about the possible effect on the men's health. And Clark wrote of the Clatsops: "Pocks & Venerial is Common amongst them," an observation that some of his men soon proved for themselves. But there are few references to venereal disease on the Plateau itself at this time. Indeed, Lewis specifically noted that "in my whole route down this river I did not see more than two or three with the gonococia and about double that number with the pox."

The difference was due to the more restrictive sexual mores of the Plateau Indians. Gass favorably compared the "honour of the Flatheads" to the "venery" of native women on the coast and on the upper Missouri, an observation echoed by many later explorers. The relative chastity of Plateau women formed a barrier to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in the proto- and early historic periods, a barrier that might have allowed native populations to rebound from at least some of their losses by 1805.

All across the Plateau the expedition met with Indians locked into debilitating conflicts with natives outside the region. Many of the Flathead men were away on an expedition against the
Blackfeet when the captains first visited their village. The Nez Perce spoke of their perennial conflicts with the Shoshone and showed off their war trophies to the expedition. Along the Columbia River the enemies were the Shoshone tribes to the south, and so great was the fear that virtually all the villages were located on the north bank of the river for protection against Shoshone raids. Everywhere that Lewis and Clark went, the Plateau Indians demanded guns of the explorers that they might defend themselves against their enemies.

Both the Blackfeet and Shoshone campaigns of expansion were fueled by protohistoric changes among those people. The Blackfeet and their allies exploited their superior access to firearms to force the Flatheads, northern Shoshone, and Kutenais to locate their winter camps behind the walls of the Rocky Mountains. These tribes responded by giving

"I Can't lern whether those Indians trade with white people or with Inds. below for the beeds & copper which they are so fond of... Those beads they trafick with Indians Still higher up on this river for Skins, robes &c. &c." William Clark, November 1, 1805, from his camp in present-day Skamania County.

The influx of European goods created an economic revolution on the Columbia Plateau, transforming what had been limited exchanges of a few status items with neighboring tribes into a regional system of trade that linked Plateau Indians to both the Coast Salish and Great Plains tribes. Natives sought to acquire trade goods in two ways. Some individuals traveled outside the Plateau to trade with other Indians or even directly with whites. Some Nez Perce men told Lewis that they had traveled to the Missouri River to trade, while another man from the same tribe said he'd gone to the coast and received some cloth handkerchiefs from a white trader there, a journey some Flatheads claimed to have made as well. A number of Plateau natives went so far as to alter their seasonal rounds to produce tradable surpluses of certain commodities, which they exchanged for European manufactures during the yearly trade fairs at The Dalles. Lewis and Clark noted that buffalo robes, bear grass, wasp, salmon pens, and camas roots were all produced by the Indians for this trade.

Finally, Plateau peoples were undergoing a revolution in knowledge at the
Meriwether Lewis drew this Chinook scimitar made of iron. Some of the European goods the Chinook acquired were in turn traded to other Indians who had yet to meet a white man.

time of Lewis and Clark. Expanded trade networks reduced village isolation and increased the geographical horizons of many natives. Lewis and Clark's journals provide many examples of this expanded geographical knowledge. The northern Shoshone described the courses of the Snake and Salmon rivers, the Great Basin, and the route to New Mexico via the Yellowstone country. The Nez Perce advised against trying to cross the still snowy Bitterroot Mountains in the spring of 1806 and instead sketched a route through southern Idaho that would later become the Oregon Trail. But the most impressive geography lesson might have come from the Chinooks, whose detailed instructions for travel to the Rocky Mountains point to frequent native travel across the length of the Columbia Plateau:

The Indians inform us that the Snows lyes knee deep in the Columbian Plains dureing the winter, and in those plains we could not git as much wood as would cook our provisions untill the driftwood comes down in the Spring . . . and even were we happily over those plains and in the woodey countrey at the foot of the rockey mountains, we could not possibely pass that emence bearier of mountains on which the snow lyes in winter to the depth of 20 feet; in short the Indians tell us they are imposable untill about the 1st of June, at which time even then is an abundance of snow [and] but a Scanty Subsistence may be had for the horses . . . .

This expanded geography was part of a larger knowledge revolution that transformed the Plateau in the 18th century. Unfamiliar European trade goods provoked questions—What sort of people made this? What are they like? Where do they live?—and stories of the white man were traded along with his manufactures. This exchange of stories probably set off the wave of prophecies regarding the approaching white men that swept the Plateau in the late 18th century. Indeed, one of the really striking things about the “first contacts” made by Lewis and Clark is how the Indians do not seem all that surprised to meet them. Curiosity seekers did sometimes crowd around the expedition to watch them set up camp, and most Indians expressed a strong interest in the expedition's possessions and intentions. But what is missing in the journals is the open-mouthed wonderment at the sight of strange white people that is so prominent and typical of first contacts elsewhere. When David Thompson explored the northern Columbia Plateau, for example, he reported that “the natives were at a loss what to make of us . . . [one man] felt my feet and legs to be sure that I was something like themselves, but did not appear sure that I was so.” At another village “the Chief . . . rode down to examine us, he appeared very much agitated, the foam coming out of his mouth; wheeling his horse backwards and forwards, and calling aloud, ‘Who are you, what are you.’” Lewis and Clark never met with a reception like this.

Disappointed at the relative lack of surprise, the captains resorted to gimmicks to get the reaction they expected. Lewis was forever producing his air-gun, and gleefully recording in his journal what “great medicine” the Indians
The Walula leader Yellepit helped Meriwether Lewis fill in the details of this map of the Snake and Columbia rivers. The maps of the Lewis and Clark expedition illustrate the expanding horizons of both peoples.

thought the device. Clark grew so exasperated by his matter-of-fact introduction to a Willamette Valley tribe that he secretly threw a piece of cannon fuse into the lodge fire to impress the laconic natives with his power.

What accounts for the blasé native reaction to what should have been such an amazing event? The wide distribution of European trade goods provides a partial answer. Several historians who have studied first contacts in other parts of the continent have argued that it was not so much the Europeans themselves that the natives found amazing but the cloth and metal and gunpowder that accompanied them. But to the Plateau Indians these more-or-less familiar objects required no supernatural explanation.

It can also be argued that there were Plateau natives who had not only heard about white people well before Lewis and Clark, they had met some. Trading excursions outside the Plateau had produced any number of natives who could describe in detail the appearance, customs and powers of white people. Shipwrecked sailors living near the coast were another possible source for Plateau familiarity with Europeans.

At Fort Clatsop Lewis and Clark met the mixed-blood son of Jack Ramsey, an English sailor who had lived on the coast for a number of years. Later explorers reported meeting an elderly mixed-blood man called "Old Soto" near The Dalles, whom other Indians described as the son of one of a half dozen Spanish sailors who had lived among them. Lewis and Clark did not themselves meet Old Soto, but their map of the area shows a "Shotos village," probably a reference to the same man. Six Spanish sailors living for a considerable time at the great trading post of The Dalles would have diffused a lot of knowledge concerning Europeans. And among the Walla Walla Indians one expedition member reported a "half white child," proof, he thought, that white traders had already visited these people. Significantly, it was at the same village that Gass noted: "We were a very interesting sight to the surrounding crowd, as nine-tenths of them had never before seen a white man"—implying that 10 percent of the Walla Wallas had met white people before.

The journals of the Lewis and Clark expedition describe an Indian world in transition. Indians were active participants in the process of protohistoric change, seeking out knowledge of white people and sources of their trade goods, and adopting those goods and customs only selectively, in ways that met native needs. The Indians who encountered the first white men on the Columbia Plateau already knew what white men were, where they came from, and what their goods were like. They had knowledge of a broad slice of the geography of the West and knew where white people lived and came to trade. And they had experienced the worst of the white man's diseases—smallpox—and now had a substantial number of individuals with immunity to this disease. Perhaps most importantly, they knew that the white men were coming and had some idea of the dangers and opportunities this would present. This knowledge and experience would help guide Plateau natives as they entered the historic era.

Larry Cebula, an assistant professor at Missouri Southern State College, is currently studying how Plateau Indians used their religion to understand Euro-American contact.
Ernst Hardware Company catalog, 1945. Although these consumer goods were listed, they were unavailable because of the war effort.

Commercial catalogs constitute a significant resource in the Society's Special Collections. Catalogs of hardware, clothing, furniture, agricultural implements, jewelry and architectural goods, to name only a few, are used by the staff for exhibit preparation, artifact identification and dating, and by the public for all kinds of research. The Society is interested in collecting catalogs from all time periods, with a particular focus on regional firms. Those from national suppliers who likely sold within the state of Washington are also sought.

FROM THE COLLECTION

Ernst Hardware Company catalog, 1945. Although these consumer goods were listed, they were unavailable because of the war effort.

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FROM THE COLLECTION
At another time, in another place, the captain might have thought his ship was being overtaken by pirates to filch the fortune from its hold. But those anxious, red-faced men who tumbled across the moonlit railings of the SS Portland as it passed Washington’s Cape Flattery and churned toward Puget Sound on July 17, 1897, sought a very different sort of riches. They were newspaper reporters sent to plunder the prospectors aboard of whatever information they had regarding the discovery of gold on tributaries of northwestern Canada’s Klondike River.

Only two days before, a second steamer out of Alaska, the Excelsior, had docked at San Francisco, its scruffy, sunburned passengers stumbling down the gangplank with leather saddlebags, carpet valises and fruit jars, all full of gold dust and nuggets from the Klondike fields. Among the miners was a former YMCA physical-training instructor, Thomas Lippy of Seattle. The normally level-headed Lippy had left the Northwest a year earlier with borrowed money and the vague hope of “making it” in the northland. Now he’d returned to the States “a veritable Monte Cristo,” as one account put it, sharing with his wife Salome a grip that contained more than 200 pounds of gold, valued at over $51,000. Another Seattleite, laundrman Fred Price, stood nearby but enjoyed considerably less attention, his $5,000 in gold making him a relatively “poor” Klondiker.

Word traveled fast. And far. Within hours of the Excelsior’s landing, there was hardly a corner of San Francisco where hyperbole about the subarctic mother lode wasn’t being liberally exchanged, and before that day was finished telegraph wires sped the prospectors’ amazing tales clear across the continent. Not since the California Gold Rush of 1849 had America’s West Coast generated such widespread excitement. Demands for more and juicier news copy incited a feeding frenzy. Like their shipmates, the Lippsys could not enjoy their visit to the Golden Gate—whenever they tried to stroll from their suite at the Palace Hotel, packs of journalists descended upon them, determined to capture their every comment. After a couple of days the couple fled in disgust to Portland.

Stories of mineral wealth from the Far North had been
Rush on the Pacific Northwest

Old Gold

Seattle outfitters such as Cooper & Levy were quick to stock everything a would-be prospector might need. So many provisions were brought into the city that overflow merchandise formed tall barriers along some sidewalks.

Seattle was already contagious with gold fever by the time the Portland's running lights were spied off the coast of Vancouver Island. So eager were editors of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer to feed their readers' appetites for Klondike tidings that they didn't wait until the ship reached the city. Instead, they loaded their ablest scriveners onto a chartered tug at Port Townsend and sent them to intercept the treasure ship as it swung abreast of Port Angeles at two in the morning on July 17. Six hours later, when the Portland finally nosed into Schwabacher's Wharf (in the vicinity of Piers 57 and 58), its masts aflutter with banners and prospectors waving from its deck, the P-I was peddling the first of three extra editions, eagerly snapped up by 5,000 envious Seattleites who'd come to watch from the waterfront.

"GOLD! GOLD! GOLD! GOLD!" trumpeted the headlines. "STACKS OF YELLOW METAL!" It all seemed too good to be true. But the 68 men who debarked from the Portland that day a century ago left little doubt that the Klondike provided what one Seattle editorialist termed the "open sesame" to a dreamland of wealth.

"They all have gold," enthused a reporter who visited with prospectors on the Portland, "and it is piled about the staterooms like so much valueless hand baggage." The ship carried "a ton of gold," according to the P-I. Yet on this rare occasion, the paper understated reality. The Portland actually held closer to two tons. Regardless, "ton of gold" was the catch phrase thereafter repeated in awe around the globe, enticing every thrill-seeker, every avaricious soul, and every ne'er-do-well hoping for a better life to join North America's last great frontier adventure—the Klondike Stampede.

That often frustrating, frequently dangerous three-year diaspora dramatically expanded interest in the Alaska and Yukon territories. It put lowly, remote Dawson City—the Yukon burg nearest the gold fields—prominently on the map and ended an economic depression that, throughout the mid 1890s, had kept a stranglehold on North America and Europe. And, of course, the gold rush wrought tremendous changes upon adolescent Seattle.

No American rail port was closer to Alaska and the principal overland trails that led from there to the Klondike. As a result, Seattle was ripe to become an embarkation point and outfitter for would-be Croesuses. It more than lived up to that potential. In the month following the Portland's arrival at Elliott Bay, 1,500 people sailed north from the city, and nine fully booked ships crowded the harbor waiting to follow them. Mining schools and new hostelries opened to serve the lure-hunting hordes who were funneling through town. Shipyards bustled with construction of ocean- and river-going craft. Stores ordered in so many provisions that the
overflow merchandise created barriers ten feet high along some thoroughfares in what was then downtown Seattle (today’s Pioneer Square Historic District).

As the New York Herald remarked, “Seattle has gone stark, staring mad on gold.”

Had George Washington Carmack and his two Native American friends known in 1896 what would come from their locating gold on a branch of the Klondike River, they might have covered the precious metal back up and never breathed a syllable about it.

Carmack was content with his life in the northern wilderness. Although born in northern California (the son of a 49er), since his move to the north in 1885 and his employment as a trail packer, Carmack had become increasingly like the natives he encountered. He learned their rituals and dialects, wed the daughter of a Tagish tribal chief, and dreamed of being a chief himself some day. He built a home for his family on the Yukon River, a mighty 2,000-mile-long watercourse that drains inland to the north and west from southwest Alaska’s Coast Mountains to the Bering Sea.

There Carmack read, composed poetry when it suited his mood, and played an organ to the howling accompaniment of wolves. Probably the last thing he would have wanted was a storm of raucous outsiders destroying his near-Edenic tranquillity. But that’s exactly what he got.

The turning point came in the summer of 1896. Carmack, his wife Kate and their daughter, together with Kate’s brother Keish (familiar to whites as Skookum Jim) and another native man, Tagish (or Dawson) Charley, were fishing for salmon at the confluence of the Yukon and Klondike rivers when into their midst paddled Robert Henderson. A seasoned prospector originally from Canada’s Atlantic provinces, Henderson had spent the better part of that year tapping a small vein of riches on the aptly named Gold Bottom Creek, several days’ travel southeast of the Klondike’s mouth. Finally in need of supplies, he’d boated to the nearest trading post, at a place called Forty-mile, and was now returning to his claim.

Like many fellow gold hunters, Henderson tended to share news of his latest diggings, trusting there would be enough “color” (gold) to go around and that he would be invited to partake of the next guy’s luck. He’d told the Forty-milers about Gold Bottom and wanted to be equally generous with Carmack. However, as the tale goes, Henderson bore a racist streak. Disregarding the Californian’s affinity toward the Tagish and other tribes, he made it clear that while Carmack was welcome on his stream, his native brethren were decidedly not.

This insult stuck in George Carmack’s craw. By August 1896 it had festered into full-blown hatred. Too bad for Henderson, because on the 16th of that month Carmack, Jim and Charley were exploring a Klondike branch called Rabbit Creek when they happened upon some color squeezed between slabs of bedrock—like cheese in a sandwich, one would later remark. Carmack had never been a big Mammon worshipper, yet he couldn’t resist the opportunity to stake a claim this promising. So he and his friends hied off to the claim recorder’s office at Forty-mile, telling everyone they met on the way about the Rabbit Creek prize.

It didn’t take but another month for most of that stream, redubbed “Bonanza Creek,” to be parcelled out among “sourdoughs” (Yukon old-timers) already living in the area. Newcomers then turned to the nearby Indian River and to Bear, Hunker and Eldorado creeks, all of which, in time, gave up kings’ ransoms. Small towns in the Yukon Valley were quickly deserted as miners followed the rainbow to what they believed was the Klondike’s pot of gold.

One prospector was conspicuously absent from this maiden wave of the stampede: Robert Henderson. Carmack knew Henderson had resumed panning at Gold Bottom, yet his lingering resentment of the man prevented Carmack from telling him of the Bonanza strike. Henderson didn’t hear until it was too late to locate there.

Fate really turned against Henderson after that. His competitors on Gold Bottom Creek, laboring downstream from where the Canadian had been for months, discovered much richer deposits than he ever had. Rather than bury his disappointment and stake a new claim nearer theirs, Henderson moved deeper into the backcountry, hoping to light upon a larger lode. Eventually, sick and bitter over the bounty he’d missed, he gave up his pursuit, took the mere $3,000 he had to show for his years of hard work and hopped a steamboat for Seattle—only to have his money stolen during the trip.
If not for inclement weather, the Klondike Gold Rush might have been in full roar by early 1897. But the cold and isolation of a Yukon winter are daunting. Waterways freeze solid enough for dog sleds to employ them as highways, and men there used to stop shaving after October 15 because it was too much trouble to melt snow enough for a grooming bowl full of water.

River traffic, which usually carried Yukon and Alaska news to the “outside world,” was completely shut down by ice shortly after Carmack’s discovery. The informal “moccasin telegraph” did spread the word throughout the surrounding region, and by January 1897 a few thousand veteran prospectors residing as far south as the Pacific Northwest had both heard about the gold finds and were preparing to brave the Yukon’s frigid temperatures. However, for the most part, this remained an “insiders’ rush” until the following summer, when the *Excelsior* and *Portland* reached the West Coast with their grizzled miners. After that, nothing so commonplace as snow and ice could stay the northward flood of humanity.

Renowned “Bard of the Klondike” Robert W. Service didn’t reach the Yukon until 1904, well after the excitement had died down. But in his poem, “The Trail of Ninety-Eight,” he captured well the delirium of that time:

Gold! We leapt from our benches. Gold! We sprang from our stools.

Gold! We wheeled in the furrow, fired with the faith of fools.

Fearless, unfound, unfitted, far from the night and the cold,

Heard we the clarion summons, followed the master-lure—

Gold!

Even before the *Portland* tied up at Seattle she was booked solid for her return voyage to Alaska. Within another week bank clerks, barbers, ferry pilots and preachers from all over the city had quit their jobs and bought passage to the raw southeast Alaskan hamlets of Skagway or Dyea, from which two parallel mountain trails—respectively, the White Pass route and the more popular one across Chilkoot Pass—led toward Klondike country. The *Seattle Times* lost most of its reporters to “Klondicitis,” as the gold madness was being called, and police force ranks were equally decimated. Streetcars stopped running as drivers deserted their posts. The city’s mayor, W. D. Wood, who was attending a convention in San Francisco when the rush commenced, didn’t bother to come home. Instead, he telegraphed his resignation, raised money to buy a ship in the Bay Area, and was so excited about sailing to Alaska that he forgot to load 50,000 pounds of his passengers’ belongings and was almost lynched at dockside.

Presently, anything a prospector thought he needed could be purchased on the shores of Elliott Bay, from heavy mackinaw jackets and wide-brimmed hats to “crystallized eggs,” milk tablets and huge “portable” stoves. Bicycles—some with forward skis—were snapped up by people who’d obviously never faced mountains as forbidding as those in the Yukon. Horses that had once been steps away from the glue factory commanded outlandish prices on Seattle docks, and when horses were in short supply, reindeer and elk substituted. Told that dogsleds would help speed them to their pots of gold, prospectors fought over the malamutes and mutts being imported into the city on a weekly basis. They even shanghaied household pets. “Somebody stole our dog...,” complained young Mattie Harris, whose mother had refused to sell the family canine to a departing argonaut. “The man took him and went on. We couldn’t go after him.”

Merchants owed a tremendous debt of gratitude to Canada’s North-West Mounted Police. As the human tide rose in the Yukon, the Mounties swept in to maintain order, as well as to ensure that stampolders were properly equipped. One thing they absolutely insisted upon (and double-checked at border crossings on the Chilkoot and White Pass trails) was that everyone entering the territory come with a year’s stock of food—about 1,150 pounds.

Added to the tents, cooking utensils, mining tools, winter attire and other necessities on the expedition, that meant that each Klondiker had to transport roughly a ton of belongings. This was no easy task, since a man could reasonably carry only 50 or 60 pounds on his back at a time. He either had to pack his provisions atop horses or shuttle them along in portions, caching each new load as he went back for the next, eventually making up to 30 trips over the same ground. People who were coming from someplace else usually waited until they reached Seattle or Vancouver before loading themselves down with these goods.

Any money the stampeders had left before departing from Seattle generally went toward entertainments because they knew they’d not see civilization again for a long while. Thus, billiard halls, saloons and Turkish baths all did a boomtown
To transport the full ton of goods they were required to carry, prospectors had to trudge back and forth over the trails, relaying their loads forward in 50- to 60-pound portions.
Gold! We wheeled in the furrow, fired with the faith of fools . . .

Alaska, perished by falling into crevasses. Well-to-do Klondikers preferred a safer 4,722-mile ship excursion from Seattle to St. Michael, on Alaska's west coast, and then east up the Yukon River.

But the majority came first to Seattle, Vancouver or San Francisco (many traveling on special “gold-rush cars” provided by America's transcontinental railroads) and then boarded, bought or did their best to hijack anything that might float them up the Inside Passage—more than 1,000 miles—to two trails in southeastern Alaska. Both trails would take them over the Coast Mountains and the United States-Canada border, and then on to the headwaters of the Yukon River. From there they could boat all the way in to Dawson.

The more notorious of these two routes—across White Pass—was rooted in the town of Skagway. Introduced by an exquisite glacier-shaded harbor (jammed most of the time with vessels that had been abandoned by impatient argonauts), Skagway of the 1890s was a farrago of tree stumps and tents and hastily rendered wooden structures, a place attuned to the discordant rhythms of saws, neighing horses, creaking wagons, and men bargaining for goods. California naturalist John Muir likened it to “a nest of ants taken into a strange country and stirred up by a stick.” He might have added that Skagway was a huckster’s haven, lorded over by one Jefferson Randolph Smith—more familiar as “Soapy,” thanks to his fondness for a confidence game that involved paper money wrapped around bars of soap. Smith, a mustachioed former Georgian, was a politically savvy crook, mounting a reputable front while simultaneously controlling an extensive network of card sharps, grifters, harlots, spies and murderers. From his arrival in Alaska in 1897 until a vigilante gunned him down a year later, Soapy was “the Uncrowned King of Skagway.”

Prospectors who hoped that their march up the White Pass Trail would relieve them of the Smith gang’s predations soon learned that Soapy’s cronies were active even there, posing as clerics or gold seekers, all ready to fleece the unsuspecting. However, these criminal threats were nothing when compared with the natural dangers of that trail.

Surveyed in 1887, the route via White Pass and on to Lake Lindeman extended for about 45 miles. It was a reasonably low course, convincing greenhorns that they could tackle it with ease. That was a serious misconception. Switchbacks, deep mud holes and perilous cliffside stretches made the trail slow going—and deadly. So narrow was the trail in some places that pack animals had to stand for hours under their crushing loads, waiting for obstacles to clear ahead. And when they could move again, their owners pushed them relentlessly. One stampeder recalled seeing a horse walk deliberately off the face of a cliff. “It looked to me . . . like suicide,” he said. “I believe a horse will commit suicide, and this is enough to make them.” In fact, few of the 3,000 steeds used on the White Pass road in late 1897 survived, inspiring its experienced travelers to nickname it Dead Horse Trail.

Aside from the occasional avalanche (one of which killed at many as 70 people in 1898), the Chilkoot Trail was deemed comparatively free of hazards—and blessedly bereft of con men. It began in Dyea, nine miles north of Skagway on Lynn Canal. Though now only a memory (except for some rotten pier pilings and crooked cemetery markers) Dyea of a century ago was a thriving community. There men could complete their provisioning or hire native packers to help them carry their ton of supplies.

The biggest plus for the Chilkoot path was its length: only 33 miles to Lake Bennett, which lay just north of Lake Lindeman. In theory, a hiker could shave a whole day off his travel by going this more direct way through the Coast peaks.
However, the summit of Chilkoot Pass rises 600 feet higher than that of White Pass and includes a quarter-mile-long climb that gains approximately 1,000 feet in elevation. During the summer, conquering this pass meant crawling over huge boulders and trying to find footholds in scree. But in winter it presented a particular torment. Photos show seemingly endless lines of men trudging up the so-called Golden Stairs, ice steps that were carved into the ascent's steepest portion. Overdressed and out-of-shape Klondikers agonized going up this grade, some collapsing in tears. Even reaching the crest was scant cause for celebration, since hikers knew they had to turn around and do it all over again, toting yet another installment from their burdensome outfit. “It took the average man three months or more to shuttle his ton of goods across the pass,” explains Canadian Pierre Berton in *The Klondike Fever*.

Is it any wonder that miners breathed a great sigh of relief when they finally reached Lake Lindeman or Lake Bennett? Yes, they still faced 550 miles of boat travel, through fierce winds and tumultuous rapids. But they also knew that this was the start of the last leg of their pilgrimage. Once they made it over the lakes and onto the broad, strangely shallow Yukon River—either by handbuilt raft, as many of the first stampeders did, or later on the deck of a small sternwheeler—they figured they were home free. Next stop: Dawson City and riches beyond imagining.

Edwin Tappan Adney, a newspaper correspondent who followed the Klondike stampers, described the crowds that reached Dawson at the height of the gold rush:

*It is a motley throng—every degree of person gathered from every corner of the earth, from every State of the Union, and from every city—weatherbeaten, sunburned, with snow glasses over their hats, just as they came from the passes. Australians with upturned sleeves and a swagger; young Englishmen in golf stockings and tweeds; would-be miners in mackinaws and rubber boots, or heavy, highlaced shoes; Japanese, Negroes—and women, too, everywhere.*

The city itself was a hodgepodge of banks and hotels, whorehouses and opera houses. Trail packers raced their dogsleds down the then-flashy waterfront drive, and world’s record-breaking lines snaked from each of the town’s only two public outhouses. Mounties guarded against serious crimes like murder but turned a benignly neglectful eye to saloons and gambling halls. Almost anything a man desired...
was available in booming Dawson, be it beaded moccasins or locally unearthed mammoth tusks, pink lemonade or Paris gowns or champagne enough to bathe a hard-to-win lover. Perhaps the only thing that couldn't be easily had was what these men wanted most: gold. Newspaper accounts had erroneously implied that wealth awaited anyone who could reach the Dawson gold fields. Paul T. Mizony, a 17-year-old from San Diego who landed at Dawson in 1898, noted that “hundreds...expected all they would have to do was to pick the nuggets above the ground and some even thought they grew on bushes.” Only when the starry-eyed prospectors finished their trip did they understand how hard mining was—and that the best claims on Bonanza and Eldorado creeks had been staked back in 1896, a full year before the rush started!

By one reckoning, only about 4,000 people actually found gold during this epic stampede. Most, including veterans of other mineral pursuits, didn’t recoup so much as their travel costs. “This is a country of contradictions,” Jonas B. Houck, a resident of Detroit, wrote his wife from Dawson in the summer of 1898. “It puzzles old miners to know anything about where to dig for gold. They will come here and dig where they think gold should be if it is anywhere in the country and not find anything and give it up in disgust; and some ‘greenhorn’ will dig where a person who knows anything about mining in other places would never think of looking and strike it rich...”

Like Houck, many of the disillusioned no sooner reached Dawson than they left again. Others went to work for the “Klondike Kings” who had found gold and stayed to bleed their claims dry. Some, their passions satisfied by having made the mere chase after chimerical fortune, struck off for the next great adventure at Nome, a puny outpost on Alaska’s cold Bering Sea coast, where gold had been discovered in 1898. Or they joined the Spanish-American War, which erupted in that same year.

George Carmack and his wife Kate tried to ride their notoriety beyond the north country. They traveled to Seattle, but the press there treated them as curious savages, remarked on their disorientation among the city’s tall buildings, and reported at length on Kate’s disorderly conduct under the influence of alcohol. Carmack eventually disowned Kate and parted ways with Skookum Jim and Tagish Charlie, never returning to the Yukon after 1900.

Thomas Lippy, the YMCA instructor and star of the Excelsior landing, took some two million dollars out of his claim on lower Eldorado Creek before selling it in 1903. He used the money to erect a grand home in Seattle and contribute to various philanthropic enterprises. But he died bankrupt after a series of bad investments.

Rather than join the ranks of prospectors, Erastus Brainerd served in Alaska as a “mining consultant” before returning in 1904 to Seattle where, as editor of the Post-Intelligencer, he railed against the multiple vices (gambling, prostitution, drunkenness) that were part of the city’s Klondike legacy. When he died in 1922 his obituaries failed to mention that he had made Seattle “the gateway to the Klondike.”

In great part due to Brainerd’s lobbying during the gold rush, Congress awarded Seattle a government assay office in 1898, ensuring that a larger measure of the $174 million in Klondike gold that was flushed through the city between 1898 and 1902 would remain there. Many of the people who chose to stay on Elliott Bay and supply the Klondike prospectors made out better financially than the miners themselves.

By the first decade of the 20th century Seattle was expanding, flattening its hilly topography to make streetcar travel easier and improving its waterfront services. Many of the people who’d once passed through Seattle on their way to the gold fields were returning to live in the city, driving its population precipitously upward—from 55,752 in 1896 to over 237,194 by 1910. There was the sense that the city had shed its frontier vestiges, gained not only fame but stature through its participation in the Klondike insanity. To celebrate, in 1909 Seattle mounted something of a “coming out party” : the elaborate Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. While previous American fairs had commemorated the anniversaries of area discovery or settlement, this one, as historian Norman H. Clark once contended, celebrated only the fact that “in the story of civilization there is probably no record of more astonishing growth than occurred in the region around Puget Sound.”

J. Kingston Pierce, a Seattle writer, is author of San Francisco, You’re History! (Sasquatch Books) and America’s Historic Trails with Tom Bodett (KQED Books), the companion volume to this spring’s PBS-TV series.
"Eleanor on the Elwha" is the most frequently requested and reproduced photograph from the Washington State Historical Society’s Special Collections. Photographer Asahel Curtis, an avid promoter of Washington who documented the industrial, agricultural and scenic development of the state, devoted little time in his busy schedule to portrait photography. However, this timeless informal portrait of Eleanor Chittenden blends the photographer’s love for the Olympic Peninsula and the out-of-doors with a keen eye for character.

As a teenager Eleanor was probably the youngest member of the group of Mountaineers (a Northwest club devoted to climbing and exploring the Olympics and Cascades) who traveled from Seattle to the Olympic Peninsula in August 1907. They followed the Elwha River, camping and fishing along the way, and eventually climbed Mounts Queets and Christy. Curtis recorded the journey in a series of photos capturing the wild beauty of the Elwha before the dams were built. Today the salmon runs are extinct on the Elwha and debate continues around the possible removal of the aging Elwha and Glines Canyon dams.

The Historical Society gladly accepts donations of prints or negatives of regional historical interest to add to its photograph collection. (Please contact the Society before making donations.) Readers are invited to submit historical photographs for History Album. If a photograph is to be returned, it must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.
Thoughts of a fort usually call to mind such descriptive terms as strength, power, impregnability and security. That a fort, or a significant part of one, could disappear, or at least fail to materialize, without the knowledge of the mandating agency or the occupants defies the imagination. Yet this is precisely what happened at Fort George Wright on the outskirts of Spokane.
During the 19th century the first forts on the rapidly expanding frontiers of the United States tended to be simple log blockhouses. Larger ones were usually surrounded by stockades with or without bastions. Many of these early fortifications were built and occupied by volunteer militias made up of settlers in response to a local emergency, but later, with the arrival of regular army troops, forts became more expansive, more dependent on size and numbers of soldiers with their superior weapons than on physical structure. Their purpose was to provide continuous protection for the inhabitants of the surrounding area and the housing, supply and training facilities for highly mobile troops.

During and shortly after the 1855-58 Indian wars in the eastern portion of Washington Territory, the United States Army established Forts Simcoe, Walla Walla and Colville under the direction of Colonel George Wright, commander of the Columbia River District. Some of them were abandoned after only a few years. Following the Nez Perce campaign of 1877 the War Department ordered the construction of a new fort—Fort Sherman—at the outlet of the Spokane River from the northwest corner of Lake Coeur d'Alene. Two years later, on the recommendation of General Oliver O. Howard, another large post, Fort Spokane, was erected on the south bank of the Spokane River near its point of entry into the Columbia River. This new stronghold was to take over the responsibilities of the forts that had been closed. In less than 20 years, however, these two posts were said to be inaccessible, poorly situated, expensive to maintain and to serve no useful purpose. The secretary of war recommended closing both posts and choosing a new site near the burgeoning city of Spokane, which since 1883 had been made accessible by the Northern Pacific Railroad.

Word of this recommendation soon reached Spokane, which was in the process of rebuilding the whole downtown business district after it was destroyed in the great fire of 1889. Meeting the enormous reconstruction costs was made even more difficult by the national financial panic of 1893. The prospect of a new military post within the community was financially attractive, but the government's requirements before Spokane would be considered for such a plum seemed almost impossible to meet: 1,000 acres of suitable land, a dependable water supply and $15,000 cash. Undeterred, Spokane businesses and individuals contributed 602 acres just west of the city on a plateau overlooking the south bank of the Spokane River, where Colonel George Wright and his troops had encamped after the Battle of Spokane Plains. A local syndicate bought the remaining 400 acres from the Northern Pacific Railroad. Dedicated citizens donated $10,500 in cash; the rest was raised by a festive raffle of donated gifts around a huge community Christmas tree.

By 1897 Congress had appropriated $500,000 for the construction of a full regimental post at the proffered site, and construction was begun. The estimated arrival of 3,000-4,000 soldiers was expected to give a tremendous boost to Spokane's economy, not to mention the large number of civilians who would have to be hired to service the post.

In 1899 the post was officially named Fort George Wright. The first soldiers to arrive on April 3, 1899, Company M of the 24th Infantry, were African-American veterans of the Indian and Spanish-American Wars. Later in the year a large cemetery was authorized and bodies moved to it from Forts Sherman and Spokane. Th ereafter, troops came and went, usually just a few companies at a time. By 1911 there was a question of whether the post was still needed, but revolutions in Mexico and China, the Russo-Japanese War and concern about the Hawaiian Islands dictated the need for troops in the Pacific Northwest.

During World War I Fort George Wright assumed considerable importance, but it was not until 1922 that the first full regiment came and stayed. The United States 4th Infantry Regiment was posted there for 20 years, although it was necessary to send one of its battalions to Fort Missoula, Montana, and another one to Fort Lincoln, North Dakota, for lack of accommodations. No one seemed quite sure why this shortage existed. The government had authorized a full regimental post, yet there was only room for 1,500 men.

In September 1931 Colonel George "Spokane" Clarke
was assigned to the 4th U.S. Infantry at Fort George Wright as executive officer. It was he who aroused my interest in this subject. Following his retirement he remained a prominent citizen in Spokane. After his death his wife made available to me a copy of a speech he had given on the centennial anniversary of General Wright's 1858 victories over the Spokane, Coeur d'Alene and Palouse Indians.

According to Clarke, Colonel Wallace MacNamara was in command of the post when he first arrived there. Clarke soon learned that two battalions of 1,000 men each were stationed at Fort Missoula and Fort Lincoln. This piqued his curiosity, as did the shortage of barracks and officers' quarters here. He had already noted the open spaces between the buildings for officers and that the commanding officer was living in modest quarters designed for an officer of lesser rank. He soon found that Fort George Wright, supposedly a regimental post, was lacking quarters for 50 officers and 40 non-commissioned officers, 6 barracks buildings, many supplementary buildings such as quartermaster warehouses, stables and a hospital. For a post listed as regimental in army records, almost 100 structures were missing. "For reasons unknown, legislators from the State of Washington failed to discover what was happening [during construction], and the fort never became a full regimental post as authorized by Congress," noted Clarke.

In March 1933 a totally unexpected development focused attention on this anomalous situation. The nation was in the midst of the Great Depression, and the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt was hastily organizing the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to put our country's jobless to work on various public works projects. Colonel MacNamara received the following order: "Contact Labor Bureau in Spokane, and request 2,500 jobless men for immediate duty in CCC. Use 4th Infantry personnel to house, clothe and feed them. Also, 20 trains of 18 cars each comprising the advance cadres of 45 companies of 250 men each will arrive at Fort George Wright within three days for placement in forest camps."

The impact of such an order as this on a post unable to house a full regiment and with only a single Great Northern Railroad sidetrack capable of handling two coal gondolas can be imagined. Simultaneous to the arrival of this impossible and absurd order, Colonel MacNamara suffered a massive stroke, from which he soon died.

In spite of all, somehow people coped, and Fort George Wright became the administrative headquarters of the largest CCC district in the United States with, at its peak, 28,000 enrollees in 122 camps. The CCC staff at Fort George Wright was spending from $500,000 to $1,000,000 a day in Spokane. This windfall did a great deal to help the city recover from the Depression. Meanwhile, Colonel Clarke had assumed command of Fort George Wright and of the 4th Infantry as well as the CCC district.

It was not long after these momentous events that another confrontation with the War Department took place. This one, however, led to the solution of the mystery of the missing buildings at Fort George Wright. Colonel Clarke, still acting as post commander following Colonel MacNamara's untimely death, received an order to build two double sets of non-commissioned officers quarters. When he sent blueprints to Washington, D.C., showing the locations where he proposed to place these structures, he received an indignant response that headquarters would not authorize the tearing down of old buildings for replacement with new ones. Clarke replied that there were no buildings on the locations he had designated. Clarke thought "this would settle the matter, but in fact it was merely the beginning of a voluminous correspondence" informing him that the proposed buildings could only be erected on sites unoccupied by other buildings and that the original blueprints of Fort George Wright in their possession showed that it had been constructed as a full regimental post. Clarke tried to point out that it had never reached this halcyon state, enumerating the various missing structures and the necessity for quartering two of the 4th Infantry's battalions at remote posts. After much bickering, Washington sent out four high-ranking Quartermaster Department officers to investigate. They were followed by a board of staff officers, and at last the mystery of the missing buildings was solved.
It was discovered that in 1895, when the sponsors introduced their bill authorizing the construction of Fort Wright to Congress, Senator Francis E. Warren of Wyoming, father-in-law of General John J. Pershing and chairman of the powerful Senate Military Affairs Committee, had the bill amended to carry authorization for Fort D. A. Russell at Cheyenne, Wyoming, to be converted into a regimental post for his home state. Somehow he was able to help himself to many of the buildings intended for Fort Wright, arranging to have them built at Fort Russell instead. In 1929 Fort Russell was renamed Fort Francis E. Warren in his honor. Amazingly, this bit of grand larceny escaped the notice of the State of Washington's delegation, and Fort George Wright never became a full regimental post as Congress had intended.

Aside from the moral aspects of this piece of chicanery, it resulted in a great financial loss to the city of Spokane. As a smaller post with half as many soldiers as it should have had, Fort George Wright undoubtedly missed out on being expanded into a brigade post during World War II as Fort Warren had been. A larger post might also have escaped being declared surplus, as was Fort Wright in 1957.

As the great 18th-century Scottish poet Robert Burns once wrote: "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley."

Since its abandonment by the federal government, this beautiful and historic old military reservation has not been allowed to sink into disrepair or to fall victim to the wrecking ball of commercial developers. Instead, it has continued to be of great service to and an important part of the community as a diversified campus for independent educational institutions. It has also been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1961 Holy Names College, which since 1907 had been a four-year liberal arts college for women in Spokane, acquired a 76-acre portion of the reservation and moved to the site. The college utilized some of the old brick buildings, erected a few new ones, and changed its name to Fort George Wright College. It expanded its curriculum to include a few advanced degrees but discontinued its operation as a college in July 1987. Only the Music Center is still active. However, parts of the former college continue as a Cultural Center for conferences, educational programs and retreats.

In 1964 a handsome little historical museum took over the post commander's quarters. For a while it became a popular site for visitors and historians, but the museum closed its doors in 1987 because of financial problems.

Meanwhile, other educational institutions took up land and buildings. Spokane Falls Community College set up operations on the campus, together with its Institute for Extended Learning. A large brick barn and stable came down to make room for the Spokane Lutheran School. In 1980 the Intercollegiate Center for Nursing Education moved its operation to the new campus, offering unique and highly successful programs for bachelor and advanced academic degrees in nursing. There is also a small Montessori School on the site.

In 1990 the Sisters of the Holy Names sold 92 acres to the Mukogawa Women's University of Japan, which has established a collegiate program for young Japanese women there and is committed to making itself "a close neighbor and friend to the City of Spokane."

Although Fort George Wright never became what it was intended to be, at least portions of the old post are thriving, useful and remain a great asset to Spokane.

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In 1878 the Walla Walla Library and Lyceum Association financed construction of the state's first public library building. It was actually a quasi-public library, open only to members of the association, whose “subscriptions” soon proved undependable. Within less than a decade the association was forced to close the library for lack of operating funds. The book collection was moved to the second floor of another building, and in 1890 the Library and Lyceum Association put the books in storage. Library service in Walla Walla ceased altogether.

Two prominent members of the association, H. P. Isaacs and T. C. Elliott, soon proposed to the Washington legislature an act enabling cities to establish tax-supported free public libraries. The bill was not approved, but the Women’s Reading Club of Walla Walla joined the crusade and began petitioning the legislature for the measure. It was finally enacted in 1895. Within a few months the clubwomen had raised $1,000 for books and equipment for the proposed library, making it eligible for municipal funds under the new law. Library service in Walla Walla resumed soon after, and the clubwomen’s efforts subsequently helped the city qualify for a library construction grant from Andrew Carnegie, the millionaire steelmaker.

The 1895 law allowing cities to underwrite the cost of library service applied only to municipalities with populations of 5,000 or more. Most Washington communities of the time were tiny and still decades away from acquiring their own public libraries even after the law’s passage. The Women’s Reading Club, however, was a harbinger of campaigns to come as women’s organizations throughout the state began searching for ways to bring library service to their communities. Drawing on models established by women’s groups in other regions of the nation, clubwomen in Washington raised money for books and equipment and often provided library service themselves in the interim.

Even in larger communities where city tax funds could be tapped, clubwomen were prominent among the founders of libraries. The Ladies Library Club of Seattle, forerunner of...
Sarah Yesler, librarian for an early subscription library in Seattle and one of the women who helped found the Seattle Public Library Association, which opened the city's first public library in 1891.

Because of the crucial role women's clubs played in establishing Washington's libraries, it is impossible to know what form library development would have taken without them. As new towns sprang up all over the West, the burgeoning need for public library service coincided with and benefited from the discovery by American women that they could exercise political influence even when they were not allowed to vote.

Women's clubs were not peculiar to the West. In the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, American women whose mothers had belonged to ladies aid societies—church auxiliaries with agendas dictated by male ministers—flocked to new, autonomous and quite controversial organizations that imitated the ubiquitous men's clubs. The clubs began on the East Coast in the 1870s but quickly spread into every state and territory.

Like the men's clubs, early women's clubs emphasized self-improvement; members of the Olympia Woman's Club, one of Washington's first, discussed such topics as "Good Intentions," "Cheerfulness," "The Mind Cure," and "The Building of Character." The Woman's Reading Club of Walla Walla, perhaps influenced in a more intellectual direction by the presence of Whitman College, studied and talked about "The Authenticity of Shakespeare" and "Faiths of Mankind."

The clubs were soon dubbed "the middle-aged woman's university" because of their focus on self-improvement and education. By the turn of the century, however, many urban clubs began attempting to address the alarming social problems generated in their communities by the spread of both industrialization and immigration. Clubwomen in frontier areas of the Midwest and West faced a different set of community problems, mainly the absence of needed social and cultural resources such as library service. When small, underfunded town councils were unable or unwilling to establish such services, women often took on the responsibility themselves. Many and perhaps most midwestern and western public libraries were started by women's groups. Success bred success; as news of the achievements of one region's women's clubs spread, women in other localities created similar organizations and projects.

In Washington, women's clubs proliferated during the first two decades of this century; by 1920 there were over 2,000 such clubs. The Washington State Federation of Women's Clubs, although only about 300 clubs were affiliated with it, at times maintained a full-time lobbyist in Olympia during legislative sessions. Club membership spanned a broad spectrum of political orientations and included many women who were neither militant reformers nor militant feminists; a substantial number actually opposed women's suffrage. Many clubwomen eschewed political activism and belonged to a club strictly for the social and educational opportunities it provided. Clubs that sponsored libraries seem to have occupied

OVERLEAF: The Nesika Club of Tacoma organized in 1892 as a literary group. Affiliated with the Washington State Federation of Women's Clubs after 1895, club members also campaigned for kindergartens and sanitary regulations.
the middle of the spectrum; their interests were mainly literary, yet they were willing activists for libraries.

Libraries were important to women for several reasons, not least because mothers were concerned about their children's education. Books were scarce in small towns and nearly nonexistent in frontier schoolhouses. Many adults also wanted library service; reading was an important form of entertainment for Americans, especially those in isolated communities, in the years before radio and television.

Books may have been important to western women for other reasons. Women, especially women on farms and ranches, tended to lead more isolated lives than men, confined at home with children, arduous household tasks and sometimes farm work as well. Somewhat surprisingly, women often had completed more schooling than male members of their families. “She can always teach” was the justification given for keeping many a daughter enrolled through high school and sometimes beyond, if the family could afford to do without her labor. Her brothers, meanwhile, were likely to have graduated into full-time farm work at puberty, if not sooner. Even town boys seldom attended school for more than a few years, after which they began full-time work in their fathers' trades or businesses, as employees in some other local concern, or as itinerant laborers.

“Average” rates of school completion were low for both boys and girls at the turn of the century when the typical American completed about five years of schooling, but the averages often mask sizable differences between boys and girls. In 1894-95, for example, girls outnumbered boys in public and private high schools in every western state; in Washington 1,041 girls were enrolled in public secondary schools compared to 795 boys. The ratio of girls to boys in Washington's private secondary schools was 5:2. In the early 1900s women outnumbered men in some western and midwestern state universities, including those in Washington, California, Texas and Nebraska, and in normal schools, both public and private. Young women with high school diplomas or who had acquired some college education often taught for as much as a decade before marrying; middle-class couples tended to marry in their mid to late 20s.

Women's education and teaching experience made them aware of the value of libraries; motherhood reinforced that awareness. Yet when women attempted to address community needs such as libraries, they were handicapped by their lack of political experience, voting power and other necessary resources. With few exceptions, women were not allowed to vote in federal or state elections or even in most local elections.

Relatively few women had money of their own; fathers or husbands usually controlled a woman's earnings or any other wealth she acquired. Middle-class married women did not work outside the home, and independent single women—e.g., teachers—earned tiny salaries. Starting a library, or even campaigning for one, required both money and political know-how; even a privately-run volunteer lending library needed funds for books and supplies, shelving and for space in which the library could be housed.

Nonetheless, club members plunged ahead, inspired by the successes of earlier clubs. They raised money using the same tried and true methods the ladies aid societies had been using for decades: bake sales, bazaars and other events where they sold products they had made. The 1921-22 Report of the Washington State Federation of Women's Clubs (WSFWC) commented,

It is often a struggle for rural clubs to establish and maintain libraries... Their financial problems are met by giving plays, rummage sales, food sales;... silver teas; garden parties; book parties; musicales; programs; manufacturers' dinners;

The old Henry L. Yesler residence housed the Seattle Public Library from 1899 to 1901, when it was destroyed by fire. Surviving books occupied temporary quarters until the original Central Library building opened in 1906.
luncheons; card parties; dancing parties; full festivals; flower shows; sale of bulbs and seeds donated by members; law parties; book gift parties; bazaars; sale of old magazines; sale of recipes; sale of cook books; pageants; fashion shows; selling subscriptions to magazines; selling chances on hope chests filled with one article per member; . . . sewing school banquets; birthday pennies; 5-cent charge on each new book per week until paid for.

This lengthy catalog of fund-raising activities shows just how burdensome library sponsorship could be for small clubs. The Walla Walla Reading Club's $1,000 was a large sum for the time, not representative of what most clubs could raise.

Nor could most small town governments supply enough tax funds to stock and operate libraries. So the result of a women's club library campaign was often a compromise: a combination of donated and taxpayer funds augmented by volunteer labor. Such combinations sustained small town libraries all over Washington. After the City of Colfax, for example, acted favorably on the 1921 petition of the Ladies Improvement Society for a city library, club members donated 443 books and opened the library in a spare room—some say a rest room—of the city hall. The city council appointed a library board consisting of the members of the Ladies Improvement Society, which devoted its January 27, 1922, afternoon meeting to pasting envelopes and book pockets into newly purchased books.

The women who organized the club and started the library also selected and purchased books, identified and rented space for the library, bought and installed shelving (or arranged to have it installed), and ordered library supplies such as borrower cards, book pockets and date cards. Some of the libraries employed a part-time librarian, but club members usually continued to perform many library duties, including the selection and ordering of books. The 20 members of the Colville Improvement Club started a library in 1910 and continued to support and operate it for the next 35 years. By 1946 the library consisted of 5,000 books housed in a building constructed with local funds and still managed by clubwomen with the assistance of a part-time librarian.

The book choices of these volunteer librarians provide a small window into the reading habits of early 20th-century Americans. In 1922, for example, the Ladies Improvement Society of Colfax ordered The Wrong Twin, Merton of the Movies, The Passport Invisible, and Alice Adams; a set of O'Henry's works, the Harvard Classics, and the International Encyclopedia.

In its 1921-22 Report the WSFWC noted that nine Washington counties still had no library within their borders. Sixty percent of the state's population, according to the Report, was still "cut off from library privileges." Ten years and countless bake sales, festivals and bazaars later, women's organizations were still starting do-it-yourself libraries in other Washington small towns. The 1930-31 Year Book of the WSFWC reported that the Woman's Club of Ryderwood and similar clubs in Chewelah, Pasco, Port Angeles, Reardan and Zillah were either operating libraries or contributing heavily to them. The same document records that 35 clubs said their members were working actively for enabling legislation to establish county libraries.

A 1912 history of the General Federation of Women's Clubs had claimed that clubwomen nationwide were by then already responsible for establishing 474 public libraries and securing 18 state library commissions; by 1930 the library total must have numbered in the thousands.

State library commissions were among clubwomen's goals as an instrument for both pressuring and enabling state libraries to assist the embryonic local libraries being started by women's groups. Small town libraries started with limited collections of donated books could be augmented by a "traveling library"—a book collection based in and circulated by a state library. The WSFWC was instrumental, for instance, in establishing the Washington State Library's traveling library and donating 400 books as a nucleus for a collection the State Library could lend to small libraries, and it helped to found the State Library Association to aid local efforts. Similar services had been started in other western and midwestern states—e.g., Colorado and Oregon—at the behest of other state federations of women's clubs. These traveling collections of books were lifesavers for new libraries started from scratch with an assortment of books that could only gradually be expanded through the modest purchases of the sponsoring clubs.

If the town itself grew and prospered, its ad hoc library could develop into a stable, tax-supported entity serving increasing numbers of patrons. Eventually, local residents would begin thinking about larger, permanent quarters. Many communities then turned to steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, who had been providing money for the construction of public library buildings since 1881 when he funded a new library structure for the town of Dunfermline, Scotland, where he was born. Over succeeding decades, Carnegie donated $56 million to build 2,509 libraries in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland and other British Commonwealth countries such as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. To be eligible a town had to already own a building site and be willing to tax itself for annual maintenance of the structure at the rate of 10 percent of Carnegie's donation, usually calculated at $2 per town inhabitant.

Seattle and Tacoma were the first Washington cities to be awarded grants by Carnegie, both in 1901. Ballard, Bellingham, Everett, North Yakima, Olympia, Spokane, Walla Walla and Wenatchee were all notified of grants in 1903. Carnegie's gifts to Seattle ultimately totaled over $400,000 for its downtown "Old Main" building and various branches (Green Lake, Columbia, Fremont, Queen Anne, University and West Seattle). In all, 38 public library buildings were constructed in 33 different communities in Washington.
with money donated by Carnegie, whose grants to Washington cities and towns amounted to $1,046,000 between 1901 and 1916. (Although the last grants were awarded in 1916, construction of some libraries was delayed until after World War I; a number of Carnegie libraries were not completed until 1921.) A 1973 survey showed that 29 of the 38 buildings still existed and were being used for some purpose, though not always as libraries.

Colfax was not one of those communities. Perhaps influenced by the views of labor leader Eugene Debs, who opposed accepting Carnegie library money, the populist editor of the Colfax Gazette choked off a drive to seek Carnegie funds with a 1907 editorial entitled “Tainted Libraries.” Decrying the acceptance of a library building from “an exponent of predatory law” whose name would be on the structure, the editor claimed Colfax people would “risk tainting the ideals of their children.” Not until 20 years later did Colfax acquire its own library building, which was not financed by Carnegie. During part of the interim, a joint public library-high school library operated out of Colfax High School, with both the city and school district contributing funds.

Once a local library became an entirely official entity, supported by public funds and perhaps housed in a brand new building with Carnegie’s name over the door, the institution usually came under the control of men. Although members of the Women’s Reading Club had raised money and furnished a room in the Walla Walla Library and the Women’s Park Club had raised and donated money for the building itself, the library board consisted entirely of men when the new library opened in 1905. When the Colfax Public Library finally began receiving some funds from the city, even though it was still operating out of a room in the city hall, the mayor appointed a new library board dominated by men. Librarians, meanwhile, continued to be mostly female.

This transfer of power from female to male hands reflected societal views about appropriate “spheres” of activity for men and women. Home, family and children were women’s assigned territories; they were permitted to engage in related volunteer activities only so long as their role was unofficial and part-time. If their efforts culminated, as in the case of libraries, in the establishment of an official institution, its management became the territory of men.

So women’s clubs turned to other community needs. In cities they tackled a reform agenda that included meat and milk inspection and settlement houses such as the one established in Tacoma, but in small towns the clubs continued to use their womanpower to add amenities their communities lacked. In its first years, the Ladies Improvement Society of Colfax had donated a bronze drinking fountain and established a public rest room and lounge, complete with a matron who served coffee and warmed babies’ bottles, for farm women and their children shopping in town. Later Colfax women spearheaded a drive for a town plaza, gave money for the first home economics department in the high school, furnished a home for disabled men, and campaigned for a public health nurse. Local clubs in smaller towns, as well as the state federation, continued to work for improved library service in rural areas for at least the next decade, however.

Women’s clubs went into a decline following passage of the suffrage amendment of 1920 and the onset of a severe farm depression in the early 1920s, which foreshadowed the nationwide depression in the 1930s. The majority of women’s clubs vanished over subsequent decades. Yet in both small towns and cities, one can still find traces of the club movement. A “Woman’s Club,” with a small membership and a modest, well-maintained club building constructed many decades ago, can often be found, especially in smaller communities. A concert sponsored by the Ladies Musical Club—still a regular event in Seattle—is another reminder.

Despite their later decline into undeserved obscurity, women’s clubs had a substantial, even radical, impact on local, state and national politics. Women’s inability to vote...
Construction began on the "Carnegie" Library of Spokane in 1904. The building's architecture was typical of the local libraries financed by the industrialist.

Evidence of their political clout can still be found, embalmed in old documents and statutes seldom consulted except by historians. The record of the 1900-1901 Washington legislature, for instance, reveals the unusual membership of the first Washington State Library commission. The legislature specified that the commission should consist of six persons appointed by the governor, including three official members—the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the presidents of the “State University” (University of Washington) and the “State Agricultural College” (Washington State University); one member recommended by the WSFWC, and two additional members, one of whom must be a woman. The next legislature repealed the statute, substituting a State Library commission composed entirely of state officials, but mandated the creation of an advisory commission that included one member recommended by the WSFWC. The governor refused to appoint the advisory commission, however.

These two statutes stand nonetheless as testimony to women’s political muscle nine years before they were allowed to vote in state and municipal elections and 20 years before they could vote in national elections. (Although not allowed to vote in federal elections until 1920, when the Suffrage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, women in 20 states gained the right to vote in state and local elections prior to 1920.) Washington women’s 1910 victory in their campaign for state suffrage owed much to the political expertise and credibility they had achieved through previous decades of civic activism as members of women’s clubs.

Women’s special contributions to western development, meanwhile, are all but forgotten. Few communities recognize and celebrate the part women played in establishing the local library and other community services and institutions. Older residents of small towns often refer to their local “Carnegie” libraries, but local women’s clubs, founders or co-founders of the libraries—the long-suffering organizers of all those bake sales, teas and bazaars—are seldom remembered or recognized for their many successes in creating the cultural resources of the West.

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Further Thoughts on “They Staggered as if They Were Drunk”
(COLUMBIA, Spring 1997)
By Austin Post

A s one who has spent much of his adult career re­searching glaciers in the western states and Alaska, and as the principal in discrediting the “Earthquake Advance Theory” proposed by Ralph S. Tarr and Lawrence Martin, I found the above article by William Alley excellent. It occurs to me that your readers might be interested in some follow-up information on the glaciers of the region described.

Tarr and Martin’s research on the physiographic effects of the earthquakes was outstanding and cannot be too highly commended. One would like to say as much for their “Earthquake Advance Theory” which, at the time, seemed completely reasonable: suddenly various glaciers spurted ahead in ways never before reported in Alaska, and their delay in advance after the earthquakes seemed to be proportional to the length of each glacier.

The problem, only to be realized much later and which Mr. Alley mentions in brief, was that the theory proved to be wrong. The glacier length estimates were far from correct and, much more difficult to account for, these same glaciers made similar advances at various intervals when no earth­quakes occurred. This I discovered in “first of their kind” annual aerial observations and photographic flights examining Northwestern glaciers, beginning in 1960 under Na­tional Science Foundation grants to the University of Wash­ington and continuing with the U.S. Geological Survey.

These investigations led to the even more remarkable discovery that over 200 glaciers in Alaska and northwestern Canada were subject to these sudden movements, for which the term “surge” was then proposed. I might add that the Variegated Glacier, which is the source of the streams that gave the prospectors so much trouble, has since become the most thoroughly studied surging glacier in the world, with Drs. W. Harrison, University of Alaska, C. Raymond, University of Washington and B. Kamb, Cal Tech, as principal investigators.

In brief, normal glaciers flow much like rivers, only orders of magnitude slower—generally only a few dozen feet per year. The flow rate is directly related to the volume of snow and ice accumulating annually in the upper glacier. Surg­ing glaciers typically stagnate for periods of from 10 to 100 or more years, while an ice reservoir in the upper glacier fills. Eventually this becomes un­stable and the ice suddenly sweeps down the valley as a glacier flood with speeds of up to 100 feet or more per day. Once the reservoir is de­pleted, stagnation again sets in and the process is repeated. It is still unknown why some glaciers are subject to these peri­odic surges while most glaciers flow at more constant rates and never surge.

Now back to the 1899 earthquakes. Just what effects did the severe shaking have on these ice masses? Anyone who has looked upon the grand glaciers descending Mt. Tacoma, Kulshan, Klickitat and other Northwest mountains can hardly be but struck by the fragile­appearing nature of these towering ice cliffs. They look as though poised to avalanche at the slightest touch. It came as a complete surprise when making follow-up flights after the 1964 Alaska Earthquake to discover how minor were the changes. Although gigantic rock slides had occurred where sheer bedrock cliffs had collapsed, ice avalanching was restricted to surficial snow and ice, such as falls off the cliffs.
periodically. The only major difference from most other years was that this sliding had occurred everywhere, which could hardly be considered surprising.

Let us now return to the Hubbard Glacier where the prospectors were camped. This was truly a trap, and that all escaped—rather than being drowned by giant waves and tsunamis—proves how little, not how great, were the effects these major earthquakes had on North America’s largest iceberg-calving glacier.

Further proof is that the parties were able to navigate to safety only hours after the earthquakes subsided. Although large floating ice jams were present then, this is frequently the case in Disenchantment Bay even today.

Two other incidentals: In the winter of 1899-1900 a good-sized portion of Muir Glacier, located in Glacier Bay some 120 miles distant from Yakutat, collapsed, streaming so much floating ice that the glacier, by then a major tourist attraction, could not be closely approached by ships for several years. Despite the fact that the earthquakes had not had any lasting effects on the Hubbard and hundreds of other glaciers closer to Yakutat, it was immediately proposed that the Muir Glacier’s collapse was due to those earthquakes. Again, the real cause took much time to appreciate: the glacier had already receded and had reached a wide, deep portion of its valley where the ice became afloat, leading to catastrophic breakup of the large area.

The other coincidence, if I may call it such, is the reference to Lake Chelan, Washington, and waves at that distant point ascribed to the Yakutat earthquakes. The coincidence here isn’t the possible effects of the earthquake; rather, that I was born and raised on an apple ranch on the shores of that lake, which placed me in an ideal position to observe non-wind-related waves on Lake Chelan. Although Mr. Alley does not specify whether his source mentions such things as “wave lengths” so as to better compare my observations (which were made as a kid then about eight years old), I can speak with authority that low frequency waves are common on that body of water. This I discovered by accident. I’d built a playtime “dock,” manufactured out of apple box cleats, which was about two inches above the usual high-water line. This dock served as home port for a miniature tugboat and barge fleet servicing my “Howe Sound” (Holden) Mine located in a nearby sand pile. Much to my surprise, on several occasions and for no apparent reason, the lake level would rise and flood my “work of art” under several inches of water! A few minutes to perhaps hours later, the water level would subside again. I now presume this was due to occasional, periodic low-frequency wave motions (seiche) which would cause the rise and lowering of alternate ends of this long, narrow lake. Presumably these waves were related to changing air pressure or possibly winds affecting portions of the lake out of view.

I mention these last two items to demonstrate how people are likely to associate unusual conditions that, when more rigorously considered, prove highly improbable. If Muir Glacier and Lake Chelan were affected by that distant earthquake, why haven’t they been observed responding to the many hundreds of earthquakes that have taken place at other far distant locations? Why not seek some solution closer to home? It generally is not too hard to find.

Austin Post is a retired U.S. Geological Survey hydrologist living on Vashon Island.
Additional Reading

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

Bellevues I Have Known


Eugene Barnett Talks about the “Centralia Conspiracy”


Harpingers of Change


River of Gold


The Great Fort George Wright Heist
“Fort Wright,” by Jerome G. Peltier. Undated manuscript at Cheney Cowles Museum.

“Fort George Wright,” by Mary Ellen Rowe (Master’s Thesis), 1980. Spokane Public Library.


The Women Behind Washington’s Libraries

Over the past 30 years Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown have produced a bookshelf of works on the Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest. Their 12th offering describes the frequently overlooked Indian Shaker Church, a variant of Christianity that spread through the Pacific Northwest around the turn of this century and endures today. Unrelated to the Shakers of English origins located in eastern states, the Northwest Indian Shakers emerged after 1882 when a dying Sahewamish named John Slocum experienced a vision and returned to life. A second miraculous healing reinforced his resolve to forsake his dissolute life-style and embrace Christianity. He and his wife Mary Thompson implored followers to lead moral lives. The sect adopted both Christian and Native American practices; the most visible characteristic involved bodily shaking that had healing power.

From humble beginnings the church spread through the Pacific Northwest via personal contact and occasional proselytizing. Traditional Indians as well as Protestant and Roman Catholic clerics looked askance at a religion that drew from and rejected familiar practices. Christians might praise evidence of Christian morality, especially temperance, while deploring native overtones, and Indians decried rejection of shamanism and customary beliefs. Over time the emergence of rival leaders wrought a history complicated rivalries, of federal and state governments and their courts, even of religion's greatest threat to survival.

The authors place their topic within broader contexts of the whole Native American experience, of Catholic and Protestant rivalries, of federal and state governments and their courts, even of the current fascination with near-death experiences. They describe personalities and conflicts within a church that was neither simplistic nor harmonious. One conflict centered around reliance on revelations versus the Bible; another on the role of spirit dances and the smokehouse. Although the authors note the effect of modern-day influences, they suspect that declining spirituality is the Shaker religion's greatest threat to survival.

Using contemporary accounts, anthropological studies, government reports and their own recent observations, the authors have produced a detailed history with strong sociological overtones; those chapters describing beliefs and practices are arguably the strongest. Enough bits of Shaker history have been told before to intrigue casual observers and serious students of the Native American/Euro-American encounter in the Northwest. Ruby and Brown have drawn this together in one highly commendable account.

Rural Reflections
A Collection of Stories from Women Who Live in Rural Areas of Whitman County, Washington
Reviewed by Glen Lindeman.

This is a very uncommon book in a very common genre—reminiscences by western rural women. Included here are contributions by 29 women from southeast Washington's Whitman County. In their own words they present lively, informative and moving accounts of their lives. Upon reading this book, I thought, "Wouldn't it have been a fine thing if all the women of the county had contributed?" But this is impractical, of course, and the 29 individuals represented here provide an excellent cross-section of the population. There is fine insight here, and the book is an enjoyable read. The editors are two life-long area residents—Patsy Prince and Della Evans, a "cowboy" poet who has recited at the famous Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada. The foreword is by Rosalita artist, writer and publisher Nona Hengen, and the beautiful cover painting is by Vicki Broeckel of Dusty, Washington.

These stories are closely tied to the land. Whitman County's diverse, hilly topography often is a surprise to visitors. Its central and eastern sections, nearer the forested buttes and mountains of the Idaho border, are semi-humid grasslands, thickly occupied, and tied to major urban-like colleges (Washington State University and the University of Idaho). The west, on the other hand, is a much drier, less populated area with a mixed grazing and farming culture not unlike that of the open range and canyonland country of west Texas. Co-editor Prince represents the former region of the county and Evans the latter.

The women in Rural Reflections cite accounts not only from the pioneer era but also from throughout the 20th century and up to the present day. This broad coverage is one of the book's great strengths. It is clear from these stories that the period of greatest economic and occupational change in Washington's rural farming areas came just before and during the mid 20th century. The traditional pioneer-like or intensely rural life-style of bygone years disappeared in this period of government-stabilized markets, expanding farm holdings, widespread electrification, vastly improved roadways and machinery, television, and gradually changing views of women's roles in modern society. These are stories of women active in many phases of Whitman County life, not only in farming, ranching and homekeeping, but in business and commercial activities, education, government and community affairs. Two of the women, for example, have served as county commissioners in recent years.

Humor, too, is never far from hand. As an editor at a university press, I took special delight in the book's final disclaimer: "If you find mistakes in this publication, please consider that they are there for a purpose. We publish something for everyone, and some people are always looking for mistakes." Also included are a map, extensive illustrations, and "cowboy" and other poetry.

Glen Lindeman lives and works in Whitman County. He is an editor at Washington State University Press in Pullman.

Women and Power in Native North America
Reviewed by Thomas Winter.

Women and Power represents a significant contribution to ongoing debates about gender and power in native societies and the impact of colonization and contact by European societies on already established gender role patterns. Native American societies discussed include the Tlingit, Eskimo, Chipewyan, Colville, Blackfeet, Pomo, Paiute, Navajo, San Juan Pueblo, Cherokee, Muskogee and Seneca.

Historians will want to pay close attention to Winter's highly suggestive discussions of concepts of gender in Native American societies. For example, Victoria Patterson's essay on the Pomo reveals striking consequences of Native-American-European contact. Pomo women became powerful spiritual leaders in their society as a result of the Ghost Dance movement. Around the turn of the century, Pomo women often became the principal providers of their families and clans because of a growing interest in Indian arts and crafts.

The majority of the Native American societies investigated assign women relatively high status, resting on gender role reciprocity rather than gender role division. Laura Klein, in her investigation of Tlingit society, shows how concepts of gender, kinship and social rank are integrated with the tribe's political and economic systems. Klein states that the Tlingit "ranking system cannot differentially evaluate the social realities of men and women because no other part of the society does; it is necessarily part of the whole culture."

Some societies assigned, in special cases and circumstances, specific roles to women normally reserved for men. For example, the Cherokee allocated "war women" special positions. Alice Kehoe shows that the Blackfeet do not distinguish between genders in the lexical sense, but only between animate and inanimate, thus allowing for the existence of "manly-hearted women," so-called because of their extraordinary assertiveness. As Daniel Maltz and JoAllyn Archambault point out in their summary essay, "The availability of high-status male roles to some . . . women implies the superiority of male roles and makes women who occupy them the exception rather than the rule."

Laura Klein and Lillian Ackerman, professors of anthropology at Pacific Lutheran University and Washington State University, respectively, have put together a stimulating volume that deserves the interest of anthropologists and historians alike.

Thomas Winter received his doctorate from the University of Cincinnati. He has published numerous articles, book reviews and film critiques on gender issues.

Address all review copies & related communications to:
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