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From the Editor 2
History Commentary 3
Thoughts on a boxcar graffiti artist.
By Herb Blissard

Oregon's Carlisle 6
A history of Chemawa Indian School.
By Cary C. Collins

A Century of Services for the Mentally Ill 11
Washington's state-run psychiatric programs: an overview.
By William R. Conte

History Album 18
Red Cross to the rescue.

Oysterville Remembered 19
Memories of growing up on the tide flats of Shoalwater Bay.
By Willard R. Espey

Ezra Meeker's Quest for Klondike Gold 24
Puget Sound's pioneer "hop king" turned gold digger.
By Howard Clifford

From the Collection 30
The engine that could.

Vic Meyers 31
Not your run-of-the-mill candidate for mayor.
By Patrick Divney

Clallam County's Spruce Railroad 36
A monument to the war effort made obsolete by the armistice.
By Mary L. Stough

Yakima Canutt 38
The cowboy way... led this Colfax cowboy to Hollywood.
By Michael Allen

Correspondence 44

Additional Reading 45

Columbia Reviews 46

FRONT COVER: As professional rodeo evolved in the 1930s Pacific Northwest, town boosters used popular culture venues to showcase and capitalize on the rodeo cowboy's mystique. Here the classic bucking bronc motif is the centerpiece of an illustrated sheet music promotion—"Ride 'em Cowboy"—sponsored by the Ellensburg Rodeo Board in 1935. See related story beginning on page 38. (Special Collections, Washington State Historical Society) BACK COVER: This drawing of Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon, appeared in the January 1887 issue of The West Shore magazine. See related story beginning on page 6. (Courtesy Special Collections Division, University of Washington Libraries)
An Invitation to Our Readers

Over the last two years I have had the fun and honor of appearing on several "People and Places of Washington" segments for Television Washington. (For those members and readers who are not residents of Washington or aren't wired for cable, TVW is a state-based version of C-SPAN, a public affairs cable television channel.) My three episodes to date have dealt with the History Museum in Tacoma, the State Capital Museum in Olympia, and the troubled history of trying to install murals in our state capitol building.

Anyway, at the invitation of TVW, later this summer I will head out on Washington's highways with a "film crew" to record features on historic sites all over our state for later re-broadcast and possibly for other uses. When asked by TVW's CEO Denny Heck how I would approach the project, I said we should go to places that were both visually interesting and also told compelling stories about Washington's history.

I had great fun mapping out an itinerary that would economically allow the crew and me to visit these sites, but then it occurred to me, as the editor of COLUMBIA Magazine, that many of our readers might also have fun compiling such a list.

So let me encourage the readers of COLUMBIA to send your suggestions to our editorial office. What do you think are the ten essential historic sites in Washington that exemplify the broad pattern of our state's history? The nominations will not be in hand in time to guide the television production, but an edited compilation would be fun to run in a future issue. I'll share my list at that time, too.

—David L. Nicandri, Executive Editor
Cowboy Was Here . . . Thoughts on a Boxcar Graffiti Artist

By Herb Blisard

Really the writer doesn’t want success. He knows he has a short span of life, that the day will come when he must pass through the wall of oblivion, and he wants to leave a scratch on that wall—Kilroy was here—that somebody a hundred, or a thousand years later will see.”
—William Faulkner, 1959

TOO MANY BRIDGES, grain elevators and slab-sided rock faces in Washington’s 66,000 square miles have been defaced by someone’s message. Most are blights on the land and insults to aesthetics. At the bottom of a steep canyon road I’m greeted by a heart-enclosed sprawl of love. Taking a 90-degree bend in the dry wheat country, I can count on confronting yet one more sign demanding the government get off our backs. And I notice that latter-day warriors have sprayed territorial markings on the side of a fruit packing plant above the Columbia River.

We all leave marks on our world—words and symbols announcing “we were here.” Paleolithic hunters daubed details of their expeditions on cave walls. In ancient Pompeii, travelers gouged endorsements of local wines and lodgings. Twenty centuries later, hobos and street people chalk notices on fences and walls directing fellow travelers to hot meals and rough beds.

Some messages are only as permanent as weather, civic indignation and clean-up crews tolerate. Others have good legs or better—good wheels—and spread their words from city to city and the spaces in between. From “wash me” signs on dusty automobiles to cryptic scribblings on buses and trucks, the signings all proclaim someone was somewhere.

The most traveled, although probably the least seen, are written on railroad freight cars. Boxcars are the most popular canvas for the dwindling number of road knights to record their thoughts and gripes.

Declarations of love—“Nina, I Take Thee for My Wife”—and hometowns—“The Beaumont Rambler” and “The Elko Kid”—ornament the peeling sides of rolling stock. Crude drawings of oversize sexual organs compete for precious drawing room with resonating nicknames—“The Hammer,” “Waterbed Lou,” “Coaltrain,” “Big Ed” and “Hoboski.”

Usually there was only one of each in the yards and sidings of central Washington until I discovered what became the first in a series of boxcar endorsements so different, so trenchant and often puzzling that I forgot my distaste for vandalism. I quickly reasoned this series was not as blighting as those sprayed on overpasses and alley façades. They were more artistic, hinted at history and, besides, would be seen by very few other than railyard workers or fellow travelers.

After five or six sightings I began to build a persona for this peripatetic scribe. He was a male with a bitter philosophical bent who had taken to the road after a miserable marriage or a frustrated academic career. He could have been a defrocked university teacher, or maybe the scion of an old-money family back east. Whatever he was, this sardonic commentator was surely kin to one of James Joyce’s Dubliners—an outcast from life’s feast.

His comments could travel thousands of miles before
erased by time or obliterated with paint; today a central Washington yard, tomorrow the desert Southwest, next week a Kansas wheat field.

His work stood out from all the other scribblings I have seen on freight cars from the Olympic Peninsula to the Idaho border. Each message was accompanied by his distinctive imprimatur—a quick, practiced sketch of a squashed-nose, doubled-chinned, pipe-smoking cowboy in a ten-gallon hat. Unlike his fellow railroad writers, he never signed or dated his work. Not having a name, date or hometown to attach to his work only heightened my need to create the man behind the markings.

FIVE YEARS AFTER my first sightings I continue to search for more biographical clues to flesh out my creation. I try to be first in line when the crossing gates go down and a mile-long train pokes through town. It's not difficult to spot his graffiti if you are looking for them. They stand out like a clean, white sheet in a front street flophouse.

If I were to consult another of my heroes—Sherlock Holmes—he might deduce the writer to be about six feet tall from the location of the messages on the cars, and that he was probably right-handed from the slant of the letters. I'm sure the Great Detective would drop whatever case he was working on to discover who the writer was.

I believe my rambler has read the ancient mythologies. He is either describing himself when he writes COLOSSUS OF ROADS or just punning around. How many meanings can you wring out of ULISSES CARRION? Is this just a different spelling of the Greek hero, or is he referring to the Joyce novel? The term could have special railroad significance.

Does “carrion” represent roadkill or his carry-on bindle? His deftly ambiguous YOUTH-IN-ASIA recalls a time and place other Americans are content to forget.

A few cars away he inscribes TAPS ON LOAFERS—a solemn benediction for those who don't work, perhaps including himself, or he's putting an end to memories of a happier past, a time of coin-decorated shoes. Then again, he might be describing yard cops rapping on boxcars to roust the unwanted.

After his Nam experience, he could have studied in a Japanese monastery and come to the conclusion that there is little that matters except the splintered floor of his mobile mansion and the tall, blurred view through its door. Is the journey the only reality, the only measure of life?

Grammar, allusions and apparent education set him apart from his compatriots, most of whom have severe problems spelling common four-letter words. His messages are further distanced from the majority when he writes in another language. His enigmatic message in Italian—ALTRI FRANCOBELLI—only deepens the mystery. A literal translation seems to say “other postage stamps,” but I'm tempted to read into it a comment on “another French war.”

SABBATICAL may be telling all who see the message to take a break from their weekly schedule, to travel and see what else is out there. Another of his markings includes the number “43,” which, if it was his birth year, would have made him eligible for a tour of Viet Nam. Or you could add the numbers and get the traditional number of years necessary for an academic leave of absence.

His Stetson hat logo either marks his Texas roots or hides a receding hairline which he describes as a GLABROUS PATE.
There have to be many days when his existence, Zen or otherwise, is empty, cold, dangerous and lonely. The reminder STILL TUESDAY reads wintry gray and boring, where one day passes indistinguishable from any other. For that special day that wasn’t just another Tuesday, he wrote GLASS-BREAKING EVENT. He knows a compound modifier when he writes one.

Who was getting slammed when he asked HOO’LL BUY A V. SLOW DECAY? Options are many. The V. could be short for Viet Nam or his method of stressing “very.” Slow decay has nuclear overtones. HOO’LL is puzzling. Is it an arcane railroad term or the nickname for a traveling companion? BIG MISTAKES could be a political or a personal comment—nuclear energy, American police action or his decision to take to the rails.

Fat cats merited a scornful memo—DOWN WITH PLUTOCRATS.

NUPTIALS AND BAIL MONEY must refer to his unsuccessful marriage somewhere back down the line. Could have taken place in Louisiana, so he followed it with POUNCHATRAIN VERY BIG MISTAKE. That might be too obvious a reading. Train tickets are punched, pounce is an ancient writing surface and smacking a boxcar with one’s fists is a large error of judgment and could lead to a “womble rash.” It’s tempting, and all too easy to look for the hidden meanings in his message when this one may only be a big lake near New Orleans.

WOMBLE RASH is one of those scrawlings that entices the detective to dig beyond the obvious. RASH could be chipped paint on a boxcar. It could also describe raw, red skin incurred when crawling under a boxcar, wiggling through a fence or heaving yourself onto a moving car. WOMBLE can describe a “churning, roiling” activity, and by extension “belly crawling.” I can see my writer scrabbling under a fence, crossing six lines of tracks, two of which he has to crawl under parked cars, to get to a southbound train as it leaves. This interpretation brings him to life, but it is also distinctly possible that none of my interpretations hit on what he intended, a caveat that should be applied to most of the other markings.

RAILROAD HISTORIANS have offered me dozens of other interpretations. I still prefer the one I have created—a tragic, romantic wanderer who, although he believes he has failed in almost everything he has tried, continues the search. He cannot do otherwise.

Knulp, a German vagabond whose wanderings were chronicled by Herman Hesse, learns that after a lifetime of seemingly aimless wandering, he has in fact fulfilled his earthly mission.

“In My name you have wandered,” the Lord tells him, “and ever and again aroused in the steady and industrious people a little longing for freedom.”

With vinegary messages, the cowboy scribe reminds me, steady and industrious, of that sweet feeling of freedom.

GOODBYE CIMARRON!

AUTHOR’S NOTE
The capitalized phrases are the actual messages written by the still unknown and unidentified railroad writer.

Herb Blizard is a photographer, author of numerous articles on Washington, and an instructor at Yakima Valley Community College for over 35 years.
Teaching "America" at Chemawa Indian School

On February 25, 1880, Lieutenant (later Major) Melville C. Wilkinson, United States Army, Third Infantry, sent the following telegram to Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz in Washington, D.C.: "School under way[.] Eighteen boys & girls[.] More ready to come. Need balance [of] appropriation this fiscal year." With this brief advisory from its founder and first superintendent, Forest Grove Indian School was born. It went on to become the oldest continuously running nonreservation Indian boarding school in the United States after Carlisle closed in 1918.

The school was originally located 26 miles southwest of Portland, at Forest Grove, Oregon, on property leased from Pacific University and neighboring farmers. Administrators moved the facility to a setting just north of the state capital at Salem in mid 1885, after the Indian Office in Washington, D.C., determined that the original site lacked adequate agricultural land. Fire had destroyed the girls' dormitory, and insufficient water supply and poor drainage factored into the decision as well. These drawbacks, combined with local opposition, sealed the school's fate in Forest Grove. At Salem the institution became most commonly known simply as "Chemawa."

Chemawa Indian School formed one component of a complex federal educational system designed to prepare Native American children for assimilation into white society. Besides nonreservation boarding schools, the Indian Office also operated reservation boarding and day schools. Because long distances served to separate home from school and parents from children, bureaucrats in the last quarter of the 19th century came to favor the nonreservation school as their institution of choice. In 1883, for instance, an official commented on the need to obstruct tribal and parental involvement in the so-called "civilization" process:

On the reservation no school can be so conducted as to remove the children from the influence of the idle and vicious who are everywhere present. Only by removing them beyond the reach of this influence can they be benefited by the teaching of the schoolmaster.
Centrally located in the fertile Willamette Valley, Chemawa had ample arable land to support agricultural training and enough isolation from reservations to quarantine students from "undesirable" associations.

Chemawa opened just four months after Captain (later Brigadier General) Richard Henry Pratt established the now well-known Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. Recognized as the "father" of Indian education, Pratt "sought to transmute Indians' essential identity by altering students' physical appearance, language, ideals, spiritual beliefs, social roles, traditions, and way of life in general." In his opinion, effective resocialization demanded removal from home, family, tribe and reservation. Based on the Carlisle assimilationist model, large nonreservation schools soon began to proliferate across the country: in 1884 alone, Chilocco opened in Oklahoma; Genoa, in Nebraska; Albuquerque, in New Mexico; and Haskell, in Kansas. Nineteen more schools had been built by 1902 in Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, South Dakota, Montana, California, Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin. From Pennsylvania to Oregon, the administrators and faculty employed in these institutions all strove to achieve the same goal: to acculturate Indian youths in the values, beliefs and methods of American society.

From humble beginnings at Forest Grove, Chemawa expanded rapidly at Salem. In 1920 the school enrolled 903 students from 90 far western tribes, nearly a third coming from Alaska. The physical plant consisted of 66 buildings valued at nearly a quarter of a million dollars. Four-hundred-plus acres of orchard, garden, and other agricultural land were worth an additional $55,000. The federal government appraised the entire facility at almost $400,000.

Chemawa drew pupils from throughout the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. To be admitted, students had to be at least one-quarter blood degree, pass a physical examination, and have their parents' consent. By 1930, 8,000 Indian youth had attended the school, a figure that would climb to 22,000 by 1987.

Chemawa's service area fluctuated through the years. From 1925 to 1960 the Bureau of Indian Affairs prohibited Alaskan children from enrolling, except in cases of emergency or by direct order of the secretary of the interior. A mandate to carry out the Navajo Project, a special program to provide members of that nation with educational opportunities unavailable in the Southwest, made Chemawa strictly a Navajo school from 1957 to 1960. Chemawa admitted only Alaskans and Navajos until 1967—when the Indian Bureau ended the Navajo Project—and began again the following year, for the first time in over a decade, to enroll students from Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

Like all federal Indian boarding schools, Chemawa provided both academic and vocational training. Labeled the "half-and-half" system, students spent part of their day in the classroom and part in the shops or on the farm. Early in the school's history the curriculum for all pupils included courses in United States history, geography, language, arithmetic, reading, writing and spelling. In addition, boys specialized in steam and electrical engineering, carpentry, painting, blacksmithing, tailoring, baking, printing, and wagon-, shoe- and harness-making. Young women, meanwhile, learned cooking, cleaning, washing, sewing, and other skills related to the care of home and family. In 1901 typing instruction was incorporated into their vocational regimen, as was nurse's training in 1911.
Training in patriotism formed a significant part of student life. In 1913 Superintendent H. E. Wadsworth reported that "early in the year a regular system of flag salutes was instituted, respect and love for the flag of one's country being the basis of all good citizenship." Wadsworth related,

Before breakfast every morning, unless inclement weather prevent, all students, in regular company formation, march to the flagstaff. The colors are raised while the band plays the "Star Spangled Banner," after which the students repeat in concert the oath of allegiance, and salute the flag. Just before supper the students again march to the flagstaff, the bugles sound the "Retreat," the flag is again saluted and then lowered for the day.

The Indian Office sought to make nonreservation schools as self-supporting as possible. This meant that students had to assume considerable responsibility for keeping operating costs low. A clergyman familiar with Chemawa noted their high level of productivity:

The pupils make all the shoes and boots worn by the ... children, do all the blacksmithing and iron work, all the carpenter work needed about the place—except, of course, the buildings, which are erected by contract—make all the clothing for both boys and girls, as well as the bed clothing, do all the laundry work and cooking, [and] make all the improvements about the grounds and farm.

In October 1886 the school newspaper outlined a typical week for Chemawa students:

We get up every morning at 5:00 o'clock, prepare our toilet, make our beds and clean our rooms, and at 5:30 answer the roll call. At 6:00 o'clock we go to breakfast. At 7:00 o'clock we have chapel; after chapel all go to work, on the farm, in the carpenter shop, shoe shop, blacksmith shop, harness shop, tailor shop, tin shop, laundry, sewing room, kitchen, dining room or some place else. From 9:00 o'clock until 12:00 o'clock half of us are in the school room. At 12:00 o'clock we all meet in the dining room. At 1:00 p.m., those who spent the morning in the school room go to the farm, the work shop, etc. Those who worked during the morning go to the school room. At 4:00 p.m. school is out. At 5:00 we have supper. From 5:30 to 6:00 we drill. At 7:00 we all march to the school rooms to get our lessons for the next day. At 8:40 the retiring bell rings, all lights must go out and everything be quiet. This is repeated day after day, except on Wednesday evenings we have prayer meeting in the place of study hours. On Saturday afternoon we do not work, but we take a bath and are given clean clothes. On Sunday morning we "dress up," black our shoes and go to Sabbath school. In the afternoon, unless some of the city ministers come out to talk to us, we are allowed a half holiday, and take a walk. In the evening we have religious exercises in which all who wish are allowed to take part. The Indian boys and girls are always ready to do what they are told, and to do it the best they can. We are not well educated yet, and do not know how to work well, but in the near future we hope to become a credit to ourselves, our country and our people.

Chemawa's academic program underwent many changes in the school's first half century. From 1880 to 1883 students attended for three years and then, at their option, applied for extensions of up to two additional years. In 1884 administrators introduced a fixed five-year schedule for all newly entering pupils. The 25 graduates at Chemawa's first commencement in Salem in late July 1885 had received a fifth-grade equivalent education. In 1888 an eight-grade curriculum was approved, which remained in place until officials adopted a ten-grade course of study in 1917. Finally, in the 1926-27 academic
year, Chemawa became a full four-year high school. The grade school was closed in 1933, but opened again in 1936 so that younger children could attend school while receiving treatment for conjunctivitis.

Compulsory school attendance for American Indians began in 1891. By 1893 Congress had “authorized the secretary of the interior to withhold rations and annuities from parents and guardians who refused to send their children” to reservation schools. The legislation only legalized coercive tactics that field personnel had been employing for years. As one example, agent Charles E. Monteith of Idaho’s Lapwai Indian Agency for the Nez Perce confessed to Indian Commissioner Hiram Price in March 1883 that although he realized tribal members were “currently at liberty” to educate their children as they wanted, he had withheld federal assistance from parents unwilling to register their sons and daughters in his Lapwai boarding school.

Mandatory attendance laws did not extend to nonreservation boarding schools where “parental or kin consent” remained an admission requirement. Administrators quickly realized, therefore, that at least subtle persuasion would be necessary to achieve large enrollments in schools located hundreds or even a thousand miles away from students’ homes. Jerry Meeker, who lived on the Puyallup reservation near Tacoma, Washington, and a member of the first class at Forest Grove in 1880, fell subject to such methods. In the summer of 1882 he decided not to go back to Forest Grove for the fall term. To persuade the young man to reconsider, Superintendent Wilkinson appealed to duty and obligation as sufficient justification for Meeker’s return:

I do not understand you; have you decided not to come? You must answer me this first. I must tell you, that I think you ought to have at least another year here, before you are strong enough to return to your people to be a teacher & leader. You may feel strong now, but you will need more wisdom before you can be really prepared to take your place as a strong man to guide in the councils of your people. I still think that if your father can possibly get along without you another year he ought to do so, for your sake, & for the sake of his people, in the future. You must be careful how you give up such an opportunity.

As Wilkinson’s remarks suggest, he was training his charges for positions of tribal leadership. Candidates for admission “should be the brightest, the best; the children who will command some family influence when they return” to the reservation, he told Yakama agent James Wilbur in August 1882.

A survey of Chemawa’s student register shows that Wilkinson would not have been disappointed in that aspect of the school. If the experience of the Yakama tribe is an accurate barometer, many Chemawans went on to serve prominently in tribal governments. Watson Totus (1905-1988)—a descendant of both Kamiakin and Smohalla, and great-grandson of Elit Palmer, a signatory of the 1855 Yakama treaty—served for 40 years on the Yakama Indian Nation Tribal Council and as chairman from 1974 to 1978. Thomas K. Yallup (1884-1961) participated in Yakama tribal politics for half a century and was a councilman for 28 years. Kiuus Jim (1892-1960), a Chemawa student from 1907 to 1912, excelled at both track and long-distance running while in Oregon. The Yakamas elected him as their council vice chairman and Jim also served on important water and fisheries committees. William Winnier (1888-1956), lastly, was sergeant-at-arms of the tribal council from 1947 until his death. Although a subject for further study, the Yakama’s record is likely not dissimilar to that of other Pacific Northwest Indian peoples.

Nonreservation boarding school students typically spent at least some time previously attending a reservation boarding school or a day facility. In September 1893 Commissioner of Indian Affairs D. M. Browning outlined the criteria for administrators to follow in admitting students to nonreservation schools and the qualities successful candidates should possess:

Transfer from a reservation to a nonreservation school should be looked upon as a promotion and a privilege, and selections for such transfer should be carefully made and based upon merit and proficiency. Such a system, fully carried out, will give to the higher schools a more earnest class of pupils, better able to use profitably the very excellent advantages which these schools offer.

Browning recommended that nonreservation schools accept only Indian children who were “old enough . . . to engage in regular shop or farm work” and only graduate students who were “old enough . . . to have fairly mastered a trade and to have acquired character and habits of sufficient strength and tenacity to withstand the strain of reservation and tribal influences.”

To help in recruiting and keeping students, the Indian Bureau tried to make school life a pleasant experience. An attractive physical plant formed a part of that effort. Chemawa’s red brick and white-washed schoolhouses, dormitories and shops made for an impressive landscape. A visitor in 1903 described the immaculately maintained campus:

My first view of Chemawa, the second oldest and fourth largest Government Indian School in the United States, made a pleasing and memorable impression. The beautifully kept lawns, playing fountains, beds of the finest roses I ever saw, on either side of the long lines of granolithic walks, leading to buildings of modern architecture in front of which are beds of cedars, evergreen bushes or groups of graceful fir-trees, give to the place an air of substantial elegance and aesthetic permanence that is reassuring and gratifying.

Although long and widely known for fiscal restraint, the Indian Office approved large appropriations to support capi-
tal improvements at Chemawa. McBride Hall, a girls’ dormitory built around the turn of the century, cost $20,000 to construct. One observer wrote glowingly about the building:

It is complete and up-to-date in every particular, steam heated, electric-lighted, with the latest and most improved system of ventilation. . . . Long lines of nickel-plated spigots over porcelain-lined troughs where each student may have running water to bathe face and hands, and the many ring baths in the nearest of order marked the improved bathing facilities over most institutions. The entrance to the building was through a large doorway and the hall and stair-way [were] carpeted in Brussels, with new rag carpet on the hall, farther from the door.

Athletics was perhaps most popular of all student activities. Early in the century Chemawa offered football, basketball, baseball, track, gymnastics, tennis and croquet. For two years, from 1916 through 1917, William J. Warner, brother of Carlisle’s Glenn “Pop” Warner, coached the football team. Chemawa also had two parade bands. The first comprised 28 experienced players; the second included all beginning musicians. Finally, the school boasted six literary societies, two companies of Boy Scouts, YMCA and YWCA chapters, and affiliation with several religious denominations.

Even so, many students found institutional life difficult if not impossible to adjust to. Homesick, scared, discouraged or simply fed up, pupils routinely ran away, sometimes in large numbers. For example, in 1921 the school recorded 46 “desertions,” followed by 70 in 1922, 42 in 1923, 75 in 1925, and 58 in 1926. Discipline could be harsh. Despite the federal government’s banning of corporal punishment in Indian schools in 1904, one Chemawa superintendent was suspended and eventually transferred after “whipping” 13 female runaways in October 1910. Death was not an unknown occurrence either. Established in 1886, the Chemawa School Cemetery contains 189 headstones, each marking the grave of a student whose body was never returned home for burial.

Within the confederation of federally-managed Pacific Northwest Indian schools, Chemawa held a position of unequaled prominence. The Indian Office allocated larger sums to educate more students at a higher level over a longer period than anywhere else. Perhaps Superintendent Wadsworth summarized best Chemawa’s significance as an educational facility in his 1916 annual report:

This is the largest and best-equipped Indian school in the Pacific Northwest, and is within convenient distance of the large numbers of Indians living in Oregon, Northern California, Washington, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Nevada. In addition to these, it is a very popular school with the native Alaskans . . . and the school could probably be filled with these children alone, if effort were made. This school should be one of the last to be abolished, as it has a large Indian population to serve. It should be kept to its highest efficiency, and continued indefinitely.

Wadsworth’s assessment has proven prophetic. Today, as a fully accredited high school and one of only four federal nonreservation Indian boarding schools operating in the United States, Chemawa continues to serve the native people of the Pacific Northwest.

Cary C. Collins is a doctoral candidate in public history at Washington State University. His current research remains focused on Chemawa Indian School at Salem, Oregon.
A Century of Services for the Mentally Ill

The first administration building at Western State Hospital, built in 1886. This structure was replaced on the same site by the present administration building in 1934.

Washington's State-Operated Psychiatric Programs

Psychiatric services operated by the State of Washington have run a course parallel to the development of American psychiatry. Starting late in the 19th century, the system was spared the spinning chairs and bell-shaped hoods thought to deflect evil spirits. However, services did run the gamut from the moral therapy of the late 1800s to the use of currently appreciated pharmacological, group and individual therapies.

EDITOR'S NOTE
The following is reprinted from Saddlebags to Scanners (Washington State Medical Association, 1989), with permission of the publisher.

BY WILLIAM R. CONTE
Over time, state programs have enjoyed the influence of many notables in psychiatry and related fields. These include Dr. Rebecca Wright, expert in hydrotherapy; Dr. Walter Freeman of lobotomy fame; Dr. Philip R. A. May, noted researcher in the field of schizophrenia; and Dr. Karl Menninger, the “father of American psychiatry.”

Washington Territory became a political entity in 1853, at which time the white population of the jurisdiction was 3,965. The first territorial legislature, called the Assembly, met in Olympia at the Gold Bar Restaurant in 1854. The Assembly passed the Poor Law, which took note of individuals who could not work as the result of “bodily infirmity, idiocy, lunacy, or other causes.” (This deprecatory terminology was not deleted until 1988.)

Under the terms of the Poor Law, care of the indigent mentally ill was to be provided by the counties, some of which funded the responsibility while others did not. The counties did have the authority to seek out family members for reimbursement of expenditures when such families could be found and when they had money.

Services for these individuals were extremely limited and consisted of an occasional supervised live-in situation with a willing “foster parent.” If there were no funds, not even these meager efforts existed, and the disturbed patients were forced to fend for themselves. For individuals who were financially more capable, the situation was not a great deal better. They were required to leave their homes and go to Portland, where the closest facility was situated.

The counties had mixed reactions to this new responsibility. Some of the larger counties refused to accept it and billed the territorial government for their expenditures. The territorial officials, in turn, attempted reimbursement from the federal government, but without success.

There is an interesting historical parallel in this regard—more than a century later, in 1964, the Washington State Legislature transferred the care of community psychiatric services to county jurisdiction. County commissioners, like their territorial predecessors, met this responsibility with mixed emotions, particularly when the large state appropriations promised with the reorganized program failed to materialize.

Services for these individuals were extremely limited and consisted of an occasional supervised live-in situation with a willing “foster parent.” If there were no funds, not even these meager efforts existed, and the disturbed patients were forced to fend for themselves. For individuals who were financially more capable, the situation was not a great deal better. They were required to leave their homes and go to Portland, where the closest facility was situated.

The counties had mixed reactions to this new responsibility. Some of the larger counties refused to accept it and billed the territorial government for their expenditures. The territorial officials, in turn, attempted reimbursement from the federal government, but without success.

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As the territory’s population grew, so did the number of those less capable of caring for themselves. Many citizens, noting the development of “asylums for the insane” in the majority of states, feared that Washington Territory might acquire a negative reputation, and thereby discourage newcomers, if it also did not provide care for the mentally ill.

Thus, in 1862, Washington Territory entered into a contract with the Sisters of Charity to operate a hospital providing for the “safe keeping, care and medical treatment” of individuals who were psychiatrically ill. This was the first organized psychiatric service under the auspices of Washington Territory. The contract granted the Sisters of Charity eight dollars a week for their care of each patient served. Seventeen patients were received in the first year.

Although there was general satisfaction with the services rendered by the Sisters of Charity (Territorial Governor Pickering said he was “gratified” at the care the mentally ill were receiving), when their contract expired in 1866 the territorial government again sought the lowest bidder to provide these services. Perhaps the fact that James M. Huntington and his son-in-law, W. W. Hayes, agreed to perform the services for seven dollars a week per patient gave them the edge. These men erected a building at Monticello (Longview) for the care of the “insane.” They knew nothing about the needs of their charges and appeared to pay no attention to the recommendations of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane, as evidenced by their neglect of the patients.

In 1869 Dorothy Dix, nationally recognized crusader for humane treatment of the mentally ill, visited Oregon and learned of untenable conditions at Monticello. She wrote a letter to the Daily Pacific Tribune, an Olympia newspaper, and indicated that

Patients sleep on bunks, in cells, in a coarsely finished unplastered building, parts of which are described to me as very little better than a barn. . . . Some of the patients are confined in the cells. . . . The cells are varying in filthiness; in all were sinks evidently never washed . . . bedding very dirty. . . .

Although she recommended that a medical man be designated to evaluate the Washington asylum, nothing really changed until the Huntington and
Hayes contract expired. By that time the territorial government had purchased the abandoned Fort Steilacoom from the federal government for $830 and was prepared to furnish the facilities for its future contractors. The legislature also passed a measure creating the position of a resident physician to oversee the "medical, moral and sanitary management of the patients." The new asylum in the retired military housing opened on August 19, 1871, with the transfer of 15 patients from Monticello.

The period between 1871 and 1875 was a time of extreme controversy. The lay contractor who was prepared to exploit the patients for his own personal gain was in almost constant conflict with the resident physician whose only interest was the care and treatment of his patients. The Medical Society of Washington Territory was offended by the negligent care, became involved, and was clearly very influential in improving matters.

In 1875 the Medical Society's members published a document entitled, "A Supplement to the Late Asylum Conflict." The group indicated that its purpose in the publication was to "awaken a more universal interest in the welfare of our indigent insane." To accomplish its goal, they outlined the problems encountered in the dual management system and quoted extensively the reports of a former resident physician, Dr. H. C. Willison. The paper noted that Willison described observing during his tenure men sleeping in dark damp cells day in and day out, with wet rotten straw for beds, loading the air with a stench almost suffocating; patients were taken out in the damp and cold to work.... One man was kept in irons day and night for months until the arms were so swollen the irons had to be removed.

Dr. Willison indicated he found no interest on the part of Governor Ferry when he described these conditions. He also decried the 152% increase in population over a 3-year period (1872-1875) and said he believed that 15-20% of the patients had been relegated to the ranks of the incurable because of neglect.

In concluding its position paper, the Medical Society noted the recommendations of Dr. Willison, supported by the American Journal of Insanity (not dated), and adopted as its own the recommendation that the hospital organization be "affected" with a medical superintendent as the responsible head. "In this arrangement only is there immunity from such conflict of interest and duty." Willison also recommended that a board be appointed to oversee the state hospital. Incidentally, this same recommendation was made in the early 1960s by Garrett Heyns, then director of the state's institutions.

Later in 1875 the territorial legislature removed the dual management and placed the resident physician under a board of trustees, thus protecting the doctor from political and other pressures. That same legislature, upon the suggestion of the Medical Society, changed the name of the program from "The Institution for the Insane" to "The Hospital for the Insane in Washington Territory."

Five years after the hospital opened, the resident population numbered 61 (August 15, 1876). In his annual report dated August 15, 1877, Dr. Rufus Willard, medical superintendent of the Hospital for the Insane, noted:

"The general care and custody of patients is of great importance, but the chief duties of a medical superintendent are higher than this. To afford permanent relief is the greatest object, and to accomplish this, the sooner the views already expressed (on this) are clearly understood and accepted by every community... the sooner we shall be able to carry out the true aim and object of this institution."

In 1889, brought about another change in the name of the Steilacoom institution—it became Western State Hospital. When the population at Western State reached 200, a site committee was appointed to find a location in eastern Washington for another state hospital. That committee was cautioned to keep accessibility in mind since the distance between Steilacoom and Tacoma by horse and carriage was problematic. The search committee chose Medical Lake as the site for Eastern State Hospital because that community had made such a "favorable offer." They attempted to sidetrack the admonishment regarding accessibility by noting that the "salubrious setting
was only eight miles from Cheney, its nearest station on the main line of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and is on three stage routes. . . ."

A third state psychiatric institution opened in 1915—Northern State Hospital, situated on the state-owned Western State Hospital Farm near Sedro Woolley.

The compassionate treatment called for by the medical association and unanimously endorsed by the mental health personnel of the day set the stage for the "moral treatment" that was characteristic of Washington's programs as well as the psychiatric facilities across the country. Briefly stated, this treatment called for humane care, a variety of supporting services (including work and recreation), and an opportunity for religious participation. Moral treatment militated against any punitive approach.

This is not to say that inhumane treatment of the psychiatric patient was forever abolished; indeed, whenever one group of individuals is placed in control of another, as in hospitals and prisons, unfortunate events are likely to take place. However, with the established policy calling for a kindly and supportive communication between staff and residents of the institution, the likelihood of therapeutic advantage was increased.

Moral treatment placed emphasis on improving housing, food, nursing and medical services. However, the rapid increases in population of the hospitals, the ensuing overcrowding, and the depreciated staff-to-patient ratios sometimes made it difficult to adequately maintain this approach.

State psychiatric services have always taken advantage of new and promising treatment opportunities. Hydrotherapy became a time-honored treatment procedure in Washington's psychiatric hospitals. This treatment consisted of wet packs and hot tubs as well as needle-spray showers. A consultant was imported from the East Coast to train the staff in the use of this particular therapy, and it was employed in the state psychiatric hospitals for a period of 50 or more years (1910 to the early 1960s). It had a remarkable quieting effect long before tranquilizers were generally accepted.

Insulin, identified by Banting and Best in 1922 and responsible for bringing diabetes under control, was found to have a calming effect on excited psychiatric patients. Manfred Sakel, working in Berlin (1927-1933) with morphine addicts, found that insulin was helpful in managing the overactive states following morphine withdrawal. His later study of the use of insulin in higher doses suggested that producing comas was beneficial to patients who had been diagnosed as schizophrenic. After he reported his work in 1933, his findings were noted early by frustrated psychiatric hospital personnel around the world and given acceptable and broad use.

Insulin was the first of the somatic treatments of the major mental illnesses and was utilized in Washington's psychiatric hospital program beginning in 1936. The risks of using a new therapeutic procedure are always of concern. The danger with the use of insulin seemed particularly great in that, to be effective, patient consciousness needed to be reduced repeatedly (30 or more times) to the coma level. The possibility of circulatory problems that might need to be faced by the limited medical and nursing staff, together with the lack of a clear theoretical basis for its use, resulted in its application on a much more limited basis than the need called for.

Nonetheless, insulin was used in the state hospitals until late 1950s, giving mutual evidence of its effectiveness or the perseverance of staff who dealt with disturbed behavior.

Because insulin therapy had proven beneficial in many instances and because of the risks involved, other forms of somatic therapy were actively sought. Joseph von Meduna, working in Hungary in the late 1920s, believed that epilepsy and schizophrenia were incompatible diseases. He experimented with convulsive agents as a treatment for the psychoses. Using at first camphor and then a synthetic camphor, Metrazol, he produced convulsions in hospitalized patients. Metrazol also had its risks, not the least of which was the occurrence of fractures; but it was used by therapists in state hospitals in the late 1930s.

Italian physician Ugo Cerletti, acting on the same theory that epilepsy and schizophrenia were incompatible and influenced by his belief that he had discovered certain pathological features in the autopsied brains of epileptics, decided to use electroshock as a therapy in these conditions. The first treatment, given in 1938, was found to be less expensive, safer and associated with less risk than other somatic therapies. This treatment, still practiced in many centers today, was available in the Washington programs by 1938. It is still available but used only infrequently.

Although many theories have been
espoused over time as to why shock therapy has relieved some of the most distressing symptoms of psychiatric illness, it has been and still is firmly believed by some that the therapy tends to break up the vicious cycle of depressive thought that plagues so many psychiatric patients. Based on this theory, the surgical procedure of frontal lobotomy became a reality. Here, the surgeon actually separated the neuronal pathways that connect the frontal lobes with the rest of the brain. Again, such procedures were tried in Washington's psychiatric hospitals, and Dr. Walter Freeman visited both Northern State and Western State hospitals to demonstrate his technique for this procedure.

It is often said that psychiatry came into its own because of understandings gained and techniques developed during World War II. Although not often considered, many of these "new" developments, such as crisis management and therapeutic use of interpersonal relationships, had been effectively at work in state hospitals long before the war. In fact, an analysis of the discharges during the "asylum" days reveals that "treatment" was often the result of a kindly and understanding word from a particularly attentive ward person, a visitor, or even one of the food services personnel who delivered lunches to the unit. The therapeutic phenomenon to which I refer is, of course, nothing more than the common denominator of all psychotherapy. Then, as the systemic therapies were introduced, patients became more communicative, thus enhancing their potential for developing relationships.

With the improvement in the staff-to-patient ratios, the opportunities to respond to patient communication multiplied. And, when the contributions of the various schools of thinking in psychiatry were felt at the institutional level, the techniques available to understand, approach and relate to patients were again greatly expanded.

In the mid 1950s the psychotropic drugs, while never a cure, unleashed vast numbers of hospitalized patients from the bonds of autism, and a flood of information and feelings were made available for inspection. Thus it was that the legislative action calling for the creation of the Mental Health Research Institute was welcomed with enthusiasm. For the first time in Washington, busy clinical personnel could have consultation and assistance from a small nucleus of staff to study what was being done to help patients and consider what else might be done. The institute produced 38 publications and conducted 36 teaching seminars in 1964 alone.

Patient populations have tended to fluctuate dramatically, while legislative appropriations, available biennially and usually not on an emergency basis, never seemed adequate to implement needed programs nor to accommodate changing times. Further, staff salaries have not been competitive, leading to problems with recruitment and morale. Then, too, the location of the hospitals, along with the negative attitudes toward state employment felt in some segments of the general public and the professional community, set the stage for the isolation of the staff. Washington's state psychiatric facilities experienced all of these difficulties time and again. State hospitals everywhere have been plagued by similar problems.

Certain program developments created to ameliorate these problems were
All three of Washington's mental hospitals had farms. They provided food and an occupational assignment for patients. Although useful at the time, they were replaced (1960s) by individualized goal-directed activities more effective in rehabilitation.

carefully planned with the involvement of staff at all levels of the administrative structure and implemented with strong support. I refer to the emphasis placed on quality of services and the academic orientation of them. The net result was the accreditation of the state hospitals by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Hospitals (all three hospitals were accredited at the same time) and the identification of the institutions as places for study and training. Indeed, the state hospitals became academic institutions as well as places of treatment.

Over time, the services were utilized by institutions of higher learning for training in all the disciplines, not just nursing, which had traditionally utilized the psychiatric services for the applied practicum. As the psychiatric, psychological, nursing, occupational therapy, social work (and other) trainees came to the hospital campuses, they became morale boosters while staff mobilized to make the training experience more beneficial. And, when they returned to their respective campuses, they carried with them some of the practical realities of the world in which the needs of vast numbers of people had to be met in the group treatment arena. The concept of group therapy, milieu therapy and biologic psychiatry took on new meaning to graduate education when viewed in the light of the experience of students.

The late 1950s were monumental years in the history of Washington's state-operated psychiatric programs. The in-resident population in the three hospitals reached 8,424—the highest level it was to attain. Governor Albert D. Rosellini called for and obtained a doubling of the hospitals' budget in 1957, and that budget was doubled again in 1959.

Dr. Karl Menninger's survey of the Washington hospital system led to many practical recommendations, including one calling for a closer working relationship between hospital staffs and members of the local medical community. Both he and his brother, Dr. Will Menninger, addressed the legislature to support the mental health movement in general and the upgrading of the state hospitals in particular.

In a prophetic step, the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, to which compact Washington was signatory, surveyed the state's entire mental health effort and strongly encouraged the development of psychiatric services in local general hospitals along with outpatient departments in the various communities.

At about this time, a group of psychiatrists in Seattle, composed largely of psychoanalysts, organized the Committee of Psychiatrists (COP) to support the state programs in any way it could. Because of their influence and their urging, a Division of Mental Health was established in the Department of Institutions, and the first supervisor of that effort was appointed in the spring of 1959. This responsibility covered the three state psychiatric hospitals and the Mental Health Institute.

The early 1960s were also filled with great activity. Personnel were appointed to support the several disciplines at the institutional level. A planning section was established in the Division of Mental Health and therefore unheard-of communications between the three state hospitals led to broad cooperative efforts in staff and public education, further identifying the state psychiatric facilities as academic institutions.

But, despite progress, problems continued. Bigness breeds bureaucracy, and bureaucracy leads to inhibiting routines, nonproductive paperwork, confusion and frustration. Each service within the hospital programs was filled to overflowing and became unwieldy. Funding was a perennial concern.

Faced with the ever-increasing annual admission rate and always guarding against the warehousing of patients so prevalent in the past, staff in all three hospitals fought bigness by concentrating on the treatment programs. As a result, hospital stays were shortened and total hospital populations were significantly reduced to the extent that, ultimately, one hospital (Northern State) was closed.
hospitals were regionalized, with each individual unit being a smaller and more manageable hospital in itself. Each unit serving the larger communities—King and Pierce counties—was associated with outpatient departments situated in Seattle and Tacoma. Long-range plans noted the hope that over time such units could leave the hospital grounds and be moved in toto with their complement of staff to the community served.

Quite obviously, a move of this sort would create another advantage: it would provide treatment close to the homes of the patients and greatly facilitate the involvement of families in the treatment endeavor. Coincident with this hope, the early 1960s saw the emergence of several events that had far-reaching significance:

- Governor Daniel J. Evans transferred the responsibility for community mental health services to the Department of Institutions. For the first time in its history, all of the state-operated programs and/or state and federal funding could be coordinated under one administrative agency.

- The “Find a Doctor Project,” created by the Department of Institutions, called on each county medical society to locate a doctor in the community who would be willing to assume limited but vital follow-up services for patients who were discharged and who had no family physician of record. This move, while providing medical coverage for the patients, also tended to move toward community-based services.

- The federal government made available larger appropriations of money to enhance the states’ services for the mentally ill. This called for improvements in the state hospitals and transfer of the major share of the responsibility for the mentally ill to the communities.

Additionally, the American Medical Association sponsored a National Mental Health Congress, which was held in Chicago, October 4-6, 1962. It was attended by 2,300 individuals representing medical societies across the country as well as mental health personnel at the state and local levels. Dr. Robert Felix, medical director of the National Institute of Mental Health, expressed the hopes of the Kennedy administration. As the meeting concluded there was support and enthusiasm expressed over a six-point program developed as a collaborative effort.

The congress and its sponsorship admonished county medical societies across the country to be more involved, to seek communication and cooperation with the services in the interests of their patients, and to do all they could to enhance the psychological knowledge of the individual physician. The congress seemed to quell any thought that a community orientation of services was a step toward socialized medicine. Indeed, the implication of the entire program was that of providing a broader range of services with a greater involvement of medical people.

I

n 1964 the Washington State Legislature passed enabling legislation (the Comprehensive Mental Health Services Act) that facilitated the development of local services and organized state and federal funding of them. Under this act, for the second time in a century, the counties were “given” responsibility for the care of large segments of the mentally ill population. As in 1854, the responsibility was received with mixed emotions. The anxiety in the minds of some rested in the matter of financing. However, promises were made that the transfer of the responsibility would also be accompanied by the appropriation of adequate budgets. Unfortunately, those promises were not kept due to a redistribution of available dollars. As a result, the community programs have never been able to keep pace with the demands made on them.

Even so, decades later there are scores of freestanding or allied mental health services receiving state and/or federal funds and providing psychiatric services at the community level. In addition, there are 20 locally controlled hospitals offering inpatient and psychiatric care while another 16 hospitals provide emergency, consultative and/or partial hospitalization.

Periodically, state agencies are subject to complaints and criticisms about abuse of patients, faulty judgments made by staff, laxity in supervision and the like. Sometimes it is said that the community approach to mental health programming is responsible for the large number of homeless people on the streets. It is easy to allege that state-operated programs are supervised by casual and/or disinterested staff. It should be remembered, however, that institutions are communities (sometimes rather large communities) and every community today is subject to drug problems, violence, and other unfortunate occurrences. State programs, like their counterparts in community institutions, are subject to the same misfortunes. Perhaps those who are critical will need to look further for an explanation of the poverty and hardship that surround us.

History does have a tendency to repeat itself. The services during territorial days were contracted to nonmedical personnel—a practice that was changed to medical leadership on the advice and counsel of organized medicine. The creation of the Department of Social and Health Services (1970) removed the statutory requirement that the secretary of the umbrella state agency be a professional. Soon thereafter, superintendents of the state hospitals were removed from the merit system, thus diluting the professional leadership at two administrative levels and creating the potential for political invasion of the programs.

History has shown that whenever large groups of people are brought together in public or private facilities there has emerged a series of human behavioral, social and funding problems. State psychiatric hospitals are no exception. But good treatment programs under the supervision of a caring staff survive in the interest of the patients they serve.

William R. Conte was the first supervisor of the Division of Mental Health, Department of Institutions (1959-1966). He also served as director of the Department of Institutions (1966-1971).
Red Cross to the Rescue

September 25, 1945: the first troop ship bringing returned soldiers and rescued civilian internees from Asia unexpectedly arrived in Tacoma with 5,000 men aboard. Who would welcome them and care for their needs? As the photograph shows, the Red Cross responded with 7,000 doughnuts, 320 cases of milk, kind words, and shelter for the homeless civilians. One of the soldiers later wrote, “Words can never express the . . . joy of coming home to our great country and loved ones, to be welcomed as if we all were your sons.”

This photograph by 44-year-old photographer Turner E. Richards, from the Historical Society's Special Collections, is one of over 200 photographs, posters—some by America's finest graphic designers—films and objects in the Society's exhibit commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Red Cross in Washington, "Fire, Flood, and Blood: The Red Cross Crusade for Compassion." The exhibit opened March 12, was dedicated by Red Cross president Elizabeth Dole April 1, and will close November 1, 1998.

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.
IN 1913, LEGISLATIVE service having proved to be a luxury my father could no longer afford—he was paid five dollars for each day of the legislative session—we returned to our home in the isolated settlement of Oysterville, Washington, where Papa owned a thousand acres of empty oyster beds and another thousand of worthless tide meadows, woods and marshland. On these latter he ran stock and raised enough vegetables to supply the family.

Oysterville was and is located near the point, on the bay side, of a narrow, marshy mile-wide sandspit that proceeds due north for 30 miles from the mouth of the Columbia River. The village, founded in 1854 by Isaac M. Clark and my grandfather, Robert H. Espy, had prospered mightily at first on the tiny native oysters—an epicure’s dream—that jammed the banks of the bay channel; but after barely a quarter of a century most of these had vanished due to over-gathering, disease, pests and unseasonably cold winters, and most of the oystermen with them. By my time there were probably only 15 or 20 families left, subsisting on cattle, chickens, pigs and garden truck.

The Bay

OYSTERVILLE IS ON, and of, the bay. Not so much that the bay is part of us; rather, particularly in the engulfing winter tides, we are part of it; the tide pours over the road and the lanes, and some folks get about in dinghies.

The bay itself, though—five or six miles wide, perhaps 25 miles from end to end—is indeed of the ocean, utterly its creature. The sea pours in and out across a bar seven miles to the north. Twice a day it fills the bay to the brim; twice a day it withdraws, leaving as a reminder only the silver channel, far out. The channel has seaweed lying limp along it, and an ankle-deep wriggle of sloughs heading inshore. Beyond it, weather permitting, I can see the far side—low cliffs of amber sand, with green descending to the beach between them, and behind, undulating eastward, range after range of low, evergreen hills.

It is when the tide is out that my nearest brother Edwin and my younger sister Dale and I really make use of the bay, or at least of the hundred yards nearest the shore. No sand here—these are mud flats, home to black-shelled clams that squirt saltwater a foot into the air when they feel our footsteps. They live only six inches down, and lack both the sense and the tools to dig deeper, even when gone after with a spade. Ordinarily, though, we use no spades; we excavate the clams from the mud with our hands, careful to avoid the cutting edges of their shells.

The mud flats consist of the soil that breaks off from the bank at high tide, mixed with sand. Some of it is so new it is still in chunks with grass on top; these are separated, or connected, by a scum of mud. Tiny crabs hide under the chunks; even with legs extended, none would attain the diameter of a single tiny crab.

The clams and the wee crabs extend only as far as the mud flats; beyond that is hard, rippled sand and the lacing of shallow sloughs. At the edge of the channel—we rarely go...
out so far, and then only with Papa—we
grope in the shallows and bring up oys-
ters in barnacled clusters that break
apart at the tap of a hammer. We carry
our catch home in gunnysacks that drip
over our shoulders.

**With Papa on the Oyster Beds**

It was a quarter to 11 that Novem-
ber morning when I was five, and Papa
was having his greens, bacon, mush and coffee by the nursery
stove. He said, “Willard, would you mind putting down that
book and getting into your clothes? I’d like you to come out
on the oyster beds with me.”

Papa visited his empty oyster beds frequently. He sighted
down sloughs with a surveyor’s transit and measured between
old pilings with a surveyor’s chain. You would have thought
he was assessing something of value.

My coveralls were on now. I groped inside a boot for a sock
and encountered dampness. I said hopefully, “My boots are
still wet, Papa.”

“Helen,” he said to Mama, “where have you put Willard’s
other boots?” This was a rhetorical question. He knew I had
no other boots. The rest of the family had plenty of boots.
The number of pairs ranked about the stove on a cold morn-
ing would have outfitted a regiment of clam-diggers. Some of
the boots were red, some black, some blue, some olive, some
gunmetal gray. Most were freckled with white patches where
they had sprung leaks. All were pulled down—the upper part
had been turned inside out over the stiffer section below the
knee and then brought back to knee level.

Papa had boots for every purpose: a prize pair for the
ocean, a pair for the garden, one for the barnyard, one for the
swamp, two for the bay. Choosing among them could take
him half an hour or more, with the merits and demerits of
every pair reviewed and compared in judicious, grammatical,
terminable sentences.

Papa was said
to be the fastest-
walking man in
Pacific County;
surely he was the
most erect.

Now he had to choose boots for me.
His, and even Mama’s—she only owned
knee boots, anyway—were too large.
Dale’s were too small. Edwin was wear-
ing one of his two pairs, and the other
one was wet. Medora and Sutta were
away at boarding school in Portland,
and their boots were not to be touched.
That left Mona’s. They were too big,
but after I had enlarged my feet with
three pairs of wool socks and a pair of Edwin’s moccasins I
fitted into them well enough.

Mama sat reading *The Gilded Age* while the
selection was going on. Papa had been planning
this particular trip for some time. The Novem-
ber 22, 1915, tide was down in the tables for a
four-foot runoff, making it one of the lowest of the year.
Oyster beds that seldom saw sunlight would be exposed to-
today, and he wanted to see whether the population showed
any signs of reviving. But Mama knew, and even I suspected,
that he would leave home too late to reach the beds before
the tide had started to turn. To leave on time simply wasn’t in
his nature. Time often waited for him; he thought the tides
should too.

Mama saw us off from the south door, shading her eyes
with one hand and holding her sweater together at the throat
with the other. “Harry,” she called as Papa opened the gate in
the picket fence, “don’t let Willard start dreaming and wade
in over his head.”

Papa fastened the gate with a loop of wire over two pick-
ets, leaving Jack, the big collie, whining in the yard, and we
set off. He carried an empty gunnysack for oysters over his
arm. He walked joyfully, his shoulders back, his head up, his
Vandyke saluting the eastern horizon. He was said to be the
fastest-walking man in Pacific County; surely he was the most
erect. It distressed him that already, before I had even
reached six, I slumped.
In a few minutes I had fallen hopelessly behind. It was all I could do to keep my footing; at every step Mona's boots sideswiped each other.

By the time I reached the bank of the bay, Papa was already a hundred yards out. I jumped down two feet to the narrow beach, tripped, and landed on my stomach. One of my boots had come off. I brushed the sand from the sock and worked the boot back onto my foot. Papa looked back and stopped.

The mud flats were black and slick. My boots sank an inch or two at each step and came out with a sucking sound. Mud clams squirmed greetings as I passed. I waded through an ankle-deep sink where the water was still draining and emerged, my boots now shinily clean, to join Papa on firm, rippled sand.

At once he set off as before, heading toward the channel. I lagged after him; splashing through sinks, stepping aside to feel the satisfying crunch of a cockle shell under my foot, dragging the toe of one boot to make a wriggling mark in the sand.

The weather was astonishingly fine for November. The northwest wind had blown every cloud out of sight behind the horizon; only bright blue nothingness was left. Still, I was cold; the wind might shift at any instant; the skies might be sheeting before we reached home.

A mussel hit the hard sand 20 feet from me with a sound like hands clapping. The seagull that had dropped it landed nearby, glancing at me suspiciously, and examined the shell to see if it had broken from the fall. It had not. The bird took the mussel in its beak, shot upward, and moments later let it fall again farther off; this time I could not see where it landed.

A flock of snipes writhed past over my head, tens of thousands of them, a monstrous airborne snake a quarter of a mile long; its underside turned from gray to shiny silver and then to gray again, back and forth, as the birds maneuvered in unison on currents of air.

THIS, I THOUGHT PROUDLY, was our domain. Grandpapa's—Papa's—mine. I looked to the northwest, where Leadbetter Point slid into the sea; I could see the boil and glitter of the bar that joined Shoalwater Bay to the Pacific. To the northeast, far past the foot of the bay, a pale blue cone was suspended, a visible breath in the sky; it was Mount Tacoma—later to be known as Mount Rainier, more than 50 miles away as the crow flies; it was visible only on such crystalline days as this.

We had come out a long way, but the other side of the bay remained unattainable, beyond the green seaweed, beyond the channel. The tide had to be out on the mainland side as it was on ours, yet a thin azure line of water seemed to be pressing against the chalk of the eastern bluffs. The bluffs were low; so were the hills that rolled away to the horizon behind them. Once in a while white vertical slashes on the hills interrupted the greenness of fir, hemlock and spruce. I knew the slashes were the remains of long-dead, still-standing trees.

Map showing Oysterville on Cape Disappointment and Shoalwater (now called Willapa) Bay, which are situated in the southwest corner of Washington.
Toward the south the bluffs parted to let out the Nemah River, and again to let out the Naselle. The mouth of the Naselle lay hidden behind Long Island, a great green raft anchored in the bay. I had changed footing now and was facing south. Across from Long Island, on the peninsula side, two piers reached into the water. On the shore behind them stood low buildings, so small and so sharp that I might have been looking at them through the wrong end of my grandfather’s telescope.

Papa waited patiently to guide me across the deepest sink of all. It was choked with streamers of seaweed flat as macaroni, green as emeralds.

We hooked our forefingers in the flaps of our boots and pulled the tops up as far as they would go. I could not get mine all the way, because Mona’s legs were longer than mine. Papa took my hand. We began pushing through the seaweed. At each step it separated from its roots—I could feel it tear—and wrapped about our boots. The water reached my knees and then my thighs. Papa looked down at me and considered.

“Dad cuss it, Willard,” he said, “I don’t think you can make it. You’d better head back to dry ground; Mama wouldn’t be happy if you got water in your boots.”

Back on bare sand, I turned to watch him. His wake was a blue streak in the shiny green of the weeds. He had brought
up his bootlegs as far as they would come and was using both hands to tighten them around his flanks. Then the sink shallowed; his legs gradually reappeared until he was striding away from me across a nearly drained flat of seaweed that seemed to stretch to the channel itself. At last he pulled on his rubber gloves, dropped to one knee, and began feeling among the weeds for oysters.

But the tide was turning. The seaweed began to stir and ripple. Papa must have noticed the deepening water. He called across, "By George, boy, we're a little late. Don't wait for me—I'll catch you."

And indeed the tide was already beginning to lap like a cat at Mona's boots. I hurried. When I looked over my shoulder Papa was circling northward to cross the sink at its shallowest point; he knew this wet terrain as intimately as he knew the teats of his cows.

**The Rising Tide**

*Only five I might be,* but I was well aware that the rivulets we had splashed through so casually on the falling tide might reach Papa's hips—or higher, if luck ran out—on the rise. Only the summer before it had caught three tourists who went out too far and stayed too long. At the ebb their last frantic efforts to reach high ground showed faintly still in the sand. A white man could not have read the signs, but Lame George, one of the few remaining Indians, had taken Papa back over their route, pointing out how the steps started shoreward with great loping strides; how they shortened as the water rose; how the bootprints shrank as they stood first on the balls of their feet and then on tiptoe. Then there were no more signs.

Papa had caught up with me. He dropped to one knee. "All right, boy," he said; "now's your chance for a piggyback ride."

Nothing could go wrong as long as Papa was there. He knelt, and I heaved myself onto his back. He held me beneath the knees while I kept my hands tight around his chest. I pitched on his back like a dinghy in choppy waves. Past his left ear I could see the prairie between Oysterville and Nahcotta, broken occasionally by a house or barn. Our ranch ended at the great slough a mile south of Oysterville, where the Walkowsky Woods began. All my life I had wanted to play in the two cutters that lay rotting in that slough, but Mr. Walkowsky would never let me.

Near shore a line of pilings extended a mile south from Clay Street to Walkowskys'. Grandpa had installed them in the 1890s to save our meadows from the gnawing of the tidewater. There were great gaps in the pilings now, and those that remained looked as if a thousand beavers at once had been working on them. I saw our cattle grazing on the salt meadows on either side of the road. A scrub-covered ridge, backbone of the peninsula, cut them off a quarter of a mile farther west.

Past Papa's right ear lay Oysterville itself—a score of structures in varying states of repair, scattered at random along the road. The three directly before us were the leftovers of what once had been called Millionaire's Row—houses built of redwood brought from San Francisco in oyster sloops during the 1870s. The southernmost was Papa's; then came the Carruthers'; then came grandpa's. From the bay our house and the Carruthers' looked much the same, both with steep roofs, scroll-sawed eaves decorations, and windows frowning on the bay. A few feet south of ours a windmill was whirling, pumping water into barrels on the roof.

The houses clearly fronted on the bay, which seemed odd, since the road was on the other side of them. I knew the reason: in the 19th century there had been a street on the east side, and indeed another one right on the bay bank; but high tides rose over the sills and flushed away the foundations, and finally the houses on the bank all drifted out to sea. The road at bay's edge vanished; the one a block farther west became a lane; and the road running back of Millionaire's Row became the main street of Oysterville.

We forded the last sink, and Papa put me down. The tide came sniffing eagerly on our trail. It nosed down a million rippled channels, as if looking for something it had lost.

Willard R. Espy is author of more than a dozen books, including the best-selling *An Almanac of Words at Play* and *Oysterville: Roads to Grandpa's Village*. His essays and light verse have appeared in numerous publications. He lives with his wife, Louise, in New York City and in Oysterville, Washington.
Ezra Meeker's Quest For

KLONDIKE GOLD

THE YEAR WAS 1897. The Pacific Northwest was still in the throes of a major nationwide financial depression that had begun with the Panic of 1893. Unemployment was at a record high, bank failures were an everyday occurrence, manufacturing plants were closing down at a rapid rate, and major corporations were facing bankruptcy. Even farmers were going broke and losing their property holdings—all due in part to the lack of gold to finance the government.

One particular Puget Sound farmer who suffered a double setback was Ezra Meeker, the nation’s “hop king,” who had made a fortune with this fruitful crop in the lush Puyallup Valley. Meeker’s financial reverses resulted from two very different causes: lending most of his funds to financially strapped neighbor farmers who were unable to repay their loans, and a voracious infestation of hop lice, which destroyed this valuable crop throughout the Pacific Northwest. The combination of the devastation caused by the lice and vivid memories of hungry miners during the Fraser River gold rush motivated the luckless Meeker to journey to the Klondike goldfields in 1898.

Nearly half a century earlier, on March 21, 1858, some six years after the Meekers first arrived in the Pacific Northwest, the schooner Wild Pigeon brought word to the struggling community of Steilacoom that the Indians in Canada had discovered gold on the Fraser River and traded several pounds of gold dust to the Hudson’s Bay Company. News of the discovery resulted in more than 300 people leaving Victoria for the gold streams.

The next day word arrived that the Bellingham Bay Company was compelled to stop work inasmuch as all but three of the coal miners had left for the Fraser goldfields. The same applied to logging camps in the area, resulting in mills being shut down. As more ships arrived from the north, the excitement ran through every town on the Pacific Coast and continued around the world, sending dithers through adventurous spirits everywhere.

The next week brought news of the arrival in Victoria of more than 100 pounds of gold; hundreds more men, and women too, had contracted gold fever and were outfitting and heading out. At that time, the Meekers were still in the blockhouse they had built in Steilacoom for protection from the Indians, their cattle peacefully grazing on the plains a few miles distant. Despite the fact that there had not been any Indian trouble for more than two years, there was still a spirit of unrest, due mainly to some atrocious murders committed by a few renegade white men. The army presence at Fort Steilacoom, and the gamblers and blacklegs it attracted to the area, didn’t help the situation either.

Meeker operated a small business in the blockhouse and made the mistake of letting a few of the bluecoats, as the soldiers were known, have articles on credit. When Meeker later refused credit to some drunken soldiers, they returned 30 strong that evening, fired a shot through the door, and tried to break it down.
Steilacoom businessmen became alarmed. One of them, who had headed for the Fraser River, returned with 50 ounces of gold dust; the fever struck again, bringing on a reenactment of the California gold rush of a decade earlier, only in the opposite direction. Ships by the dozen, loaded with hundreds of prospectors—some with and others without cargo to feed the mob—headed north. Their destination was Whatcom (now Bellingham), the closest American port to the Fraser River area. Meeker, knowing that the influx of people must be fed, decided that if the multitude would not come to him, he would join the mob to provide milk and butter from his cows. People were paying a dollar a gallon for milk and any price asked for fresh butter.

How to get there was the difficulty. All space on the northbound steamers was taken from week to week for freight and passengers, with no room left for cattle. But the need for supplies was growing desperate, and finally the cattle, mainly cows, were loaded in an open scow and taken in tow alongside the steamer Sea Bird. All went smoothly until they arrived at the head of Whidbey Island where a choppy sea from a light wind began slopping over into the scow, which would eventually have sunk the vessel despite efforts at bailing. When the captain cut the vessel’s speed, all was well, but the moment greater power was applied, over the gunwales came the water. The dialogue between Meeker and the captain became more emphatic than elegant, according to passengers. The captain did not dare let Meeker’s barge loose or run it under without incurring the risk of heavy damages and, probably, loss of life. Meeker refused to be cut loose or land en route. Eventually he was cut loose in Bellingham Bay.

Utterly exhausted, he landed at the mouth of Squalecum Creek, on which he later purchased property. The cows needed to be fed and milked, and as more than 3,000 passengers had just arrived at Whatcom, Meeker was too busy to sleep for the next 36 hours.

Whatcom became a boom town of several thousand residents, with hundreds more arriving each day. By this time, getting to the Fraser River had become a major problem. The early voyagers had slipped up the river before the freshlets came from the melting snows to swell the torrents of the river. Those coming later either failed altogether, gave up the unequal contest, or lost an average of one out of three canoes or boats in the attempt. How many lives were lost will never be known.

Canadian officials later required miner’s permits before allowing anyone to attempt the Fraser, and those permits could only be obtained in Victoria. This put an end to Whatcom as a jumping-off point for prospectors. Meeker had done well financially and returned with his cattle to Steilacoom.

It is doubtful, Meeker stated, that a stampede of such dimensions ever occurred where the loss of life was greater, proportionately, than that to the Fraser in 1858. Probably not one in ten who made the effort reached the mines, and of those who did, the usual percentage of blanks was drawn. Yet the successful miners were immensely rich, and many millions of dollars worth of gold came from the find over time.

Meeker also noted that, while the losses to some Puget Sound people were great, much good nevertheless came out of the stampede. Many among the flood of newcomers stayed after the return tide was over and went to work in the region, helping develop the Pacific Northwest into a major factor in the nation’s economy. Some became respected businessmen and honored citizens.

Years later, in 1897, when news of the gold discovery in the Klondike reached the Puget Sound area, thousands of residents once again became stricken with gold fever. Meeker was immune—for a while. He got to reasoning, however, that with hundreds stampeding north and with plenty of gold being taken, there ought to be a chance to recoup his financial status in the mining district. He decided to head north. Despite his nearly 70 years, Meeker felt well able to make the journey to the Klondike.
Yukon goldfields. He later described the trip as being similar to his westward journey over the Oregon Trail.

Meeker had many tons of vegetables dried and placed in cans. His wife helped in the drying process, and the building formerly occupied by his light plant was utilized as a cannery.

In the spring of 1898, accompanied by son-in-law Roderick McDonald, son Fred, and several others, Meeker started for the Yukon loaded down with tons of dried vegetables. The cargo included 500 live chickens, who made it necessary for the ship to stop en route so that they could be made more comfortable.

In delineating his reasons for going to the Klondike and his experiences there, Meeker wrote:

After the failure of the hop business, I undertook a venture to the mines of the North. This resulted in a real live adventure of exciting experience.

After the failure of the hop business, I undertook a venture to the mines of the North. This resulted in a real live adventure of exciting experience.

I had lived in the old Oregon country (as the Pacific Northwest was described) forty-four years and had never seen a mine. Mining had no attraction for me, any more than corner lots in new embryo cities. I did not understand the value of either and left both severely alone.

But when my accumulations had all been swallowed up, the land that I had previously owned gone into other hands and, in fact, my occupation gone, I concluded to take a chance in the mining country. Matters could not be much worse, and probably could be made better, that in the spring of 1898 I made my first trip over the Chilkoot Pass, and then down the Yukon river to Dawson in a flatboat and ran the famous White Horse Rapids with my load of vegetables for the Klondike miners.

One may read of the Chilkoot Pass the most graphic descriptions written, yet when he is up against the experience of crossing, he will find the difficulties more formidable than his wildest fancy or expectations had pictured.

I started in with 15 tons of freight and got through with nine. On one stretch of 2,000 feet I paid $40 a ton freight and I knew of others paying more. The trip for a part of the way reminded me of the scenes on the plains in 1852—such crowds that they jostled each other on the several parallel trails where there was room for more than one track. At the pass most of the travel came upon one track, and so steep that the ascent could only be made by cutting steps in the ice and snow—1,500 in all.

Frequently every step would be full while crowds jostled each other at the foot of the ascent to get into the single file, each man carrying from a one hundred to two hundred pound pack on his back. Nevertheless, after all sorts of experiences, I arrived in Dawson with nine tons of my outfit.

Meeker rented a combination store and cabin for $200 a month and sold his potatoes for 75 cents a pound, onions at the same price; condensed milk went for $1 a can and sugar for $75 a sack. Eggs probably were the most profitable, going for $1.50 apiece, while chickens brought $5 each.

Subsequently, Meeker had some fresh vegetables sent to the Klondike, individually wrapped. They were kept in Dawson in a room where the temperature was elevated to a comparatively propitious degree by means of a stove.

The first stampers, hundreds of them, some traveling on foot over the
mountain passes, others coming up the Yukon River by steamer, reached Dawson City before the fall freeze-up cut off their advance. That winter, five supply-laden steamers, including one chartered by the mayor of Seattle and his group, were locked in the ice between St. Michael's and Dawson City.

The first arrivals over the passes brought no food or supplies. They counted on being able to purchase necessities in Dawson. By the same token, the few trading posts there were not prepared for the onslaught that was to come.

As early as August 11, 1897, Commissioner Charles Constantine of the Yukon Territory had written the government in Ottawa: “The outlook for grub is not assured for the number of people here—about four thousand crazy or lazy men, chiefly American miners and toughs from coast towns.”

Trading companies were equally concerned. In order to give everyone a fair share of what little food was available, they adopted a dole system of food distribution. They locked their warehouse doors and allowed but one customer to enter at a time. A clerk was stationed at the door. Once a customer was served, the clerk unlocked the door, let him out, and allowed one more to enter the store. Purchases were limited to only a few days’ supplies.

Regarding the reported famine during the winter of 1897-98, the Klondike News of April 1, 1898, stated,

For the past ten years the famine cry has agitated the Yukoners every winter, just as regular as the old moose cows have calves in the spring. And just as regular as the famine and high prices come, the managers of the old trading companies have that plausible way of “peddling the bull” to the miners, as to how the last boat got stuck in the ice or grounded on a sand-bar and thus brought about a shortage of provisions. Take an Alaskan miner with a Yukon appetite in the winter with a famine on and several thousand miles from supplies and he is as meek and flexible as a hazed freshman and is ready to concede to any terms or pay any price and becomes an easy prey to the advance agent of famine. These companies realize this and that they can get more money for a few provisions at famine prices than at ten times the amount at regular prices and as a natural consequence, the last boat usually gets stuck somewhere in the river outside the reach of the miners. This makes the process of holding them up comparatively easy.

As a result the old Yukoner will shout with joy when he sees the barges laden with supplies coming up or down the river.

After selling out his first shipment, Ezra Meeker started up the river with 200 ounces of Klondike gold in his belt. It had been a successful endeavor, but four trips in two years convinced him that he did not want any more such experiences.

“There was when my mind would run on this last venture, the monument expedition,” he stated while writing his book, Pioneer Reminiscences of Puget Sound.
MEEKER WROTE that the trip to the Klondike became a real adventure. To begin with, he was fortunately detained for a couple of days and escaped the avalanche that buried 52 people in the snow on the trail out of Dyea. He passed by their morgue the second day after the catastrophe on the way to the summit and doubtless stepped over the bodies of many unknown dead embedded so deeply in the snow that it was utterly impossible to recover them.

He had received a good dunking during his first passage through White Horse Rapids. Though he vowed that he would not go through there again, he did so the very next trip that same year and managed to come out of it dry. While going down the Thirty Mile River, it did seem as though they could not escape being baked upon the rocks; but somehow or another they got through safely, though the riverbank was strewed with wrecks and the waters had claimed many victims.

It was here in this deep and dangerous gorge, with its perpendicular cliffs of granite and a current that ran like a millrace, that 150 boats had been smashed in one day, seven prospectors had died and hundreds had lost all their possessions.

When Meeker reached the Yukon River proper, the current was not so very swift, but the shoals were numerous. More than once they were “hung up” on a bar and always with an uncertainty as to how they would get off. In all of this experience of the trips by scow, they only took damage once. In that instance, a hole was jammed into the boat and they thought they were “goners” for certain, but they managed to effect a landing so quickly as to unload the cargo dry. Meeker blamed himself for taking such risks, but curiously enough he admitted that he enjoyed it, sustained, no doubt, by high hopes of coming out with “my pile.”

Meeker asserted that his experiences during the Klondike gold rush comprised the most memorable period of his life. He was determined to garner his share of gold dust. In a way, he did and he didn’t. After realizing a profit of $19,000, he bought a mining claim—his first and last look at a mine. While it enticed him, he never was able to exploit it. A deep freeze came a month earlier than usual. He couldn’t keep the ground thawed and couldn’t obtain enough water for sluicing. Losing his $19,000 and grieving over the death of his son Fred, who died of a lung ailment, Meeker gave up and left the Yukon for the last time in April 1901. He came out over the rotting ice with little more than another adventure chalked up on the credit side of a life ledger largely filled with more than falls to the lot of the average man—but then, Ezra Meeker was no average man.

He felt that fate—or something else—was against him. After the mining experience all his accumulation was gone, “slick as a mitten,” as the old saying goes. He never wanted to see another mine or visit another mining country. A Puyallup man who was in the Klondike at the same time stated later that Meeker’s claim proved to be of great value.

Two weeks after arriving home, Meeker celebrated his golden wedding anniversary and experienced the joy of a welcome home, commenting:

Even if I did not have my poke filled with gold, I had then passed my seventy year mark and my “pet project,” as some people called it, of marking the old Oregon Trail, was hung up indefinitely, but the sequel is shown in what follows and is the answer to my forebodings.

In his autobiography, written some 60 years after his initial cross-country migration, Meeker recalled of his Oregon Trail trek, “I was the youngest of the menfolk in the party, and the only married man of the lot, and if I do have to say, the strongest and the ablest to bear the brunt of the work.”

Meeker pointed out that in both experiences he recalled many examples of cruelty, brutality and selfishness on the
trail, but he also saw others of compassion and magnanimity. He said that he could describe instances that would convert the most skeptical listener into belief in the depravity of mankind, so heartless and selfish were the actions of some men—to other men, women, animals and themselves. Yet he felt that, “For myself I can truly say I do not remember the experience as a personal hardship.”

Meeker’s account of his experiences is as hair-raising a story as ever came out of the Klondike. Added to the gamut of terrors that beset his travels on the Oregon Trail were frostbite, spinal meningitis and the awful scourge of scurvy. The banks of the Yukon were strewn with the wrecks of unfortunate craft that had met doom in the swirling rapids and on the treacherous rocks. It was a sight that did not add to the comfort of cowering travelers making the same trip and shivering with terror as their own rickety boats bumped and scraped over the same jagged rocks that had wrecked the others. Meeker narrowly escaped death on a number of occasions, and he counted it little short of a miracle each time he disembarked in Dawson with his salable merchandise.

Just as had been the case with the Fraser River stampede, the Pacific Northwest—especially the Puget Sound area—benefited from the influx of people and money. As a result, Meeker returned from the Klondike to a more prosperous Puyallup. Seattle’s population more than doubled from 80,000 prior to the start of the rush to 195,000, bank clearing increased from $36 million to $92 million, property sales from $300,000 to $10,000,000, and the gold assay office handled $414,737,274 during the next three decades, most of which remained in the Seattle area.

**At the pass most of the travel came upon one track, and so steep that the ascent could only be made by cutting steps in the ice and snow—1,500 in all.**

Foremost, Meeker remains the pioneer who came west over the Oregon Trail in 1852. He became a storekeeper, farmer, businessman, logger, longshoreman, founder and first mayor of Puyallup, “hop king” of the world, bank president, one of the founders and a president of the Washington State Historical Society, inventor, promoter of roads and railroads, author of some 20 books, lecturer, philanthropist, the richest man in the state at one time and flat broke at another, and a flamboyant personality always. He was probably best known, though, for his successful 20-year struggle to mark the Oregon Trail, which culminated in his retracing the route in 1906 in an ox-drawn covered wagon accompanied only by his dog.

He later flew over the same route in an open-cockpit biplane and traveled over it by auto and train. In so doing, he met with and enjoyed the friendship of United States presidents, Wall Street tycoons and corporate officers.

Ezra Meeker passed away at the Frye Hotel in Seattle on December 3, 1928, a few days before his 98th birthday. He was buried beside Eliza Jane, “lady of the cabin,” in Puyallup’s Woodbine Cemetery on a hill overlooking the valley he loved so much. In 1939 the Oregon Trail Memorial Association erected a monument over his grave.

In Puyallup’s Pioneer Park there is a life-size statue of Meeker, by Victor A. Lewis, marking the site of his first home in Puyallup—a small log cabin. The Meeker Mansion, on the National Register of Historic Sites, located at 312 Spring Street, is now a museum. The Washington State History Museum, in Tacoma, houses a considerable collection of Meeker memorabilia and photographs, plus the covered wagon and oxen, Dave and Dandy (stuffed), that completed the 1906-07 journey with him over the Oregon Trail.

A Seattle author and photographer, Howard Clifford, has researched, photographed and written about Alaska and the Yukon for over 40 years. His sixth book, Alaska and Yukon Railroads: A Pictorial History, is in press.
Over the Mountain

Engineer Gus C. Linrothe (center) and Northern Pacific Railway locomotive 3008, Lester, Washington, c. 1910. The Baldwin Locomotive Works built 15 of these Z-class Mallet locomotives for the Northern Pacific in 1907. They were mainly used for heavy freight and helper service between Lester and Easton, Washington. Both passenger and freight trains required additional power to make the climb up the Cascades and through the Stampede Pass Tunnel. Each locomotive weighed 355,000 pounds and had twelve 55-inch-diameter driving wheels.

Engineers took a great deal of pride in their locomotives and often posed for photographs in front of the giants. Here, Gus Linrothe stands proudly, hands on hips, with his fireman and brakeman beside him. Linrothe's son recently donated to the Society's Special Collections this image and a group of photographs depicting railroad and domestic activities at Lester during the first decade of this century.
In late December 1931 Doug Welch and some of the other city desk reporters at the Seattle Times looked with disdain at the slate of candidates who had filed for the office of mayor of Seattle. The list of hopefuls, which included former Mayor Frank Edwards trying to make a comeback after having been recalled earlier that year, seemed to them to contain a collection of men distinguished only by their mediocrity. This prompted them to sponsor their own candidate as a joke in order to demonstrate their contempt for the choices available. After a brief discussion they settled on Vic Meyers as the man most likely to add the greatest amount of spice to the race.

Who was Vic Meyers? Born in Little Falls, Minnesota, on September 7, 1897, he was the second youngest of 16 children. His father had been county treasurer for 30 years, while his mother was a pianist. During his youth Vic successfully learned to play various instruments, specializing in drums before graduating from high school. After leaving home he traveled around the country with a band he had organized. The band subsequently won awards, a contract with Brunswick Records, and some measure of national renown. Bing Crosby auditioned for him at one point, but Meyers turned him down, telling Bing that he wasn't ready for the big time just yet.

Meyers came to Seattle in the late 1920s and established himself as a regular on the entertainment calendar of the Hotel Butler, then notorious as a hangout for University of Washington students out for a fling. He later opened “Club Victor” in a former garage on Fourth Avenue in the Denny Regrade area. Meyers's club, as well as the Hotel Butler, became well known to the local prohibition squad.

According to popular lore, Meyers would be leading his orchestra on a busy Saturday night when prohibition agents came in while making their rounds. At that point he would have the musicians stop what they were playing and break into “How Dry I Am.” His luck ran out one time in 1931, and he was pictured smiling in a Seattle Times photo as the United States Marshals padlocked his club for being in violation of the Volstead Act. At the end of the year the Times staff decided that he would make as fine a candidate for mayor as any who had filed for the office.

By the close of filing in January 1932 there were ten candidates for office: Dr. Edwin Brown, Otto Case, John Dore, Frank Edwards, Robert Harlin, John Laurie, Vic Meyers, David Nygren, Art Ritchie and Norman Schellberg.

John Dore was a former reporter who covered the activities of the Seattle Police Department. This was a job that enabled him to gather significant and sometimes very sensitive information. He later became a lawyer by means of great personal effort and entered into the area of criminal law, specializing in defense.

Dore was reputedly not above a bit of questionable expediency in legal practice as well as politics. For example,
there was the story of how he absented himself from the courtroom in the middle of a trial and hurried to the law library, there to hide the volumes that contained material he knew the prosecutor would need in order to convict his client. Another legendary episode told of how (probably during his later 1938 campaign against Meyers) he hired a sound truck, gathered some of Meyers’s records and cruised through residential sections of Seattle in the middle of the night, playing the music as loudly as possible and proclaiming over the microphone, “Wake up and vote for Vic Meyers!”

Frank Edwards, the previous mayor, had been recalled in 1931 and, noting former mayor Hiram Gill’s successful comeback in 1914 after having been recalled in 1911, attempted a similar maneuver. Edwards’s administration ran afoul of the voters primarily because of his ill-timed dismissal of J. D. Ross, head of Seattle City Light, a popular man who had his own political following.

Robert Harlin, a member of the Seattle City Council, was chosen by that body to replace Mayor Edwards after his recall. Harlin had a reasonably strong pro-labor stance and had worked with the Unemployed Citizens League to help alleviate some of the worst effects of the Great Depression by means of official action. This earned him the endorsement of labor organizations throughout the city. His attempt to parlay this support into a mayoral term in his own right did not take into account the demagogic talent of John Dore.

The main issues faced by Seattle voters in this election were the desperate economic conditions that were all too evident in this third year of the Great Depression and the street railway crisis, which had its beginning in a previous administration. There was also the controversy over the firing of J. D. Ross and the question of public power in general.

The streetcar operators were set to strike, an action that pro-labor Mayor Harlin was desperately attempting to avert. The motormen had little to lose since their city pay warrants were unredeemable due to lack of funds.

A “Hooverville” of makeshift shacks extended from the waterfront to the area of the present-day Kingdome. Many who had their own homes lost them due to mortgage and tax foreclosures. Into this scene of economic misery stepped an actor prepared to give the people of Seattle a humorous diversion and temporarily take their minds off their problems.

Reportage of the political campaign in the newspapers of the day was not at all intensive. Apart from the comedic coverage in the Times, most of the newspapers carried relatively few in-depth stories about the candidates’ platforms. Most of the campaigning was done in meetings held in various neighborhoods throughout the city.

In many issues of the major newspapers, coverage consisted chiefly of announcements of where the candidates would be speaking. A typical informational article would tell of a candidate’s appearance at six to eight events in one day, a grueling but common schedule.

As the campaign got under way, the Times jumped in quickly with comically staged photographs, front page political cartoons and various whimsical stories purportedly from Meyers. Around the middle of January, Meyers declared that he would appoint as chief of police Captain Gustav Hasselblad, known as the “Piccolo Pete” of the Seattle Police Department, whose son Edward was a substitute pianist in Meyers’s orchestra. Accordingly, a photograph of the musical policeman was published under the headline “Piccolo Player as Chief? Maybe, If Vic Meyers is the Winner!”

Hasselblad was only one of Meyers’s proposed appointments. Employing the old stereotype of mothers-in-law, he proposed to appoint elderly businessman Frank Lang to the post of “Head Gigolo of Seattle” and held such a post to be as important as head of the Public Works Department. Meyers claimed that Seattle would be made a happier place to live in by assigning a gigolo to each mother-in-law, thereby allowing sons-in-law respite from criticism. It was then suggested that he might appoint Lieutenant Edwin Mackay, known as “the singing fireman,” chief of the Seattle
Fire Department on the basis of his musical talent.

As did every other candidate, Meyers took a firm stand on the subject of graft. He stated without reservation, “There'll be no cheap petty grafting, no small-time chiseling down at City Hall if I'm elected mayor. That is, there won't be any unless I'm in on it.”

Edward Hasselblad had a chance to demonstrate his keyboard skills in front of his University of Washington classmates when Meyers held a campaign rally at the Edmond Meany Hotel, an event that attracted over 200 students. Situated in the University District, this was another regular venue of Meyers's orchestra. The hotel was selected after the Chi Omega sorority was refused permission by university officials to hold the rally on campus.

At the rally Meyers hinted at future campaign plans, noting that he intended to run for governor after being mayor and promising, when that happened, to make going to the university “a lot of fun.” “There'll be tea-dansants every afternoon in the gymnasium,” he vowed. “ROTC will be optional.”

The Times also took a shot at one of Frank Edwards's advertisements, a case of biting the hand that fed the ad department. In that ad, which defended the recalled mayor's handling of the City Light controversy, former City Engineer W. Chester Morse, the man who replaced Ross as head of City Light, stated that in his “honest opinion ... a competent business administration” could save the city approximately $600,000. Meyers promised to hire such a qualified person and to also hire J. D. Ross as a technical consultant.

John Dore promised to reduce taxes, eliminate waste and help reduce unemployment by assigning two men to operate each streetcar. He then proceeded to accuse Mayor Harlin of not being a taxpayer in the city and of playing golf with millionaires, winding up by promising to do away with all city-owned limousines. Meyers lampooned Dore's habit of making extravagant promises by stating, “At first I was going to put two men on the streetcars, but John Dore beat me to that one. Of course, I might raise him a man. I might put three men on each streetcar.” Naturally, all of the other candidates were against graft and sin, and totally in favor of full employment, “America and motherhood.” One wonders if they eulogized the benefits of apple pie as well.

Taking note of the popularity of New York's Mayor Jimmy Walker as well as the public's need for a bit of diversion from their prevailing misery, Meyers stressed the importance of having someone with personality in the mayoral chair. He stated, “We should smile more, laugh more, have more jazz in municipal affairs. ... A personality, not a politician, in the mayor's office—that's my slogan.”

The Times indirectly criticized some of the inevitable promises of tax reduction and far-fetched ideas endorsed by the other candidates. One reporter warned: “Meyers isn't going to reduce taxes. He knows that isn't within a mayor's province. He isn't promising less snow. ... plenty of hot water Saturday nights. He says he's promising color in the mayor's office.”

The caption for this Laura LaPlante publicity photo read: “DON'T CROWD BOYS!” Such artful doctoring of photographs was common in those days.

The entertainer stated later in the campaign, in response to his critics, that entertainers have kept faith with the public better than many politicians. The Pasco Herald was quoted as saying that Meyers was “doing rather a complete job of debunking Seattle city politics.”

He provided color of another sort by appearing in formal attire in contrast to some of the other candidates who sometimes dressed in rather shabby clothes in order to identify with many of the less well-to-do voters. One commentator called his outfit “Klassy Kut Klothes.”

Meyers's popularity was evident during an appearance before the Olympic Breakfast Club with most of the other candidates, minus Dore, Harlin and Case. Though the others tried to speak, they were hooted down amid cries of “Vic Meyers for Mayor!” Meyers said he was in favor of hiring hostesses to serve the passengers on streetcars, saying, “Let's make a streetcar ride an event.” Later qualifying his remarks, he noted, “I announced that I would put hostesses on all street cars, but I don't know now. One of the lines wants blondes, another wants brunettes. I wouldn't last ten minutes.”

He continued his theme of opposition to prohibition by repeating his curious phrase, “I still think a small saloon will help reduce unemployment, 'America and motherhood.' One wonders if they eulogized the benefits of apple pie as well.

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newspapers throughout the United States. A Chehalis newspaper pointed out that Meyers was "attracting attention from all parts of the country... That's darn good publicity for Seattle—and Vic."

When Meyers's wife had a baby girl on January 26, 1932, that was good for yet another front page story of how he missed a political meeting the previous night while pacing up and down the hall at Providence Hospital, and it certainly demonstrated his qualities as a family-oriented person.

The flippant attitude displayed toward the election on the part of a major metropolitan newspaper made it inevitable that someone would write a letter to the editor in complaint. When it happened, the Times printed the letter and provided a justification for its actions:

The Times readily admits that its view of municipal politics heretofore has been serious and often sad. Perhaps it should be explained that its present light regard for the primary campaign is limited to the contest for mayor among ten candidates, not more than two or three of whom have ever given evidence of the slightest qualification for executive office. . . . The Times's present enterprise is not merely to furnish what the show folks call "comedy relief" to a sordid situation. Run through the list of the mayoralty candidates; listen to the foolish statements, the absurd promises that most of them are making. Plenty of food for laughter there; and there's nothing better than a laugh to help get the cobwebs off the community brain.

This cynicism was justified somewhat by the actions of some of the other candidates during the campaign. Most of them actively worked for the support of the African-American community. As in the rest of the country, racial segregation was a reality in Seattle during this period, though it wasn't as virulent as in other places. Here blacks were part of the voting populace even though their economic status and civil rights were far below what whites enjoyed.

Most of the mayoral candidates attempted to outdo each other in declaring their feelings of friendliness and brotherhood toward their fellow citizens of African descent in statements quite shameless considering prevailing conditions. In addition, largesse was distributed to them and others that would have been laudable had it not so obviously been a ploy to gain votes.

One example of this occurred when Frank Edwards sponsored a turkey dinner at Smith's Restaurant in the Central District near the end of December 1931. The dinner was supervised by Mrs. Archie Bonner, who had just opened a branch campaign headquarters for Edwards within the Sojourner Truth Home.

John Dore did not pay for any dinners, but he did issue a statement that again deplored the worsening of the unemployment situation caused by firing city employees. (Actually, after his election he moved quickly to fire many more.) He went on to promise blacks treatment as "American citizens, regardless of color." He claimed to have numerous black friends and said, "There is not a human being that lives that has less of racial antipathy in his make-up than I have."

Otto Case was not going to be left out of the business of spreading messages of peace and harmony. He asked, "At this season . . . may we lay aside our prejudices and hatreds," adding that "all men are brothers in His eyes." One wonders just how seriously anyone took these statements.

As the campaign progressed, Meyers gained a new ally in Laura LaPlante, a stage and screen star of international fame, whom he had known professionally for several years. This proved to be an alliance of great convenience indeed. Laura was due to appear in a stage production of The Expectant Husband at the Moore Theater on February 13. Her appearance in Seattle proved of immense publicity value to herself and Meyers, the expectant mayor.

LaPlante, billed as Meyers's campaign manager, was accorded extensive coverage in the Times, complete with photo spreads. One such photo collage showed her pounding a podium and shouting, "Vic's the man!" while the next photo showed her embracing him, declaring, "And what a man!"

Meanwhile, Mayor Harlin was also making speeches. As has been noted, he had the support of labor and for good reason. The streetcar situation was approaching a crisis as...
employees were being paid in city warrants that were essentially worthless. Harlin promised to find a way to redeem the outstanding warrants and actually had some success. While refusing to employ strikebreakers in the event of a walkout, he managed to put together a package through contributions from the motormen’s own union, money wrung from the city council, and donations from Seattle merchants.

City Treasurer H. L. Collier was confident that by March he could stop impounding revenues in order to pay interest to outside investors. This money could then be applied to lesser obligations—such as the motormen’s earned wages.

Former mayor Edwards was busy taking advantage of this opportunity in his campaign as well. At a meeting held in the Pantages Theater he announced his intention to file suit to force the city treasurer to halt payment of interest to investors immediately. At this time Edwards was facing court action himself, being accused of shady financial dealings involving shares in a British Columbia mine. In a grand theatrical display he then asked, “Is there a street railway employee in the crowd? If so, I’d like to see his salary warrant.” Such an employee was indeed present and, just by coincidence, happened to be carrying his uncashed warrant. He presented it to Edwards and received, in return, $40.

Near the middle of February Meyers performed a couple of campaign stunts that brought him more publicity and undercut the assumptions of later writers who claimed that he began to take the mayoral race seriously in the last weeks of the primary. On February 13 he hired a beer wagon, put his band in it and paraded in it along Fifth Avenue while the band played. The wagon lost a wheel at the corner of Fifth and Union, stopping traffic and further adding to the spectacle.

Then, at a jovial meeting of the Shrine Club held at the Olympic Hotel three days before the primary, Meyers appeared in the outfit that gained him widespread publicity. Wearing a sheet à la Mohandas “Mahatma” Gandhi, a top hat and leading a goat by a leash, he sat quietly during the meeting as did the other candidates (two of them excused themselves, citing other important business) while their pretended “supporters” outlined their policies. For years afterward, articles discussing Vic Meyers would carry the story and sometimes the famous photograph of him in that costume.

On February 16 the Municipal League made public its evaluations of most of the candidates. Harlin received their only unanimous “qualified” rating. It noted his prior service on the United States Coal Commission during World War I and his service as United States representative for coal conservation to the peace conference at Versailles.

The league criticized Ed Brown for “continuous conflicts between the mayor and the council” and blamed the losses incurred by the streetcar system on the five-cent fare that had been enacted under his administration. Otto Case was given good marks for his long experience and wide knowledge of political administration as well as being an active supporter of City Light. John Dore, on the other hand, was harshly criticized for making “reckless and extravagant promises that he must know are impossible.” As for Frank Edwards, the Municipal League saw “no reason for people to reverse their recall judgment and elect him again.”

Vic Meyers “treated the campaign as a joke and [there was] no reason to consider it otherwise.” Art Ritchie, while noted as having some ability, was, like Dore, given to making excessive promises. David Nygren’s experience as a bridge and paving contractor was mentioned, and it was the league’s opinion that as mayor he would make “… a good bridge and paving contractor.”

Finally, on February 23 the primary election was held, and the Post-Intelligencer announced the unofficial results the next day: John F. Dore, 45,653; Robert H. Harlin, 22,626; Frank Edwards, 17,339; Otto A. Case, 12,508; Arthur J. Ritchie, 8,479; Vic Meyers, 4,798; N. A. Schellberg, 2,108; John Laurie, 719; David Nygren, 436; Edwin J. Brown, 112.

The race for the general election was between Dore and Harlin. Dore won and became Seattle’s next mayor. Apparently his wild promises struck a chord in people desperate to believe them. Vic Meyers went back to managing his nightclub and his short-lived political career appeared, to most observers, to be over. However, Meyers had other ideas. But that is another story.

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The Line That Became Obsolete Before Its Completion

Loggers who worked in the Spruce Production Division were the first to see an eight-hour work shift. To "get the spruce out," soldiers and loggers worked around the clock.

Despite Woodrow Wilson's campaign to keep America out of World War I, the tide of public opinion turned against Germany with the sinking of the Lusitania on May 7, 1915. Germany then began its unrestricted submarine warfare in the Atlantic to break British control of the seas. The United States entered the war on April 6, 1917.

Tanks, poisonous gas and submarines were used with diabolical efficiency during the war. An untried weapon, the airplane, was also introduced, and the need for aircraft-quality wood for the Allies became a necessity. Sitka spruce was better than any other wood for airplane construction. It had qualities of lightness, strength and resiliency, plus a long, tough fiber that would not splinter when struck by a rifle bullet.

In order to ensure a steady supply of wood for our European allies, the United States War Department established the Spruce Production Division in 1917 and made Lieutenant Colonel Brice Disque director of operations. The Spruce Production Division was initially assigned 10,000 soldiers from the army's Signal Corps. By the end of the year some 25,000 to 30,000 soldiers joined nearly 100,000 loggers, mill workers and railroad laborers in the woods to "get the spruce out."

Even though patriotic fever was high, it did not sit well with private timber companies or the unions to have soldiers in the woods competing for precious jobs. Colonel Disque, who understood the positive results of the army's involvement, wrapped everything in the flag of loyalty to the country and the need to take drastic action in an emergency.

The spruce forests of the Olympic Peninsula were a wild, inaccessible land. An inventory of the spruce belt by the United States Forest Service estimated that nearly eleven billion board feet of spruce stood in Washington and Oregon. Over five billion of this was on the Olympic Peninsula, and the Clallam County operation was the largest single spruce production sector.

Under Colonel Disque's direction, the Spruce Production Division penetrated the Clallam County spruce belt. Accomplishing this feat meant building 175 miles of railroad and two sawmills. Eleven subcontracts were awarded to different companies, and work progressed on several sections.
simultaneously. Soldiers and loggers worked around the clock in three shifts.

Fourteen months after initial construction work began in July 1917, 36 miles of main line track, various sidings and graded paths for spur lines were completed ahead of schedule.

Despite the many superlatives bestowed on the Spruce Railroad—the most expensive at $30,000 per mile, and the fastest built (75 percent faster than any previously laid tracks)—it never hauled a single spruce log for the war effort, the job for which it was intended. The line was completed 19 days after the armistice was signed—the need for it disappeared with the cessation of hostilities.

After the war, ownership of the railroad passed to two private corporations; subsequently, it was renamed the Clallam County Railroad. After a serious fire and costly lawsuits, the original Spruce Production Railroad No. 1 was abandoned in 1954 and the rails torn up for scrap.

According to David Morris, Superintendent of Olympic National Park, the “staff of the Olympic National Park completed the conversion of the abandoned railroad bed into a trail in 1981. The bridge at the Devil’s Punchbowl was constructed during the 1970s to reroute the trail past a hazardous tunnel.” The heaviest work done on the 36-mile line was along the steep banks of the north shore of beautiful Lake Crescent. Today between 7,500 and 10,000 people hike this trail each year. There is a certain irony that one of the most expensive railroads ever built is now providing the most inexpensive kind of recreation.

A retired librarian, Mary L. Stough, is currently a free-lance writer living in Olympia and working on a western Washington tourist’s guide to historical murals.
There in the middle of all the Italian confusion stood Yak, the
classic figure of the laconic Westerner—cool and calm, watch-
ing the chariots skid through the turns. Of course he wore boots, jeans,
and his thumb was hooked in his back pocket . . .

—Charlton Heston describing Yakima Canutt on the set of Ben Hur
One of the most unforgettable stunts in the history of Western movies takes place in John Ford's 1939 classic *Stagecoach*. When the Indians attack the stagecoach, it is rushing across the spectacular Monument Valley, with a young, valiant John Wayne—the "Ringo Kid"—at the reins of the wildly galloping team of horses. At one point in this chase, a lone Indian rides alongside the stage's galloping ponies and skillfully mounts one of them, attempting to pull the team to a stop and thus thwart the escape. The stagecoach crew promptly shoots the Indian, yet despite his injuries he somehow keeps his hold. Gradually, though, he loses strength. Then, in a series of spectacular maneuvers, he falls from the horse's back and lands between two galloping horses, hanging onto the harness and dragging precariously on the ground facing the stagecoach driver. The driver shoots him again. Then the Indian falls from the horses and drops completely to the ground as the stagecoach passes over him at an extremely high rate of speed. The Indian is dead, but his demise is spectacular. The visual impact of this scene—which lasts only a few seconds—is unforgettable.

The Hollywood "Indian" who performed the *Stagecoach* harness drag was Yakima Canutt, the famed Northwest rodeo rider turned Academy Award-winning stunt man. Canutt probably executed the harness drag using techniques he learned in the 1910s and 1920s from rodeo trick riders in their own "dragging" stunts. Yet trick riding techniques were just one of many facets of his rodeo career that Canutt carried with him from the Northwest and into Hollywood films. Indeed, much of Yakima Canutt's demeanor and personality traits can be traced directly back to his Pacific Northwest rodeo and cattle ranching roots.

Enos Edward—later nicknamed "Yakima" or "Yak"—Canutt was born in the Snake River Hills near Colfax, Washington, on November 29, 1895. Yak was not an Indian—his parents were of mixed Scottish, Dutch, Irish and German ancestry. His father and mother, John and Nettie, worked their cattle ranch and fruit orchard on Penawawa Creek with the help of Yak and his four brothers and sisters. There in the Palouse Country of southeastern Washington, Yak remembered learning "how to swim, shoot, trap mink and muskrats, and I caught a great number of coyotes." Interestingly, John Canutt was elected to the Washington State Legislature in 1896 and subsequently appointed state oil commissioner by Governor Alfred E. Mead. Young Yak Canutt thus resided for a brief time in Seattle's Green Lake neighborhood before returning to the family's ranch on Penawawa Creek as he reached adolescence.

During his years on his parents' Palouse cattle ranch, Yak was exposed to the "cowboy code." Yak's eastern Washington world was still closely tied to that of the vanishing cattle frontier and the code behavior that characterized the cattle kingdom. Basically, the cowboy code was a set of unwritten rules of behavior that evolved among late 19th-century Great Plains cowboys—a code subscribed to almost universally by cowboy occupational folk groups. The cowboy code contained many features that resemble the unique characteristics ascribed to American frontiersmen by historian Frederick Jackson Turner in his essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History."

Cowboys were democratic, practical, innovative and courageous; they disliked intellectuals. Cowboys worked hard, but at times they also drank and played hard. They were individualistic yet closely bound by the code mores of their peers. These included an aversion to city life and "civilization," fancy talk, and boasting. Cowboys spoke only when necessary, said what they wanted to say slowly and deliberately, adding some vernacular and perhaps a dash of dry humor to enliven their "lingo." A cowboy loved his horse and took good care of it; he stood by fellow hands and his outfit at all costs. He showed hospitality to cowboys from other outfits and shared important trail information with them. Moreover, a cowboy was always deferential to women, showing an exaggerated courtesy toward "good women."
"I rode horses, lots of them," Canutt later recalled of his years on Penawawa Creek. In his 1979 autobiography, Stunt Man, Canutt wrote, "It just seems that I had always been on a horse." Yak rode his first bucking bronc at age 11 and after that climbed aboard rank broncs every chance he got. "My mind was made up," he remembered. "I was going to be a cowboy, a horse breaker. My greatest dream now was to eventually ride in the bronc-riding contest that was one of the main attractions each fall at the Colfax Fair." His parents opposed the idea, and his father argued strenuously against his becoming a cowboy. But Yak persisted and paid his entry fee. In 1911, at only 16 years of age, Yak Canutt won the bronc riding event at the Colfax County Fair. His rodeo career had begun.

For the next 20 years Canutt rode the rodeo road. He was one of the first-generation pioneers of the emerging sport of professional rodeo. By 1915 he was quickly rising to the top of the profession. "I won more than I lost. I was building a good reputation as a bronc rider, bulldogger, and all-around cowboy." Canutt won second at Pendleton, Oregon, in 1915 and the All-Around titles of several smaller rodeos.

In surveying Yak's rodeo days, the theme of the cowboy code again emerges. Because there were so many ranch cowboys like Yak on the early North American rodeo circuit, there were recognizable variants of cowboy code traits in the culture of early 20th-century rodeo cowboys. They dressed, talked and wandered like plains cowboys. At rodeo's end they sometimes drank as heavily as plains cowboys on a night in town. A look at rodeo behind the chutes revealed other variants of the cowboy code at work. Rodeo men were democratic, resourceful and most certainly courageous. They were individualistic when compared to society at large yet loyally conformist in their following of cowboy norms. They showed hospitality, sharing everything from cash, beer and a motel room to their rigging and roping ponies. More importantly, they shared precious information about competition rough stock with their rodeo cowboy opponents, just because they respected them as fellow cowboys. They loved their roping and bulldogging horses, and they showed a profound respect for the wild animals they attempted to ride.

Thus Yakima Canutt easily made the transition from ranch life to rodeo life, and by the time of World War I—in which he briefly served as a sailor in the navy—Yak was regarded as one of the top rodeo cowboys in North America.

As noted earlier, and contrary to popular belief, Yak Canutt was not an American Indian. But Yak himself did a great deal to create confusion over his ethnicity, and it all began in 1914 when he was riding broncs in Pendleton. His riding buddies were from the "Yakima Indian country," and they bragged to the locals that "Yakima cowboys" could bust any bronc in town. As it turned out, Canutt and his buddies had been hitting the bottle too hard and ate more than their share of dust that day. Canutt remembers that one bronc threw him off so fast and so hard that it put a bunch of local cowboys in hysterics. "A photographer got a picture of me upside down..."
above that bronc and, to carry on the rib, captioned it, 'Yakima Canutt leaving the deck of a Pendleton bronc.' The cowboys picked it up and started calling me 'Yakima,' which was soon cut to 'Yak.' However, the name was good as a show name—people seem to remember it.

Yak occasionally cultivated the mistaken assumption that he was of Indian ancestry. He often told different questions that he was of Sioux, Umatilla or Nez Perce ancestry. "I enjoyed the little game," he remembered, "until the Indians themselves started trying to find out what tribe I belonged to." He told the Indians the truth, with mixed results. Some scolded him for being "ashamed" of his heritage while others expressed confusion over his mixed European pedigree. But Canutt persisted, and his Indian name was one of many attributes that carried him from the rodeo arena to Hollywood movie-making.

Canutt combined a theatrical bent with superb athletic prowess, as evidenced by his ability to ride heretofore "unrideable" broncs. A review of his feats provides a panorama of the great broncs and the great rodeos of 1910s and 1920s America. Canutt rode Bootlegger at Cheyenne, Wyoming (1916); Fox at Sheephead Bay, New York (1916); Culdesac at Walla Walla (1917); Black Diamond at Los Angeles (1919); Corkscrew at Monte Vista, Colorado (1922); and Fatty Arbuckle at Garden City, Kansas (1922).

But the two most famous bronc rides of Yak's career were on Tipperary during the Black Hills Tri-State Roundup at Belle Fourche, South Dakota, in 1920 and 1921. Tipperary was one of the rankest broncs in early North American rodeo; no one had ridden him. Yak learned all about Tipperary by swapping information—cowboys knew and feared his famed "third jump," a signature maneuver that always sent bronc busters flying into the dust. In 1917 Cheyenne Frontier Days Champion Sam Brownell was invited to Belle Fourche to take on Tipperary, but the bronc won the day. Canutt, also a Cheyenne champ, inherited Brownell's invitation and task in 1920, and he remembered the ride vividly:

I stepped aboard, and the bronc was cut loose. I hit him in both shoulders with my spurs and he whirled away in a high jump. His second jump was a fast, straightaway jump. . . . I figured that with this long, fast straight jump he was getting up momentum for the next, "third jump," which made him famous. And, just as I figured, he practically exploded. He went into the air with a combination jump that felt like he was breaking in two. He kicked high to the right, swinging his front legs and head to the left. Actually it was a sunfish [jump] with a kick added. It popped my head and loosened me, but that tricky maneuver threw him out of stride . . . . He bucked to the end of the arena, and stopped at the race-track fence. I stepped off and led him back as the crowd gave me a great ovation.

Yak rode Tipperary again the following year in Belle Fourche. As a result, he was presented the "Tipperary Medal," commemorating his two famous rides.

In the course of a rodeo career spanning two decades Yakima Canutt compiled an awesome record. He won Pendleton’s coveted Police Gazette Belt in 1917, 1919, 1920 and 1923. In 1923 his combined earnings from timed events (bulldogging) and bronc riding won Yak the Roosevelt Trophy, the equivalent of today’s World Championship. All of this, combined with 20 years of consistently excellent rodeo performances, ultimately led to Yakima Canutt’s 1976 induction into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. (Interestingly, in the same 1976 ceremony, Yak’s old adversary Tipperary was also inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame.)

By the mid 1920s Canutt was approaching 30 years of age and looking at the end of his bronc-riding career. In search of new opportunities, his eyes quite naturally turned to Hollywood, California. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, Hollywood became a center for the production of silent and "talking" movies, including the popular Westerns. An interesting and somewhat incongruous part of the story of the rise of the Hollywood Western was the migration of hundreds of authentic...
American cowboys and rodeo hands to the urban environs of southern California. A book aptly titled *The Hollywood Posse* (1975) tells of this migration. The rise of Hollywood accompanied the twilight of the North American ranching frontier, when many out-of-work cowboys found themselves looking for a way to somehow continue their unique cowboy lifestyle in an urbanizing America. Ironically, Hollywood provided such an opportunity. Movie Westerns demanded a slew of new stars, stunt men and extras who were expert horsemen and could recreate authentic scenes from the American West on the Hollywood movie screen. Thus, over the next three decades men like Yakima Canutt and, later, Ben Johnson, Slim Pickens and many others migrated from the American cattle ranching and rodeo circuit to the bright lights of Hollywood. There they rode the rodeo and performed the daring stunts that came to characterize the Western film genre. And “the Hollywood posse” brought more than horsemanship to the big city. These former cowboys and rodeo men also brought the cowboy code, continuing to practice its values within their occupational folk group.

Yak Canutt, of course, became one of the most famed of the Hollywood posse. He started out working in silent movies and made the transition to “talking” grade B Westerns, appearing in both supporting acting and stunt man roles. He appeared in *The Desert Hawk* in 1924, and stunted in 1925’s *Two-Fisted Sheriff*. Joining Monogram and Republic Pictures’ grade B movie-making operations, he worked with John Wayne in “The Three Mesquittes” series, which launched Wayne’s ride to stardom. A few of Yak’s many 1930s credits include *Lonesome Trail* (1930), *Hurricane Horseman* (1931), *Shadow of the Eagle* (1932), *Scarlet River* (1933), *Neath Arizona Skies* (1934), *Westward, Ho!* (1935), and *King of the Pecos* (1936).

In most of these movies Yak played minor acting roles and performed stunts, often doubling for the movies’ stars. By 1939 his reputation was so good that he made the transition from grade B movies to feature films. Yak appeared in *Stagecoach*, also John Wayne’s first feature film, performing the incredible harness drug described above (many consider this Canutt’s greatest stunt). Later in 1939 Yak landed a job on the set of *Gone With the Wind*, in which he appeared as an actor in a few special scenes and did stunt work. It is Yak who attacks Scarlett O’Hara (Vivian Leigh) when she rides through the squatters’ camp on the outskirts of Atlanta. And in the famous scene where Rhett Butler (Clark Gable) rescues Scarlett, furiously driving a one-horse buggy through the flaming Atlanta ruins, it is Yakima Canutt driving, doubling for Gable in this dangerous feat.

Inevitably, Yak Canutt encountered as much injury and pain on the movie set as he did in the rodeo arena. And, like rodeo cowboys, Canutt and his fellow Hollywood stunt men tried to shrug off the danger and pain, explaining it away as “just part of the job.” In the Atlanta scene of *Gone With the Wind*, for example, Yak flipped the buggy in rehearsal, landed on his head, and lost his memory for several hours (he could not remember which movie he was making). In *Tapadero*, a 1932 John Wayne Western, Yak lost his hold during a stunt and almost had his head crushed under a wagon wheel; he also broke his shoulder blade in four places. In *Boomtown* (1940), Yak’s horse “reared over backwards,” crushing him beneath: “After a nightmarish ride to the hospital I found out that two of my intestines were nearly cut in two,” he wrote later. “My diaphragm was badly injured, the lining covering one kidney was torn off, and six ribs were broken.” This was a turning point. After 11 years as a stunt man (which followed 20 years in the rodeo arena), 45-year-old Yakima Canutt decided to “make the transition from stunting to action directing.”

The next 35 years of Yak Canutt’s career saw him successfully make that transition. Although Yak continued to work as a stunt man in epic pictures like 1941’s *They Died With Their Boots On* (starring Errol Flynn), Canutt’s name soon also began to appear on movie credits not as “Stunt Man” but rather as “Action Director” and “Stunts Coordinator.” From the 1950s through the 1970s Yak played a major creative role in the direction of movies like *Ivanhoe* (1953), *Mogambo* (1953), *Ben Hur* (1959), *El Cid* (1961), *Swiss Family Robinson* (1964), *Cat Ballou* (1965), *Where Eagles Dare* (1967), *A Man Called Horse* (1969), *Rio Lobo* (1970), and many more.

“For twenty years and more,” writes Charlton Heston, “most of the action sequences in most of the pictures we remember for those sequences were directed by Yakima Canutt.” Ben Hur, the Italian-filmed movie in which Heston first worked with Canutt, certainly fits this generalization. Heston recalls rehearsing regularly for three months as Yak trained him for the film’s famous chariot race scene. In the finale to this scene, Heston was to pilot a speeding chariot pulled by four galloping white horses in a spectacular jump over a wrecked chariot to win the race. Heston describes Canutt’s demeanor and mannerisms throughout these many rehearsals as those of “the laconic Westerner—cool and calm, watching the chariots skid through the turns.” Canutt “not only taught me to drive, but to enjoy it,” all the while creating “one of the finest action scenes ever filmed.”

In 1966 Yakima Canutt won an Oscar in recognition of his work as a stunt man and action director. Ten years and eight movies later, Yakima Canutt...
made his final movie, Equus, and retired from movie making.

Yak Canutt was a private man who wrote and spoke little about his personal matters and family life. We do know that in 1916 Yak fell in love with Kitty Wilks and, while on a drinking spree, married her in Kalispell, Montana. Kitty was a respected bronc rider on the cowgirl rodeo circuit; he was 21 and she was 28. Their tumultuous three-year marriage ended in divorce. In 1931 Yak married for keeps to Minnie Andrea in Yuma, Arizona. Two of their children, Edward Clay and Harry Joe, both eventually followed their dad into the motion picture and stunt man business. Edward Clay “Tap” Canutt’s name appears on Western movie credit lines to this day.

On the surface Yakima Canutt’s two careers—rodeo bronc riding and Hollywood movie making—do not seem to have a lot in common. The differences between the bright lights of Hollywood and the dusty early Western rodeo road seem great indeed. Yet Yak rode as many horses in Hollywood as he did in the rodeo arena, and his Hollywood stunts were often based on skills he learned in the rodeo arena. A more important connection between the two worlds of Yakima Canutt, however, was the code of values that Canutt and his fellow cowboys brought with them to Hollywood. The cowboy code permeates Yak’s work in both the rodeo arena and in Hollywood. Courage is the most obvious of these code values, for it made possible the incredible stunts performed by Canutt and other members of the Hollywood posse.

Dental of pain and the willingness to continue to work while enduring great pain also apply in Canutt’s story. And so, too, do Canutt’s style of dress, the words he used, the drawl in his voice, and the understatement of his oral delivery, described by Charlton Heston and several more of his contemporaries. Yak never lost the cowboy mannerisms and ways of his Snake River Hills youth. In his hard-living and hard-drinking ways (which he curtailed considerably as he grew older) Yak also kept up the cowboy code. And wandering from movie set to movie set, from Italy to Africa and to America’s Owens and Monument valleys, Yak Canutt also maintained the roving, itinerant lifestyle he had learned and loved on the rodeo trail.

Finally, and much to his credit, Yakima Canutt retained the cowboy’s respect for animals—especially horses. The broncs of the early rodeo arena (like Tipperary) may have been Yakima Canutt’s adversaries, but he valued their strength and skill. On the movie set, too, Yak Canutt watched out for horses and other animals and treated them with respect. His relationship with Humane Society officials assigned to the movie set was always cooperative and thoroughly professional. And, like Errol Flynn and others with whom he worked, Yak often expressed contempt for those moviemakers who harmed or disrespected horses and other animals.

By career’s end Yakima Canutt had won the greatest honors that could be bestowed by colleagues in his two beloved professions. He had won an Academy Award for his stunt work and direction, and he was inducted into the Stunt Men’s Hall of Fame and the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Yakima Canutt was also an Inductee to the National Cowboy Hall of Fame, Pendleton Roundup Hall of Fame, and the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame. Yakima Canutt died in 1986 in southern California, distant in miles, but not in spirit, from the Snake River Hills ranch country where he was born and raised.

Michael Allen is associate professor at the University of Washington Tacoma and founder of the Ellensburg Rodeo Hall of Fame.
Rosellini

Governor Al Rosellini deserves much credit for his vision, direction and support of parks and recreation in our state. The book review by Robert Carriker in the Winter 1997-98 issue of COLUMBIA is, in my opinion, accurate. Regrettably, the book itself is lacking in any accounting of the former governor's contribution to our leisure time and protection of our natural resources.

It was my pleasure to be appointed director of Washington Parks and Recreation in November 1963. The following is a selected list of some of Rosellini's accomplishments:

1. He appointed a committee of state officials to address our outdoor recreation and make recommendations. They did—33 of them. Based on several of those recommendations, the voters approved a $10 million outdoor recreation bond issue and a marine initiative to provide an estimated $1.3 million per year—forever. Passage of the marine initiative also provided for the creation of a permanent interagency committee composed of state officials and non-government citizens. The list of acquisitions and developments facilitated by those two sources is staggering.

2. He directed the State Parks Commission to undertake a two-year comprehensive outdoor recreation study and subsequent plan.

3. He directed the creation of the State of Washington's Underwater Park System, the first such system in the country.

4. He markedly expanded the state's Youth Development Conservation Corps with subsequent improvements of existing areas and facilities.

—Charles Odegaard, Seattle

Small World

The article, "Words of Gold," by J. Kingston Pierce, in the Spring 1998 issue of COLUMBIA I found well written and entertaining. Of particular interest to me was the reference to and discussion of Sylvester Scovel and his recently acquired wife. The name Scovel sounded familiar, and when I looked through the collection of my father's old photographs I found this image.

Besides my father, Robert G. Walker (far right), those listed underneath are unknown to me. Mrs. Scovel seems happy and enjoying her male companions. (Perhaps her husband, Sylvester, had already departed for New York.) The dog was not my father's—he arrived in Skagway [sic] with two St. Bernards, duly noted in the Tacoma press of the time, of which I also have photos.

Robert Walker arrived in Skagway in late August 1897 with eleven horses and tons of supplies that he and his partner William Vose had transported over White Pass to Lake Bennett over a period of 30 days. They lost eight horses by injury or starvation. It is quite likely that Mrs. Scovel was on the trail at the same time.

—John Hunt Walker

CORRESPONDENCE

"Raiders" Revisited

In the Winter 1997-98 issue of COLUMBIA, Tom Berg of Hadlock offered a correction to Mike Vouri's article, "Raiders from the North," published in the Fall 1997 issue. Vouri quoted from Isaac Ehey's diary the words, "one marine was killed" in the battle of Port Gamble. Berg correctly identified the man killed as a navy coxswain, not a marine. Berg, however, got the sailor's name wrong, reporting it as Engelbrecht Gustav. The log, signed by G. Howard, Acting Mate, reported:

"At 1:20 P.M. Nov. 22, 1856 (four hours after the Indians ashore had surrendered), the funeral procession, with the remains of Gustave Engelbrecht (coxswain) who was killed fighting gallantly in the action with the 'Northern Indians,' left the ship to be interred; half masted the colors. At 2h00m the procession returned."

Vouri and Berg did not mention that Engelbrecht was the first American serviceman ever killed in action in the Pacific theater or that his grave is now listed as a National Historic Site. It undoubtedly was the first on the hilltop that became the cemetery for tiny Port Gamble, which at that time was home to one woman, one female child, and perhaps 20 white men; all of whom had taken shelter in a log blockhouse for two days while the battle was under way.

The Puget Mill Company built the iron fence around the grave in later years. The Kitsap County Historical Society has erected a granite monument over Engelbrecht's grave.

—Harold F. Osborne, Edmonds

This photo of Mrs. Sylvester Scovel turned up in John Hunt Walker's collection of images from his father's days in the Klondike.
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Additional Reading

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

Oregon's Carlisle

A Century of Services for the Mentally Ill
Evolution of Care and Treatment Philosophies at Western State Hospital, by Sidney H. Acuff. Fort Steilacoom, Washington: The Western State Hospital Archives, Hospital Interpretive Center, 1987.

Oysterville Remembered

Ezra Meeker's Quest for Klondike Gold

Vic Meyers

Clallam County's Spruce Railroad

Yakima Canutt
Hair of the Dog
Tales from Aboard a Russian Trawler
Reviewed by Bruce C. Harding.

I n the 1980s Barbara Oakley was hired as a translator aboard a Russian trawler, which was part of a large fleet of fishing and processing vessels operating in the Pacific Ocean under a joint USA-Russian agreement. Part of her duties included monitoring the amount of fish brought aboard. Her intriguing narrative reveals not only many aspects of Russian-American relations during that time period but, more importantly, reflects her part in creating and maintaining working relationships among men and women with a variety of cultural backgrounds, languages, attitudes, and ways of doing things.

Details of life aboard the trawler provide the most enjoyable aspects of the book. Women's rights advocates will enjoy her comments on female Russian crew members and their rewards. The importance of creating and maintaining personal relationships with fellow workers is well handled and reinforced this reviewer's belief that people who differ on many concepts can still exist together to achieve a common goal. The issues of alcohol overindulgence, race relations and nationalism are treated from several viewpoints.

Oakley provides specific examples, in one case offering the reaction of the Russian crew to American television ads about female undergarments and other personal products.

The crew members' comments about life aboard the trawler contain undercurrents of Russian-American differences on social issues, forms of government, standards of living, desires for peace and the necessity to compromise. As a translator, Oakley contributed greatly to this mutual understanding.

Even for readers whose fishing knowledge is limited to the use of a cane pole and bobber, this volume offers both enjoyment and an opportunity for learning. It will not, however, entice one to seek employment catching fish by the ton. Not even the money and fascinating life aboard ship could balance out the long hours and miserable conditions that fishermen must endure.

With this book, Washington State University Press continues its high standard of publishing. However, the volume contains only a few photographs, a modest number of published references, and lacks maps that would enable the reader to locate places discussed in the text. These concerns detract from an otherwise excellent work.

Bruce Harding is a retired records manager and archival consultant living in Pullman, Washington.

Hair of the Dog
Tales from Aboard a Russian Trawler
Reviewed by Bruce C. Harding.

Paul Kane's Great Nor-West
Reviewed by Barbara D. Minard.

I n their book Diane Eaton and Sheila Urbanek reopen a window that Paul Kane first opened 150 years ago when the Irish artist traveled in northern and western North America. This window allows us to view life at Hudson's Bay Company forts and glimpse aspects of Native American culture in the 1840s.

Paul Kane experienced the Northwest he painted. During 1846-48, Kane traveled from Toronto along the Hudson's Bay Company fur trade routes, across northern British Columbia, down the Columbia River, up to Fort Victoria on Vancouver Island, and back again. He was at Fort Vancouver while Hudson's Bay Company staff awaited news of the newly established border between the United States and British Columbia. He also sketched a Cayuse warrior who several months later participated in the Whitman tragedy. Kane thought of himself as a documentary artist.

During his adventures, Kane produced field work consisting of over 500 sketches, watercolors, oils on paper, and a simple diary. Later, in the studio, he painted a hundred large-scale oils on canvas and published a narrative about his Northwest travels. Eaton and Urbanek demonstrate that the greatest documentary value of Kane's work lies in his little-known 500 field sketches and diary. They also explain how his studio oils were often a combination of several field sketches placed in a romantic-style landscape to please Victorian patrons. His published narrative, Wanderings of an Artist (1859), was also "colorized" with the words and style of a ghostwriter and editor.

Paul Kane's Great Nor-West is arranged by geographic area. The text is interpretive and informative. Sidebars contain quotes from Kane's published narrative. The illustrations give us 51 of Kane's scenes viewed through the window of time. Forty-three are his field sketches, watercolors or oils on paper, and eight are his large studio oils on canvas.

Eaton and Urbanek succeed in introducing Kane's field sketches to a wider audience. They emphasize the value of his graphic documentation of the Native American cultures. The authors provide an insight into ethnography, art and social attitudes of the time. The book is more than a history lesson.

Barbara D. Minard is a cultural resource specialist living in Astoria, Oregon. She is a former park ranger, having served with National Park Service installations in Alaska and elsewhere.
She's Tricky Like Coyote

Annie Miner Peterson, an Oregon Coast Indian Woman

Reviewed by Michael McKenzie.

She’s Tricky Like Coyote

From the cunning spell-jur of the Yakamas to the trickster of the coast tribes, Coyote’s seemingly endless capability to adapt and endure serves him well as the leading character in many Native American myths and stories. In a sympathetic tale told with power and beauty, Lionel Youst introduces Annie Miner Peterson, who indeed lives up to the tenacity implied by her Coos tribal name ward way. Youst wisely lets Annie’s life be the focus—he knows that their stories work best by letting the characters do their own talking. By chronicling her story in a simple, straightforward way, Youst wisely lets Annie’s life be the focus—he knows there’s enough there to do the job.

Peterson lived the vast majority of her 79 years (1860-1939) along the Oregon coast. Her life bridged the early contact period and the modern era, making her knowledge of Coos tribal mores and languages unique. She was the last person fluent in Miluk and a key source in dictating both Miluk and Hanis stories to Melvin Jacobs, an anthropologist who recognized Peterson’s special gifts. The accuracy of her memory was well attested. This, as Jacob realized, was no ordinary anthropological source but a reliable testimony of Native American ways before the coming of the whites.

There is more to Annie Peterson than anthropological savant. With Youst’s judicious use of excellent photographs, we see Annie happily posed with three generations of descendants, looking very much the modern woman. But there’s also the Annie of the forced march from Coos Bay to Yachats—the Coos people’s own “Trail of Tears” when they were relocated from their ancestral homes. And there’s the Annie who was abused by more than one husband—only to find unexpected happiness with Swedish logger Carl Peterson. And, finally, there’s the Annie who knew full well the importance of the culture she left—and worked hard to preserve physical and social artifacts of a time gone forever.

Youst has woven a masterful and historical tale. It is one of that rare breed of good books that seamlessly and painlessly educates readers while holding them enthralled. We know the plight of indigenous peoples—in theory. In Annie, we know it in our gut. We cry when she is sad; we rejoice when she finds happiness. And through it all, Annie Peterson, the last link between the mythic “Age of Innocence” and our modern cyber-age, endures. It would be a mistake to attribute her endurance to some romantic ideal of the “noble savage”; Annie’s nobility is neither so trite nor so imposed as that. Rather, like so many other people of character, when faced with adversity, she refuses to complain but instead works still harder, making the most of life. In the end, she made her namesake, Coyote, proud.

Michael McKenzie is associate professor of philosophy and religion at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Big Dams and Other Dreams

The Six Companies Story

By Donald E. Wolf. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996; 352 pp., $27.95 cloth.
Reviewed by Paul Pitzer.

The Six Companies formed in the 1930s to build the Black Canyon or Boulder Project that became Hoover Dam. Together or separately, they went on to construct more dams, bridges, highways, airplanes, automobiles, buildings, and just about anything else formidable in the way of major construction ventures. Since the 1930s they have made a major contribution to the building of the American West, the whole country and, in some cases, other nations.

When engineers write about engineering ventures, they often get so bogged down in jargon and details that their story is lost in minutia or is understandable (and interesting) only to other engineers. Donald E. Wolf’s an engineer turned historian-writer, and he has, as much as possible, overcome this problem. In his telling of the Six Companies story there is of necessity some technical material, but it is minimal and Wolf leavens it with personal insights into the private lives of the more significant principals.

Wolf’s work, however, is not only a telling of the Six Companies (actually there were more than six) as they worked together on joint ventures. It is, rather, the story of all of the companies involved as they worked together, individually, and with yet other companies. This results in a complicated narrative with a large cast of characters who appear, disappear, and reappear with, at times, disconcerting suddenness. Keeping track of who’s who is sometimes difficult. Each of the companies involved is worth a separate work; some have already been done—e.g., Mark Foster’s treatment of Henry Kaiser. Having some familiarity with the different companies and the main characters before reading Wolf’s book would be helpful. Taking on all of the companies together and producing a short book was undoubtedly a difficult task, and one suspects that considerable material was left on the editor’s desk.

The book’s main shortcoming is the index, which frequently fails to cite locations and occasionally gives inaccurate page numbers. This makes using the book for research rather difficult. Otherwise, Big Dams and Other Dreams is worth the time for anyone interested in the subject and a worthy contribution to the story of construction and growth over the last seven decades in the West and the entire nation.

Paul Pitzer teaches history in Oregon and is author of Grand Coulee Dam: The Harnessing of a Dream (1994).

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<td>ONE-PLUS-ONE, $38</td>
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<td>INDIVIDUAL, $34</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Seniors (60+) and full-time students and active military may take a 10 percent discount off the individual or family membership rate.

To request a membership brochure, write or call:

WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, Washington 98402

253/798-5902; fax 253/792-9518

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MUSEUM PASSPORT (annual pass for four to both the WASHINGTON STATE HISTORY MUSEUM in Tacoma and the STATE CAPITAL MUSEUM in Olympia) ........................................... $40

NONPROFIT PASSPORT (annual pass for 15 persons per visit)—available only to nonprofit organizations .................................................. $75