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COVER: Celilo Falls in the mid 1930s, 20 years before it was obliterated by construction of The Dalles Dam. This hand-tinted photograph is from a series of postcard pictures taken along the route of the scenic Columbia River Highway, on the Oregon side of the river. See related story beginning on page 4. (Special Collections, Washington State Historical Society)
t's not often that I get this opportunity to communicate so directly with COLUMBIA's readers. I want to let you know that we appreciate the many comments (be they compliments, criticisms or corrections) that filter in from various sources—sometimes it's a letter to the editor; occasionally it's a note scribbled in the margins of a membership renewal form; and quite often it's a comment passed along via the receptionist or another staff member. Whatever the avenue of transmittal, your messages are important to us. They let us know that you are out there, you are reading what we have labored to put before you, and you have an opinion about it.

There's plenty of food for thought in this issue of COLUMBIA. In a seasonal vein, we bring you a history of the Washington Christmas tree industry and the sad story of a foggy winter night that brought about the demise of a Gig Harbor fishing boat in rough seas on the rocky coast of Vancouver Island. Not for the first time, our cover story focuses on the Columbia River. In it Richard Lowitt describes the national political climate surrounding the building of the Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams in the 1930s.

Our Klondike commemorative series began in 1994 with an article about women in the goldfields of Alaska and the Yukon. After covering a broad range of other Klondike-related topics in subsequent issues, we have come round full circle, and the series goes out in grand style with a biographical account of Klondike Kate, "the Queen of the Yukon," by James Bledsoe.

Two of the articles in this issue are by writers whose names have appeared in these pages before. Kurt Armbruster returns with a more in-depth picture of George Francis ("Citizen") Train and his efforts to promote Tacoma than we have had to date, and WSHS exhibits curator Maria Pascualy gives us a glimpse into the life and work of artist and historian Del McBride, whose recent death is mourned by many.

Once again, thank you for your feedback, and keep it coming! After all, COLUMBIA is your magazine. Our goal is to reflect your interests while presenting accurate and interesting history. So let us know how we're doing.

—Christina Orange Dubois, Managing Editor
Trading Beyond the Mountains

By David L. Nicandri

Every so often we encounter a book that shifts or broadens our perspective. I had that occasion recently when I was asked to review R. S. Mackie's *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843*, for the journal *Alaska History*.

Mackie's book is a magisterial history of commerce, or as he would call it, commercial geography. In it he shows how early fur trade explorer Alexander Mackenzie (whose exploits in this era that will see Lewis and Clark undergo apotheosis, makes the exploits of the American explorers seem tame by comparison), and the fur trade consolidator, Sir George Simpson, presaged what some people now refer to as the Pacific Northwest economic region, a resource-rich expanse from the California border to the Arctic, from the Rocky Mountain crests to the Pacific. These commercial pioneers saw the resources of this region for what they are: unsurpassed anywhere on the continent. Ironically, about the only resource this region provided of poor grade was the land-based fur trade. The climate was simply too moderate to generate thick fur on beavers.

Mackie's book pivots around the repeatedly ill-fated American efforts at economic development within the region, in contrast to the great success of the British Hudson's Bay Company. Sadly for the HBC, its business acumen was not rewarded by the British government, which gave into negotiations with the Polk administration what its traders had deflected in the field. The HBC was a diverse business enterprise, trading not only in furs but agricultural produce, fish and timber. The company drove William Clark to distraction with its success, relegating the American fur traders to the mountains where they scrounged for furs—a circumstance leading to the term "mountain man," originally a British phrase and one meant to be used derisively.

In short, the HBC out-hustled the Americans for whom politics was eventually the only recourse. In a moment of triumph, in 1841, Simpson proclaimed, "All opposition from the citizens of the United States is at an end." But where American business failed, American statecraft succeeded. Primed by such observers as Washington Irving, the American government pressed for a division of the Oregon Country. As Mackie phrases it: "The Hudson's Bay Company won every commercial battle it entered, but lost the political war of 1846."

Viewed from our modern era of world trade, the scope of HBC enterprise in the Northwest is astounding. Fish, lumber and produce were distributed to Hawaii, San Francisco Bay and Sitka, and furs, of course, went to London. Mackie writes of the "seemingly incongruous spectacle of 'fur trader' sending salmon to Honolulu and Canton, and lumber to Valparaiso and Rio de Janeiro, in exchange for cargoes of copper ore destined for London." Alexander Mackenzie's 1793 epiphany of economic opportunity was made real by Simpson. The vast resources of the Columbia and Fraser River valleys became the foundation of an export model that in no small way continues to work to this day, as any visit to the Tacoma, Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia, waterfronts will show.

Mackie's compelling narrative shows how the roots of this grand transpacific trade can be traced to the first entrepôt of significant scale in this region—Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River. The ever-vigilant Simpson reorganized his commercial empire in view of emerging demographic, political and diplomatic trends, and made Fort Victoria on Vancouver Island his new commercial capital.

Few modern-day businessmen, with their instantaneous communication devices, moved with as much dispatch as did Simpson in 1842. Two bad years in the inland fur trade and two years of American immigration over the Oregon Trail were all he needed to know that a move north of the 49th parallel was advised. This realization, just a year after declaring American commercial competition vanquished, was clinched when Simpson spent three weeks on a ship stationed off the Pacific Coast, waiting for favorable conditions that would allow him to cross the bar of the Columbia.

Just as Mackenzie saw the future of Pacific Rim trade, Simpson, with his northward strategic deployment to the Georgian/Puget basin, saw the limits of the Columbia River passage. Victoria, a depot on the Pacific with deep water connections to Oahu, Sitka and London and no Columbia River bar to contend with, fully anticipated the burgeoning Pacific Rim trade passing through the Northwest's saltwater megaports.

Trading Beyond the Mountains is the story of the Northwest's entrepreneurial roots and promise in this region when trade had no boundaries. The principal historical vestige of this chapter in regional history is Fort Vancouver, at the heart of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve in Clark County.

David L. Nicandri is executive editor of COLUMBIA and director of the Washington State Historical Society.
COLUMBIA RIVER DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1930S

By Richard Lowitt

IN HIS FAMOUS campaign address at Portland on September 21, 1932, Franklin Roosevelt set the tone for developments on the Columbia River during the Great Depression when he said, “The next great hydroelectric development to be undertaken by the federal government must be that on the Columbia River.” Water power, he added, “means cheap manufacturing production, economy and comfort on the farm and in the household.” Public power, in brief, could help launch the broad-gauged and balanced development of the Pacific Northwest.

Roosevelt at Portland made no mention of multipurpose river valley development. His focus was on “the question of power, of electrical development and distribution.” Hydroelectricity was a national issue, and it underwent its greatest development during the New Deal era in the Pacific Northwest.

This 1940 aerial photograph shows the final stage in construction of Grand Coulee Dam. In the foreground is Mason City; across the river, the government town of Coulee Dam.

MORE POWER

President Roosevelt’s speech found a receptive audience. In effect, he restated what others had proclaimed—namely, that development of hydroelectric power was necessary if the Pacific Northwest was to be anything more than a dependent region mining its abundant agricultural, forest, fishery, and mineral resources for the benefit of consumers elsewhere in the United States and abroad. Public officials clamored for power development and both the Reclamation
ER to YOU

Service and the Army Corps of Engineers, culminating with its famous "308 Report" in 1932, all called for power development on the Columbia River.

Indeed, Roosevelt himself, while campaigning in 1920, had called attention to the hydroelectric power potential in the Pacific Northwest. Now, with the New Deal, its potential would begin to be realized in the public interest. To be sure, other aspects of river valley development would be consid-
ered, and the threat to the salmon fishery could not be ignored; nevertheless, generating hydroelectric power was the dominant concern during the Depression years. Putting tax dollars into the Northwest gave back in some measure the wealth derived from its soil and forests, and helped create a new economy.

RISING IN THE Canadian Rockies and crossing the international border into Washington near its northeast corner, the Columbia River is the second largest river in the country in terms of run-off. The Columbia flows for 750 miles through Washington and along its southern border to the Pacific Ocean, falling 1,300 feet on its way. In the eyes of planners in the region and the nation’s capital, this has earned it the distinction of being by far the largest river in the nation in terms of potential power development. The two major projects launched prior to World War II, Bonneville and Grand Coulee Dam, followed different patterns of development in generating hydroelectric power; one was constructed by the Corps of Engineers, the other by the Bureau of Reclamation. It is worthwhile to discuss each separately before discussing, by way of conclusion, efforts at coordinating them prior to World War II.

In 1933, largely with funding from the Public Works Administration, the Corps of Engineers began the construction at Bonneville—42 miles upstream from Portland, Oregon, and 140 miles from the sea—of a dam as a navigation and power project. This was considered the first step in the complex process of opening an inland waterway and developing the region, a process planners envisioned would take several decades. The Bonneville Dam, it was anticipated, would upon completion have an installed capacity of 432,000 kilowatts of electrical energy.

The first two generators of 43,000 kilowatts each were in operation by the summer of 1937. However, at the onset, greater concern was expressed over the plight of salmon prevented by dams from reaching upriver spawning grounds. At Bonneville a series of elaborate fish ladders and locks were constructed, and a daily count was taken of the various species passing over them. One hundred fish pools, each a little higher than the one before, spiral to the top of the dam while water cascades down this watery stairway. The ladders were pools 16 feet long, 30 feet wide, with a one-foot rise between each. On the trip downstream, engineers left openings in the dam large enough for the baby fish to pass through and avoid being crushed in the giant turbines and generators. At Grand Coulee refrigerated tank trucks successfully removed salmon trapped below the dam site to spawn elsewhere.

These developments attracted widespread public attention and assuaged the concerns of a fish industry worth about $6 million annually to some 20,000 people who, in one way or another, were dependent on it for their livelihood. The president was not so easily assuaged. In a 1935 memo he wrote, "All I can hope is that the salmon will approve the spillways and..."
find them really useful, even though they cost almost as much as the dam and the electric power development.” More than $6 million was expended on the Bonneville fish ladders.

But hydroelectric power for commercial and domestic use was the chief motive for the construction of Bonneville Dam two miles below the Cascade Rapids in the famous Columbia River Gorge. It was the first federal step in developing the Columbia River as the greatest power resource on the American continent. As power was generated, regional planners concluded, other growth—including population—would follow. Envisioned, in addition to Bonneville and Grand Coulee, was a series of ten dams by which it was proposed to utilize 92 percent of the 1,300-foot fall of the river for power plants with an aggregate installed capacity of more than 10 million horsepower.

With the completion of the dam in 1937 at a cost of $53 million, and with the first electric power available for public distribution late in that year, it became necessary to set up machinery for the administration of the dam, locks, fishways and power plant. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) was intended to be a provisional agency pending the completion of other federal projects in the Columbia River basin. Its primary function was to administer the generation, transmission and sale of the energy developed at Bonneville.

Led by J. D. Ross and, following Ross’s death in 1939, Paul Raver, the BPA constructed a network of transmission lines interconnecting the power facilities at both Bonneville and Grand Coulee with the major load centers in Oregon and Washington. The first transmission line went to Grand Coulee to provide power in facilitating the construction of the dam. The BPA also sold power to municipalities, cooperatives, public utility districts and privately owned utilities. After a little over a year, the BPA had contracted for the delivery of 218,000 kilowatts of firm power, all of which was generated at Bonneville Dam.

Equally as important as power generation was the rate structure. J. D. Ross promised “a simple, understandable rate structure for Bonneville power.” His first rate order, released in 1938, gave electric power to the Pacific Northwest at the lowest wholesale cost in America. Moreover, the rates were uniform. “Everybody,” Ross explained, “will pay the same price for power from the Columbia River, the small rural district or the large city,” thereby encouraging the widest possible use.

The BPA, of course, did not sell power directly to consumers. The “retail” rates depended on the method of distribution and the manner in which the power was used. Rates on the transmission network were set at $17.50 per kilowatt year, thereby encouraging long-hour loads of all sorts—for residential service, irrigation and factories. Ross also noted that “every cent allocated to hydroelectric power will be repaid to the federal government, together with 3½ percent interest.” The larger the amount of electricity generated, the sooner the cost of federal funds utilized for generating electricity—about 23 percent of the initial cost of the dam—would be repaid, and rates could, presumably, be further reduced in the process.

Once the rate policy was determined, Ross launched a program to develop substations throughout the region to switch power from the main transmission lines to lower tension circuits, known as “finger lines,” into adjacent territories. Initially, as would be expected, the bulk of the demand came from 18 public utility power districts in Washington and from cooperatives and municipalities in both Oregon and Washington. Industrial dam site demand was relatively
unimportant. Ross's uniform, or postage-stamp, rate structure resolved a controversy in the Northwest between factions that desired differential wholesale or uniform rates. Ross's decision was in accord with the public power outlook of the New Deal and gave a definite cast to the BPA that would influence the further development of the region.

As J. D. Ross was establishing himself and formulating BPA rate policies, upriver operations at Grand Coulee were attracting greater attention. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes visited the site in October 1938 and was duly impressed. He explained, "In normal course the dam and the power plant will not be completed for about four years. . . . It will take still longer to complete the irrigation dam which will bring into cultivation 1,125,000 acres of exceedingly rich land. This project, when completed, will cost $394 million and will be the largest man-made structure in the world." Constructed under the auspices of the Bureau of Reclamation, the dam's potential for irrigation as well as power generation were matters of primary concern. But it was power first and irrigation second because land could not be put under the ditch until the dam was constructed.

Construction at Grand Coulee got under way in the summer of 1934. The envisioned project was so stupendous—Grand Coulee would be the initial dam in a vast Columbia Basin Project—that it would be constructed in parts with a low dam at Grand Coulee as the first step. Power generated from it could help pay for the high dam later. Like Bonneville, Grand Coulee was launched with an initial grant—this one for $63 million—from the Public Works Administration.

A GLACIAL SLIDE or ice dam thousands of years ago forced the Columbia River to cut itself a new channel through walls of basalt rock. When the ice receded and the river returned to its old bed, a deep gash lay across the lava plateau in central Washington. Known as Grand Coulee, this became the site of the major dam in the planned development of the entire river basin. The coulee was 52 miles long, 600 to 800 feet deep, and from two to five miles wide. Now high and dry, Grand Coulee had its bottom 600 feet above the ordinary water level of the river. The challenge facing the engineers was to raise the water level 355 feet by the construction of Grand Coulee Dam and then pump water representing one-seventh of the average flow of the river 280 feet higher still into the coulee. When distributed, this water would turn the semi-arid desert of sagebrush and sand into cultivated lands.

The dam would create a huge reservoir of over 5,000 acre feet extending to the Canadian border, a distance of 150 miles. It would thus add considerably to the navigable waters
of the state and likewise enhance the amount of firm power that could be sold by Bonneville.

Grand Coulee Dam was the key structure in the development of the Columbia Basin Project. And its dimensions—4,300 feet long, 550 feet high above the lowest bedrock, and 500 feet thick at the base, tapering to a crest of 30 feet, with a spillway 1,650 feet long—made it the biggest thing on Earth. The power installation, it was envisioned, would generate almost 2 million kilowatts, of which about 800,000 kilowatts would be for the generating of firm, or continuous, power while the balance would supply secondary power available for irrigation pumping and standby service. Every aspect of the construction of Grand Coulee Dam involved dimensions exceeding anything previously constructed by human endeavor.

While the energy dimensions of Grand Coulee were being realized during the New Deal, those pertaining to irrigation, though still paper projections, were equally impressive. In extemporaneous remarks at the dam in October 1937, President Roosevelt said, “We look forward not only to the great good this will do in the development of power but also in the development of thousands of homes, the bringing in of millions of acres of new land for future Americans.”

One of the principal reasons for the development of the Columbia River basin, as Roosevelt now saw it, was “the settling of families from other parts of the country who have migrated for economic reasons from submarginal farms” along with families operating similar farms in the region. To meet this contingency, that of settling farm families on lands to be irrigated with water from Grand Coulee Dam, Congress approved in May 1937 the Columbia Basin Anti-Speculation Act. It placed restrictions on the size of farms and sought to curb excess profits in the sale of lands. It also gave the government an option to purchase excess lands.

The legislation was enacted to resolve problems emanating from the dissolution of large dry-land farming operations in the 1.25-million-acre area to be irrigated. Acreage in excess of 80 acres per family would not be eligible for water, and owners who refused to sell their excess lands under conditions satisfactory to the secretary of the interior and at prices fixed by appraisal likewise could not receive water. To further this process landowners in this central Washington area in February 1939 voted overwhelmingly to form the largest irrigation district in the United States. At the time it was estimated that it would take another three years before a huge canal to carry pumped water from the reservoir behind the dam into the coulee could be constructed and another two years (1944) before water would be ready for delivery to the first unit of the project.

To formally launch the irrigation project it was necessary to survey and map the 2.5 million acres of project land below Grand Coulee Dam. To lay out the projected canal system more than 100 townships—an area of 3,780 square miles—had to be resurveyed. When completed, the records would show the location, ownership, topography and soil constituency of every parcel of land. About 600,000 acres of public domain within this area would be available for public settlement. The survey records would become the basis of the Bureau of Reclamation's land ownership records. They would be indispensable to the design and right-of-way purchase for the canal system and in determining compliance with provisions of the anti-speculation act.
To direct the entire survey the bureau recruited Harlan H. Barrows, chairman of the Department of Geography at the University of Chicago. Barrows's assignment was considerably broadened because the president, envisioning at least half a million people settling in the project area, suggested "a comprehensive agricultural and industrial economic survey." By January 1940 over a hundred specialists were at work compiling information. They represented 32 federal, state and local agencies involved in one way or another with the vast undertaking. Among other things, they prepared studies on clearing, grading and irrigating desert land, on the adaptability of crops and livestock, and numerous other matters relating to farm development and operation. Also included were studies of community problems such as highways, electrical services, domestic water supplies, town locations, and educational and recreational facilities. In all, 28 topics were investigated, all of which were designed to facilitate the establishment of successful family-sized farms and farming communities.

At the end of the New Deal, before the nation entered World War II, construction of irrigation canals had not yet begun, and officials were suggesting that some of the land in the area might be without water for 20 years or more, although the entire acreage in the project area already was classified and appraised. Completion of all the investigations was a major job of technical planning. The work of Barrows and his associates provided guidelines to the settlement and development of the Columbia Basin Project and suggested appropriate action programs for carrying out accepted proposals. Every family that cast their lot on the project, it was believed, would have enhanced opportunities for success. However, by 1940 requirements of national defense were superseding concern for irrigation and the development of arid lands in the area, and requirements of national defense involved coordinating the great power resources of the Columbia River.

In December 1939 the first hydroelectric power from the generators of Bonneville surged over transmission lines into the Vancouver substation and then across the river into Portland. Bonneville power was vitalizing new defense industries, lighting houses, electrifying farms, running factories, producing new electrometallurgical and electrochemical plants, and was well on its way toward stimulating the development of substantial metals industries in the Pacific Northwest. In March 1941, two years ahead of schedule, the turbines at Grand Coulee generated initial power at the dam. Two 10,000-kilowatt generators were tuned. During the war years the dam was generating almost 2 million kilowatts, making it the largest single source of hydroelectric power in the world.

In coordinating the power resources of the Columbia River and combining the marketing of power produced at Bonneville and Grand Coulee under one agency—low cost power from both developments utilized one transmission
network—the BPA reached consumers throughout the Pacific Northwest and accelerated the supply of necessary minerals for national defense. Roosevelt proposed to institutionalize the arrangement by expanding the jurisdiction of the BPA, originally created as a temporary agency for the marketing of Bonneville power, and making it the established agency for the sale and distribution of electrical power and energy. By 1942 the BPA was transmitting more than 6 million kilowatts to consumers in the Pacific Northwest.

Roosevelt’s action led some in Congress and the Northwest to call for the creation of a Columbia Valley Authority (CVA) to manage the river in a way comparable to the multipurpose program of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). The BPA would become one component, albeit a major one, of CVA. However, in 1941, with defense needs mounting, public power marketing was regarded as the primary function of any agency proposed for the Pacific Northwest. In the nation’s capital the emergency power program developed by the Federal Power Commission made it desirable to begin creating federal power-marketing agencies as soon as possible. Officials there did not believe the same clear need for developing a TVA-type agency existed. Both the president and the secretary of the interior agreed. Ickes, never a friend of the TVA, a regionally administered agency, was enthusiastic about the BPA, which would come under his jurisdiction and keep as its sole function the transmission and selling at wholesale the huge blocks of power generated in the Columbia River basin. The BPA would neither build dams nor have any control over them. Bonneville continued to be administered by the Corps of Engineers, and Grand Coulee by the Bureau of Reclamation.

Most people in the Northwest were in accord with this perspective, though there was some sentiment for a CVA. At the time of Pearl Harbor over 40 percent of the region was still either federally or state owned. A plethora of federal agencies to conserve and develop these publicly owned lands and water resources were already established and active in the Northwest. A TVA-type agency with a comprehensive and far-flung range of activities would challenge, compete with, and weaken the already established federal agencies. The BPA in 1941, emerging as one of the biggest dispensers of electricity in the world, would carve out its own bailiwick, serve its own constituency, and compete with no other public agency as “a regional agency in the Department of the Interior.”

Congressmen seeking an agency with power to coordinate federal activities within the Columbia River basin drafted a measure calling for a CVA in 1941 to counter an administration measure that would translate Roosevelt’s executive order and make the BPA a permanent agency. Senator George W. Norris, “father” of the TVA, opposed the measure and in forceful language told the president of his opposition. While nothing came of either measure owing to wartime concerns, the BPA continued and continues to this day to market the electric power produced at federal dams on the Columbia River. The agency established for the transmission and sale of power would not be burdened with other types of service. Indeed, from Roosevelt’s 1932 speech at Portland to the wartime performance of the BPA in meeting the demand for electric energy, the theme pertaining to the Columbia River during these years was consistent and can be summed up in a phrase Roosevelt uttered in his extemporaneous remarks at the Bonneville Dam site in August 1934: “More power to you.”

Richard Lowitt is a professor of history at the University of Oklahoma, specializing in the history of the 20th-century American West. He is author of several books, including The New Deal and the West (1984, 1993), as well as editor of and a contributing author to Politics in the Postwar American West (1995).
The George Roger Chute family moved to Two Rivers, 12 miles southeast of Pasco, near Burbank, in 1905. Emma Chute submitted this photograph of her sons, Roger and Gordon, to the Christian Science Monitor where it was a winner in the weekly Monitor photography contest in 1908. The boys pumped the family's daily water supply by hand, filled a barrel with a pail, and pulled the barrel on a mule-drawn sled an eighth of a mile to their house in the raw sagebrush land. Chute later wrote,

"This was wild country, there was no herd law; thousands of Indian cayuses and wild cattle competed with Wallowa sheepmen for what scant pasture existed. The country was fearfully overgrazed, and when the Chinook winds blew we couldn't see, breathe or eat for days at a time. Water in inadequate supply was provided by an under-financed irrigation company; we fenced our land, sowed alfalfa, planted orchards and vineyards, stocked the place with cattle and horses and mules. I went into the bee business as a means of obtaining money of my own, introduced sweet clover to the region, bred a phenomenally productive strain of three-banded Italian bees, won and retained all the state prizes for comb honey production, and made more out of it than ever had been hoped. We had 300 acres of farmland in a high state of cultivation when, after 17 years of effort, the irrigation company collapsed entirely, and the whole valley went back to the coyotes and gophers.

Chute went on to a varied career as a sailor, fisheries biologist and writer. His collection of papers relating to his interests in Native American culture and commercial fisheries is located in the Special Collections Division at the Washington State Historical Society.
Artists on the Nisqually Flats

By Maria Pascualy

Klee Wyk Studio and Gallery exhibits outstanding examples of carving, weaving and decorative arts of N.W. Coast Indians, in co-operation with private collectors and the Washington State Museum. Contemporary use of the region's heritage in a selection of ceramic tile murals, mosaics, pottery, rugs, fabrics and jewelry.

Opening Sunday, August 14, from 2 until 6 and continues daily through September 4.

Klee Wyk Studio & Gallery

on U.S. Highway 99, 3 miles southwest of Fort Lewis

P. O. Box 145, Nisqually, Washington

Some Washingtonians may be surprised to hear that a ground-breaking artists’ cooperative flourished on the Nisqually flats over 40 years ago. Klee Wyk was started by Del McBride (1920-1998), a young artist with deep roots in the Indian and white worlds. He and his partners—Bud McBride, Oliver Tiedeman and, later, Richard Schneider—pioneered the use of Indian imagery in contemporary design in Washington. At a time when there was little acceptance or appreciation of Indian culture, the members of Klee Wyk actively incorporated Indian motifs into public commissions as well as their private work.

Del McBride grew up between two cultures, having distinguished Indian ancestors as well as prominent white pioneers in his family tree. As a young boy Del went to all-Indian baseball games held near Frank’s Landing, and through his great-grandmother, Catherine Mounts, and grandmother, Christina McAllister, he met “the old-timers.” Catherine Mounts, who died when Del was 13, was a girl at the time of the Medicine Creek Treaty. Her daughter Christina, Grandmother McAllister, was born on the Nisqually reservation in a mat lodge.

It was Christina’s generation that experienced most severely a brutal weaning from the traditional Indian culture. Many were sent as young children to Forest Grove Indian School in Oregon (later called Chemawa) where the boys and girls were “trained to act like white people and be good Indians,” as one relative told Del.

At age 15, already something of a researcher, Del went to live with Grandmother McAllister and made two wax cylinder recordings of her recollections of life on the Nisqually reservation. He also kept notebooks that included stories his grandmother’s friends told as they visited with her in her kitchen.

This appreciation of his Indian background is all the more remarkable given that the Northwest of the 1930s was not an easy time to be Indian. Del said people didn’t acknowledge their Indian ancestry and so he was teased at school because he did. Although Del kept detailed journals and liked to write, his first love was art. At age 20 he used money from his allotment on the Quinault Indian Reservation to attend the COLUMBIA WINTER 1998-99
Art Center in Los Angeles—an unusual choice for a young man of modest means. His hope was that commercial art would allow him to make a living at something he loved. His sojourn in Los Angeles was the only extended period of time he spent away from his source of inspiration, the Pacific Northwest.

A fortuitous meeting with noted anthropologist Erna Gunther at the University of Washington seems to have clinched his interest in using Indian themes in his design work. As a participant in the National Youth Administration program, Del was assigned to work with Gunther in the basement of the old anthropology museum. Although it smelled of "insecticide and old walrus hide," he found great enjoyment working closely with the artifacts and having access to the stellar collections of the University of Washington. Del made drawings that were enlargements of artifacts Gunther would use in her first course on primitive art. Gunther was doing something completely new at the university by taking Indian artifacts out of a natural history category and placing them in the context of art. Gunther and Del were like-minded in many ways, and their friendship continued through the years.

Del McBride, with his partners, officially opened the doors of Klee Wyk Studio and Gallery on May 16, 1953. Del was the lead designer. His brother Bud built the studio, operated the printing press and later produced ceramics. Oliver Tiedeman, a cousin, who worked as a photographer for the Tacoma Police Department, painted and handled finances for the group. An apprentice, Richard Schneider, joined them later, focusing on ceramic work as well. All three members would later regret not taking a more active interest in the studio's finances.

Klee Wyk was successful. Del was well connected in the art community, and the design studio's reputation grew by word of mouth. Architects and designers from Seattle came out to the studio in Nisqually to talk to the partners. Among their large

The partners wanted to educate the public about Indian art, so gallery openings became a chance for like minds to meet and for newcomers to be informed. Del McBride, plaid woolen shirt, talking to visitors about a piece in the Klee Wyk collection, c. 1958.

The exhibitions at Klee Wyk included artifacts from museums and private collectors. The button blanket and mask were on loan from the University of Washington. Klee Wyk exhibit, c. 1955.
REMEMBERING MEDICINE CREEK

The complicated and dramatic story of the signing of the Medicine Creek Treaty and its aftermath is explored in "Remembering Medicine Creek," on view through January 10, 1999. The National Archives in Washington, D.C., has loaned the actual treaty for the duration of the exhibit. This is the first time a treaty signed in Washington has been on exhibit in the state. The 5,000-square-foot exhibit is rich in artifacts and audiovisual material.

Accompanying the exhibition is a retrospective of the artistic legacy of the late artist/historian Del McBride entitled, "A Native Son: Del McBride, 1920-1998." Del worked with watercolors, gouache and casein in a variety of styles, but in his most dramatic works he used Indian motifs in a contemporary abstract style. A descendent of Indian and European-American treaty signers, Del participated in the development of "Remembering Medicine Creek" and loaned artifacts from his own collection for the exhibition.

Commissions was a mural at West Seattle High School depicting the story of Indian culture in the Northwest. In Seattle several apartment buildings had tile murals with Indian themes installed on the outside. Coffee tables, fireplaces, kitchen backsplashes, stationery and other products all were designed with Northwest Coast Indian motifs. Bread-and-butter items like wind bells—something very new in the 1950s—were sold in a small retail gallery in the front of the studio.

Although the design studio was a business, Klee Wyk had grander goals. The members wanted to educate the general public about Indian art through exhibits as well as promote and encourage the work of younger Indian artists by purchasing and exhibiting their work. People in the area who were interested in Indian art and culture naturally gravitated to Klee Wyk. At one of the studio's soirées Bill Holm, the noted art historian, came and performed with his Indian dance group.

During down time the partners went on research trips. Bud McBride's 1950 Mercury took them down Washington's
dirt roads to photograph petroglyphs that were later transformed into textile designs. Trips to the Skeena River formed the backbone of a series of works with totem poles as centerpieces. The partners developed a slide collection of carvings from villages and family collections that were then shown across the state. Erna Gunther continued to support Klee Wyk by loaning museum artifacts for exhibit. She also asked Del to talk to community groups about Indian history and art.

Klee Wyk became a stopping place for artists across the country; the socializing sometimes seemed to get in the way of the work. Klee Wyk never produced enough to support the partners completely, so they each continued to hold “day jobs”—Bud worked at the local cheese factory, Del taught art, and Oliver worked as a photographer. It later turned out that Klee Wyk had done better than they had imagined. Only Oliver Tiedeman, who handled the finances, had known this all along.

Interstate-5 ostensibly killed Klee Wyk by passing right through it in 1963. Del said he found a workman driving stakes on the property one day. “Is this the edge of the freeway?” Del asked. “No, it’s the center line,” came the reply. However, the partners later acknowledged that, freeway or no, after ten years it was time for a change. Each had found other dreams. Del put down his brush and became a museum curator, turning his eye more toward the history of the state.

Although retired, Del was collaborating with WSHS staff on the “Remembering Medicine Creek” exhibit when he passed away last July. Oliver Tiedeman, who died in the 1980s, continued to paint in the Klee Wyk style. Bud McBride and Richard Schneider opened Crow Valley Pottery on Orcas Island. Using native clays from Nisqually and Orcas, they produced utilitarian ware with naturalistic rather than Indian-inspired designs.

The Klee Wyk partners all lived long enough to witness a rebirth of Indian art, in works created by Indians and non-Indians alike. What they had pioneered is now commonplace. Richard Schneider reports that his nephew, who now runs Crow Valley Pottery, has started introducing Indian designs into his work.

Maria Pascualy is exhibits curator at the Washington State History Museum.

AUTHOR’S NOTE
My thanks to Bud McBride, Richard Schneider and Carla Wulfsberg for assistance in writing this article.
THE WEST COAST Christmas tree industry had its beginning in Washington in the early 1900s. Its development revolved around a few large growers along with hundreds of "mom-and-pop" tree farms and, ultimately, changing markets that have dimmed the once-dominant position of the state's Christmas tree production.

The traditional use of evergreen trees in North America during the Christmas season provides an occasion for bringing families into close contact with the fragrance and freshness of the forest. Christmas trees probably add more to mark the period of "peace on earth—goodwill toward men" than any other product of the soil.

An entire industry has been created to produce trees for the 35 million families in the United States who use a real Christmas tree as part of their holiday celebration. Today approximately 3.5 million trees are shipped from Washington, and the industry remains an important economic element in many rural communities.

Development of the Industry in North America

The custom of decorating an evergreen tree in American homes has its roots deep in antiquity. By the time of the Reformation in the 16th century, the Christmas tree was an established part of central European culture. As immigrants to America from Germany and other nearby countries carried on the practice, their customs and traditions became a part of the American mainstream.

Until the middle of the 19th century, any family that had a Christmas tree either cut it from nearby forests or obtained it from a local farmer. Families in small rural communities often purchased trees from dry goods and grocery stores.

While Christmas trees were becoming more popular, the American population was growing and moving to the cities. When sizable urban markets for Christmas trees began to emerge, enterprising farmers and woodsmen began bundling up trees to sell at city produce markets a few days before Christmas. By the turn of the century, commercial production of Christmas trees was in its infancy in the northeastern United States. Soon the swelling populations of many large cities created a demand for more trees than local rural areas could provide.

Tree buyers had to search farther afield for potential tree-growing areas to meet the demand. In response to this development, the more enterprising tree harvesters began to expand tree production and improve their shipping methods.

In the West, tree production did not get a serious start until the 1920s. While the early history is not well documented, descendants of some of the pioneers in the business have vivid recollections of those years.

The Beginnings—1900-1920

Large-scale harvesting and shipping of Christmas trees in Washington was dominated by two families prior to the end of World War II—the Hoferts and the Kirks. In both cases, production originated and expanded to satisfy the growing needs of the California market.

The Hofert enterprise was started by farmer John H. Hofert who supplemented his family's income by using his teams and wagons to haul cargo for the Great Northern Railroad. In 1880 he began cutting Christmas trees in Minnesota and hauling them to Minneapolis to sell. In ten years the successful business had expanded to Chicago and beyond.

In 1902 Hofert abandoned the cold Midwest winters for sunny California. Missing the tree business he had left behind, he began cutting wild trees in the forests of California and Oregon. The first Hofert production site in Oregon, established in 1907, was located near Cottage Grove.

In order to satisfy the growing demand in the California market, John dispatched his son Alvin to Washington in 1917 to develop new tree sources. The first Hofert production site here was near Castle Rock, expanding north a few years later to the Winlock area. This operation was the first large-scale commercial production of Christmas trees in the state.

According to John A. Hofert, grandson of John H., trees were cut from farmlands that were being allowed to

A History of the Christmas Tree Industry in Washington

BY DENNIS TOMPKINS

COLUMBIA 16 WINTER 1998-99
John H. Hofert began harvesting and selling Christmas trees in Minnesota in 1880. In 1915 he and his son Alvin established the first large-scale Christmas tree production operation in Washington near the town of Castle Rock.

grow back as forests and from forestlands whose owners did not object to the cutting of large trees so the tops could be used.

Cutting fees were nominal, particularly on farmlands where the trees were generally considered to be a nuisance. John recalls that in some instances farmers would give trees in exchange for a bottle of whiskey or for nothing at all because they wanted the land cleared for farming. The Hoferts eventually built one of the largest Christmas tree enterprises in North America. The Hofert Company ceased activity in the Christmas tree business soon after the death of Alvin Hofert in the early 1990s.

The Kirk family had been in the Pacific Northwest since before the turn of the century. G. R. Kirk arrived in 1898 to visit his father, Joshua Paul Kirk, who was in business in Seattle. As it turned out, there was another attraction—the Alaska gold rush.

G. R. sailed northward to the land of promise and excitement. Unfortu-nately, he arrived in the midst of an epidemic and spent his time quarantined on a ship. With the lure of the Klondike thus dampened, he returned to and fell in love with the Northwest.

Following a few years in the lumber business, he developed a successful planing mill in Tacoma but lost everything in a fire that destroyed the mill in 1914. He then went on to establish the forerunner of today's Kirk Company by producing cedar fence posts. His expansion into the piling and pole business proved a wise choice after the introduction of steel fence posts. G. R. also made his first Christmas tree sales during this time.

G. R.'s son, Paul R. Kirk, who is about to celebrate his 93rd birthday, recalls those first sales:

In 1918 Dad's brother-in-law called from El Paso, Texas. He said he had a florist that would like to have a carload of Christmas trees and asked if Dad could ship one. Dad replied that it sounded awfully stupid to him, but his crews cut the trees, didn't bother to tie, bale or size them, and threw them into the car and shipped them.

The next year the brother-in-law called again and said the same customer would like two more carloads of trees. Dad agreed and thought that there must be something to this business and that he had better look into it. He did, and in 1919 he decided to cut three carloads and head for Los Angeles to sell the trees at the Eighth and Alameda rail yard. His success lured him back with a few more carloads each year.

This was the beginning of a Christmas tree company that, like the Hofert Company, became one of the largest in North America, with operations throughout the northern United States and Canada.

The Roaring Twenties and Thirties

According to both John A. Hofert, grandson of the Hofert Company's founder, and Paul Kirk, son of the Kirk Company's founder, commercial production on a large scale continued to be dominated by these two companies. The only tree being produced was the wild Douglas fir, and from all descriptions they were really wild—nothing like the bushy trees commonly available today.
Most of the trees were still harvested from natural stands on cut-over timberlands. The landowners, often large timber companies, were paid per tree.

Trees were transported to production yards where they were baled on sawhorses according to size before being shipped. A bale consisted of 24 lineal feet—eight two- to three-foot trees, six three- to five-foot trees, four five- to six-foot trees or three seven- to eight-foot trees. The bulk of the production from the Hoferts and Kirks went to California markets. Douglas fir, mostly from Washington and some from Oregon, dominated the market. A few trees, such as "silvertips," were produced in the Tahoe area of northern California.

Paul Kirk remembers the 1920s first as a teenager and then as a college student. He said that most of the early production came out of the Puyallup and Orting area but later shifted to Olympia and Shelton. He remembers when his father's production manager, Otto Bath, would take him around to visit the camps in his open Ford roadster. "I was too young to drive," he recalled, "but he would let me drive when we were out in the country. That was a great thrill."

In 1928 Paul took a year off from college and worked his first season in the Christmas tree business at Shelton and then the Los Angeles yard:

In those days all trees were cut in the wild and pulled to roads. My job was to inspect the trees, size them, and put them in piles. They were then tied, put on trucks, and hauled to Shelton where they were loaded directly into railroad cars.

Paul returned to school, graduated, and in 1930 was working for a company that sold stocks. During those hectic days on Wall Street his employer went broke. Back then, Paul had a strong belief that a son should not work for his father. However, being jobless, he accepted an offer to once again help out with the tree harvest. He firmly restated his intention to find other work later, but that never happened, and Paul spent his next 65 years as a pioneer in the Christmas tree industry.

By the end of the 1930s the nature of the industry in Washington was changing. Both the Hoferts and the Kirks began to purchase land for tree production rather than remain dependent on leased land. Such ownership made it possible to cultivate trees, and the producers were able to harvest higher quality trees with better yields per acre. Much of the acreage was purchased in Mason, Kitsap and Thurston counties. These low-elevation sites were poor for timber production due to the slow tree growth resulting from the rocky glacial till soils common to the area. But the slow growth also resulted in a denser Christmas tree. The days of cutting lanky, poor-quality wild trees were coming to an end.

The Growth Years

The early 1940s were challenging years. With a desire to expand his business, Paul Kirk had developed a market for trees in the Hawaiian Islands in the late 1930s. Despite the uncertainties of the war, the Kirks decided to load and ship their Hawaiian orders. The ship was a day away from Honolulu on December 7, 1941, when news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor caused it to turn around and head back home. As it approached the Northwest coast during the night, all lights on shore had been doused for fear of Japanese detection, and the boat hit a sandbar near the Columbia River. Despite being tied down beneath protective tarps, the trees rolled off the ship and the tide delivered them along the Oregon coast—just in time for the holidays.

The culturing of trees began in earnest in the 1940s. Producers began what became known as "farming" the trees. This involved choosing "crop" trees, cutting out competing nearby trees and vegetation, trimming the bottom limbs up to a well-formed bottom whorl to create a better shape, and scarring the trunk to slow down growth and thus promote thickness.

Such culturing improved the grades of trees to the point where high quality "premiums" and lesser quality "regulars" were far superior to the lanky wild trees of the past. In addition, the new...
practice of leaving seed trees resulted in natural reproduction that produced trees for the future. This approach revolutionized the industry and resulted in dramatic increases in production in Mason, Kitsap and Thurston counties. Where Christmas trees were once a byproduct of logging, they had become a crop of their own.

With expanding markets and the potential for better quality trees, other commercial producers became factors in the Washington Christmas tree industry in the middle and late 1940s. Similar to the Kirks and Hoferts, some of these new producers involved several generations of family members over the years.

One example was Clarence Stohr, an insurance executive who moved to Washington from Los Angeles for health reasons. He took a job harvesting Christmas trees for Harris and Thomas and soon became interested in the business. In 1940, with $500 that his wife Billy had saved from the sale of her oil paintings, he made a down payment on a carload of Christmas trees. This profitable venture was the formal beginning of what evolved into the Douglas Fir Christmas Tree Company, a partnership that included Clarence's uncle, Orville Bittorf, until he sold his interest to Fred Peste in 1958.

Stohr began purchasing hundreds of acres in Mason County. Like many of the other producers, he saw this area as the future of the state's Christmas tree industry. He also shipped rail cars to the Los Angeles area where the trees were sold at what became known as the "Team Tracks" at the Eighth and Alameda Street rail yard.

The Stohr family, which later included Clarence's son Bob, with the Douglas Fir Christmas Tree Company and other tree production investments in Oregon, joined the Kirks and Hoferts as owners of one of the largest tree companies in the nation.

Alpine Evergreen Company originated in 1943 after founder Roy Reid began his Christmas tree career working for the Hofert Company in 1936. Greg Reid, one of Roy's grandsons and a current managing family member of Alpine, recalled:

We would send Douglas fir in rail cars to Los Angeles. The trees were skinny and lightweight. This tree that Alpine and others were selling was the tree most associated with the Northwest. Its slender trunk studded with branches made it the most popular Christmas tree on the market.

The beginnings of the company were modest. Trees were delivered to Roy's house in Seattle where they were stacked and sold. Under the leadership of Roy's son Paul, Alpine Evergreen, still headquartered in Port Orchard, became one of the larger Christmas tree companies in Kitsap County. It is currently managed by Greg, his brother Rod, and other family members. They also oversee 6,500 acres of forestlands.

During the 1950s business was booming for the Kirk and Hofert companies. Both organizations continued to purchase more acreage in the southern region of Puget Sound. Hofert opened processing yards in Winlock, Centralia, Purdy, Puyallup, Shelton, Yelm and Sequim.

In the early 1950s Kirk opened the industry's first mechanized processing yard near Shelton. It included conveyor belts to move trees, automatic cut-off saws to trim tree butts to size, and the forerunner of the now-popular automatic baler.

With the growing success of the industry, other families entered the business. Jim and Bill Hunter, along with their cousin Bob, were growing up on the family dairy farm in Mason County's Skokomish Valley. Their fathers had a section of cut-over forestland covered with Douglas fir reproduction. To earn extra money while in high school, the boys cut, baled and loaded their trees onto a rail car in Olympia for Harris and Thomas. They were paid 25 cents per tree for the 1,200 trees they delivered.
The next year the three Hunter boys purchased 280 acres of state forestland. They cut out the jack pines with axes and thinned the Douglas fir, keeping the best to develop into Christmas trees. By the early 1950s the large tree companies had processing yards near Shelton where the Hunters could easily deliver their trees.

During the mid 1950s the family started to retail trees in Seattle rather than sell to wholesalers. According to Greg Hunter, one of Jim's sons, the business had become a family affair—first with wives and then children. He said, "All the children grew up spending Decembers in Seattle."

Jim and Bill eventually purchased the family farm and combined tree production with working the dairy for several years. In the late 1970s they divided the farm. Bill still retails in Seattle while Jim's family primarily wholesales trees and has developed a successful retail business in southern California and a choose-and-cut near Olympia.

In January 1955 the Shelton Chamber of commerce bestowed upon the city the title of "Christmas Town, U.S.A." The declaration stated that Shelton was aptly named since some 30 million trees were under management on 20,000 acres and that up to 2 million Christmas trees were shipped from Shelton each year.

Seeds of Change
By the 1960s the Northwest had become one of the largest production areas in the country. Washington was out-producing Oregon by a margin of 3 to 1. Although the wild, natural Douglas fir continued to dominate Christmas tree production into the 1970s, changes began to occur that would dramatically change the industry in both Washington and Oregon—the development of plantations and the shearing of Christmas trees.

Earlier in this century the Christmas tree industry had been criticized for contributing in a major way to the destruction of natural forests in certain eastern states and portions of Canada. Such concern helped foster the idea of developing plantations where trees were planted in rows. The concept apparently originated in Pennsylvania in the 1930s. It was slowly adopted by other eastern states in the 1940s and 1950s as a complement to the continued harvesting of wild trees.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s the idea of plantation-grown Christmas trees was put into practice in the Northwest. Most of the early work was done on Douglas fir in Oregon's Willamette Valley. Another practice developed at that time was the shearing of trees to promote a more bushy appearance. It was first tried in eastern and midwestern states on Scotch pine. Eventually, a few growers experimented with shearing Douglas fir on the wild lands in the Northwest.

In the early 1960s, out of sight of competitors and behind locked gates, Paul Kirk quietly sheared ten Douglas fir trees and liked what he saw. The technique was soon applied to several acres of company lands. However, Kirk eventually concluded that this was an inefficient way to create sheared trees.
As a result, the Kirk Company began to convert to plantation-style farming wherever possible.

A number of other growers also began to shear in the wild. While some were successful, most of them eventually reached the same conclusion—shearing wild trees was much less efficient than developing sheared trees on plantations.

Some growers who harvested the natural Douglas fir believed the market for this type of tree would continue. However, despite skepticism about the sheared tree because it simply did not "look" like a Christmas tree, its popularity continued to expand. This led to an increase in plantations in Washington.

By the mid 1960s and early 1970s many growers in Oregon and Washington saw the possibilities, and thousands of acres were being planted with Douglas fir as well as noble fir, grand fir, Scotch pine and Fraser fir. Noble fir has grown in popularity, and some predict that it may overtake the production of Douglas fir in the future. However, its beginnings were anything but wildly successful. One of the early pioneers to experiment with noble fir was Charley Burton in Lewis County, west of the town of Morton. In 1949, knowing nothing about the Christmas tree industry, he obtained 1,000 noble seedlings from Crown Zellerbach who used nobles in its high-elevation reforestation efforts in Oregon:

We planted them in the ferns and weeds in the corner of an old field. They grew, we stomped the weeds and the mice and voles did their damage. And when the survivors got big enough, the deer rubbed them with their horns and skinned up or broke off most of what was left.

Then in November of 1955 we had the worst quick drop in temperature to 0°F. we ever experienced. It killed or damaged many of the native Douglas fir, hemlock and cedars, while the nobles suffered only minor needle damage. So we decided the nobles could take the worst weather we were likely to get.

Later plantings were more successful, but a late frost killed much of the new growth in 1965. Burton managed to overcome the resulting uneven growth by carefully pruning the trees. This experience led to the development of many of the techniques that now are standard cultural practices for noble fir trees.

The Tilton River area where the Burtons grew trees eventually became a prime noble fir-producing region where individuals like Ellis Compton (now Tilton Valley Trees) and Ed Girard joined the ranks of the early noble fir growers.

Washington's Fall From the Top

The success of plantation operations had wide-reaching ramifications on the Christmas tree industry in Washington. First of all, until the introduction of plantations, most trees harvested were Douglas fir. The plantations led to the planting of other species such as noble fir, grand fir, Fraser fir and Scotch pine.

Second, production gains in Oregon came at Washington's expense. Farmland in the Willamette Valley proved much more suitable for growing sheared trees than the glacial till soils of Mason and Kitsap counties. Today Oregon produces around 8 million trees compared to Washington's 3.5 million, a total reversal of numbers over earlier years.
Third, as the plantation tree became dominant throughout the 1970s, production slowly shifted away from the Olympic Peninsula to more arable farmlands in Thurston, Lewis and other counties along the Interstate-5 corridor. Several tree companies—Hunter and Alpine, for example—have been successful in converting some lands in Kitsap and Mason Counties to plantations. Other companies, including Kirk, Hofert and Douglas Fir, made massive efforts to convert these lands. Most, however, shifted production southward to the Chehalis and Winlock areas where they dramatically increased the production of Douglas fir, noble fir and other species.

Production for wholesale markets now ranged from Olympia south to Vancouver. Areas north of Seattle eventually developed an extensive choose-and-cut business. Production from Mason and Kitsap counties decreased from over 1 million natural Douglas fir in the early 1950s to less than 100,000 per year in the 1970s.

The Douglas Fir Company made a dramatic decision in 1976, led by Bob Stohr and a consortium of Christmas tree people such as Paul Goodmanson, Gary Bishop and Fred Peste. Crown Zellerbach, with no Christmas tree experience, had planted hundreds of acres of noble fir in Oregon. With thousands of nobles poised to potentially flood the market, Bob and his compatriots purchased the operation from Crown and named it Noble Mountain Tree Farm.

Eventually Stohr obtained control by purchasing some of the other partners’ interests, and Noble Mountain plus the Douglas Fir Company interests made the Stohrs a major factor in the Northwest Christmas tree community. A sad sequel to the Douglas Fir story occurred in 1996 when Bob Stohr perished in an automobile accident. Joy Stohr, his wife and long-time partner, has stepped in to take his place.

In the 1970s a third generation of Kirks had become involved. Rick, Mac and Ann joined their father Paul in running the company.

A Look Ahead

While the emphasis of this article is on the past, a few words about the last two decades years will bring us to the future. Nationally as well as locally, the industry experienced a serious tree surplus from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s. The thousands of acres that had been planted in the late 1970s and beyond produced far more trees than the market could bear. Thus began a significant shakeout of the industry as a few large and thousands of small growers left the business throughout the nation.

Trees either did not sell or sold at prices so low that the profits growers had become accustomed to all but disappeared. The last four years have seen the supply-and-demand balance improve, and there is currently a shortage of noble fir in the Northwest.

The industry is faced with many challenges as it approaches the new millennium. Land availability is shrinking, production costs continue to escalate, regulations threaten the future availability of crop protection chemicals, and labor shortages are increasing.

In addition, demographics are changing as the population ages. Mass merchandisers and chain stores now dominate many retail outlets as mom-and-pop tree lots continue to disappear. However, most of the companies that created the industry are still around. And the Christmas tree industry remains a vital part of the economies of many smaller communities. Survivors of the recent surpluses are optimistic about the future and their ability to continue to meet industry challenges.

Dennis Tompkins has been in the Christmas tree industry for 27 years, including 17 years as a consultant. He has written over 120 articles, features and editorials on the industry and is currently editor of the American Christmas Tree Journal, the publication of the National Christmas Tree Association. He is also a certified arborist specializing in urban forestry in the Puget Sound region.

Author’s Note

I wish to acknowledge Ann Kirk Davis for in-depth research and extensive information she contributed to this article.
ACOMAN ROBERT G. WALKER made his first trip to the Klondike goldfields in August 1897. He returned to the Klondike in 1898 and 1899 and went to search for gold in Nome in 1900 and 1901. Among papers recently donated to the Society by Walker's son, Dr. John Hunt of Bellevue, is this receipt for the purchase of "Bismark," a black, part cocker spaniel sled dog. On his first journey in 1897 Walker brought two Saint Bernard dogs with him, but they proved unsatisfactory as sled dogs. The Walker collection includes Robert's manuscript diary for 1897, a typescript of his 1899 diary (since lost), correspondence, legal papers, and an album of photographs taken by him during his 1897, 1898 and 1899 trips.
Yeti. Yeti. It was me and you, Kate. Going there for a while. If you weren't with your swarthy Greek, your cowboy prince, your "yam and yelly man," or the whole damned Bend Fire Department, then you were with me. . . .

This is a side-bar story of the Klondike gold rush. It calls attention to massive changes going on throughout the West. On one hand, all the initial search for gold centered around the prospector's small-scale transactions, where his nerve and muscle constantly validated or modified his acquired knowledge. In that sense, the Klondike gold rush was one of the last great adventures of a dying century. It manifested all the stark symptoms of the extreme form of individual enterprise.

On the other hand, the Klondike gold rush is the story of extreme forms of corporate activity and bureaucratic management, of activity organized from faraway board rooms, of burly men retiring after a lobster Newburg dinner to the library for cigars and cognac to decide questions about the influx of foreign capital and the precise organization of humans and nature.

To both these worlds enter the stepdaughter of a wealthy Spokane nabob, one Kathleen Eloisa Rockwell. At first blush she appears to be nothing more than an actress who showed a willingness to be part of any make-believe that could be invented for a cultural group. Yet a closer look indicates that her life was a subplot of the whole Klondike gold rush story and latter-day legend. Her story involves the fortunes and misfortunes of a character literally invented for her—Klondike Kate. Her character combines the festival or carnival queen or mock queen role with the traditional queen whose private and corporate health are intertwined.

As a carnival or mock queen, Kathleen Eloisa Rockwell ensured her place in Klondike history the night she first introduced her flame dance in Dawson at the Savoy Theater in October 1900. Historian Francis Backhouse writes:

Heads turned the moment Kate walked out on stage in her brief, form-fitting costume covered with red sequins and glittering rhinestones. Pink tights sheathed her legs, and a black satin cape hung from her shoulders. She stopped in the centre of the platform and faced the men who packed the theater. As she stood there, motionless, staring out into the darkened hall, voices hushed, and the clinking of bottles and squeaking of chairs ceased. The room grew charged with anticipation as the seconds ticked by. Kate held her stance, riveting the audience with her gaze.
Suddenly, with one fluid movement, she let the cape slip from her shoulders and plucked up a cane attached to more than two hundred yards of red chiffon. Arms outstretched, she started to turn, and the gauzy material slowly rose in the air. Offstage, a single violin cut the silence, its long, keening notes sending shivers up every spine.

She floated dreamily about the stage in a rising tide of crimson until, all at once, the rest of the orchestra broke loose. Lifted by a whirlwind of music, she began to leap and twirl, weaving the fabric this way and that.

Faster and faster she spun and the stage became a sea of fire as the blazing cloth surged around the red-haired, red-garbed dancer. Sweat glistened on her face. The watchers in front could almost feel the heat. And then, as if consumed by the fire of her passionate performance, she dropped to the floor, motionless once more, while the chiffon drifted down around her.

As a traditional queen, Kathleen Eloisa Rockwell ensured her place in Klondike mythology the night she was crowned Klondike Kate, “Queen of the Yukon.” She was crowned with a tin can by a barroom full of sourdoughs in Dawson on Christmas Eve 1900.

At her coronation, she wore the shiny tin crown rakishly upon her head, with 50 lighted Christmas candles sticking to its points like a birthday cake. She appeared as a shining apparition, all silvery and white, dressed in a flowing, low-cut gown from Worth’s in Paris and costing $1,500. Her gown had a sweeping train and was trimmed in rhinestones and seed pearls. Against the candlelight, her bright red hair seemed on fire. Kate, flushed and glad to be alive, laughed and nodded to all the men. That night everyone was happy and it seemed that all the world was in love. Toasting their Yukon darling again, the sourdoughs lined up for the Grand March. A tinny band struck up a snappy chord and the high-stepping Kate led the march around and around the room to the music of John Philip Sousa.

From then on Kate’s life offers all the double plots and events needed to bridge the old American West and the new American West by continuous parallel of interface between myth and realism, order and anarchy, between new and old technologies, or between esteemed sacred icons and disappointing tourist kitsch. In every later episode of her life, Klondike Kate can be seen as the traditional queen whose private and corporate (that of her whole queendom) health are intertwined.
A Dawson Dance Hall Girl

Kate's Life illustrates the peculiar blend of private adventure and corporate business that gave Old West dance hall girls an appeal far greater than their limited economic importance.

One photograph of Kate taken at the turn of the century shows her in a white gown showing off her hourglass figure. This picture provides a vision of the female anatomy that gives a chastely moral depiction while keeping the pervasive themes of Klondike whoring, hustling and seduction in the background.

Kate was always "where it was at," long before almost anyone else knew it. Artistically, Kate's life shows us that what is disposable, insignificant, ephemeral, dead or forgotten influences our sense of reality and self more profoundly than we might imagine. For instance, the extreme forms of individual enterprise and the extreme forms of corporate activity that marked the Klondike gold rush as an important transitional episode in the American West blended together perfectly in a shopping and gift-giving habit Kate took up in later life.

There were and still are secondhand stores and junk shops all over the West—archaeological middens of our own western ancestors. Kate would plunge in and purchase old-fashioned beaded bags, figurines, pieces of glassware and other trinkets that she would then give away to people as "authentic" souvenirs of her days in the Yukon. At the time, all these trinkets were nothing more than the middlenheap's litter. But Kate saw in the junk a nest of stories. She recreated and gave new birth to this litter. By giving them to friends and strangers with her "Queen-of-the-Yukon" seal of approval, she was simply dumping them back into the market as valuable goods.

Dawson as Finishing School

In all the earlier gold rushes, men had been able to move around. The 49ers going after the mother lode in California could move about and steer clear of—or interact with—the floozies and shills at will. The point is, they had a clear choice. If monotony weighed heavily upon them, they could mount a horse or catch a stagecoach for the next town or perhaps go to San Francisco for a few days of harmless revelry. The same was true at Virginia City and Leadville or anywhere else. The West was open for men to roam most of the year. In the Yukon it was different. There was only Dawson when the long, fierce arctic winter clamped down. Then the gamblers and entertainers had a wealthy captive audience unlike any in the world.

Booze in the Klondike served as a ghostly paradigm of community. Indeed, "hoochinoo" or "hootch" for short, is both an Alaskan contribution to American slang and a word derived from the name of a small coastal town, Hootzmahoo. The dance hall girls and the box hustlers were the bridge to this community. Kate learned early on how to be a good listener. She could read the grammar of moods. In the Klondike her work was to dance, sing, and act as camp psychologist—the role of the festival queen made popular in later years by Marlene Dietrich when she sang, "See What the Boys in the Backroom Will Have." In the outside world, Kate's work was to keep the legend of the Klondike alive—the role of the corporate queen—like a more user-friendly version of Joan Crawford as chairwoman of the Pepsi Corporation.
and under the aurora borealis in winter. Dawson was an incubator for frozen fiction, freeze-dried mythology. The town's dance hall girls were just extensions of its incongruities and paradoxes. Dawson dance hall doxies were the good-bad girls you could tell your "Baby, it's cold outside" troubles to. Dawson dance hall girls were the toll bridge between the frozen north and "a hot time in the old town tonight."

Yet Kate spent the rest of her life laundering this naughty aspect of Klondike mythology. She lost out in Hollywood because she wanted to stick to one version of the truth. Kate bore the burden of settlement and, at great cost, formed an enduring bond with the Northland itself. She had the wit to recognize that a mining boontown, like any human relationship with nature, is as much social and ideological as it is physical. One effect of Kate's queenly role was to divert attention away from the hurdy-gurdy, soiled-dove image of these women by calling attention to them instead as newly-envisioned aesthetic objects. In all her later retelling of the stories of the Yukon women she met, Kate filtered out the stories of the menstrual cramps, the vaginal itch, the TB coughs, the swollen faces from a pimp's beating, or the corns and blistered feet from dancing with men all night.

Instead of historical scholarship, Kate worked at giving her audience aesthetic instruction about the Klondike era. She acted as a spokeswoman for the life-style of all dance hall girls, unequivocally endorsing all Klondike dance hall girls as of the highest type and the finest people she ever knew. She shamelessly lived with a man out of wedlock for several years, both in the Yukon and the States, during the very straight-laced wind-up years of the Victorian age, and boasted about it in print.

After leaving the Northland she spent the rest of her life polishing and promoting the legend of Klondike Kate. She did an excellent job of convincing a generation of journalists, Hollywood screenwriters, and television producers that she had been hailed as the "Belle of Dawson," the "Queen of the Klondike," and the "Flower of the North."

Klondike Kate Rockwell's life bridged the gap between the old West and the new West; from America's old rootless, boontown extravagance to our current need to think of the American West as a great and clean good place. How did Klondike Kate weigh the two images that are equally part of our heritage?

First, Kate was an artist at a time when the notion of art itself was in transition. The genuine story of her times lay in the inspiration she certainly found in low culture and "pop kulch," not in high art. She was an artist who made bridges between old and new experience. "Kate was always on stage," said one of her would-be biographers. In a changing world, new art is always needed to turn our perceptions to the next definitive moment.

Second, it is characteristic of all social processes that they become visible and conspicuous just about at the moment of their demise—e.g., all the kids with tattoos on their bodies today. Klondike Kate's continued publicity success throughout her life had to do with the fact that she always showed up just as one phenomenon was about to transform into something else; just where mechanical devices began to mask human labor, just where nature was becoming machine or just where nature halted the progress of machines. These technologies that masked human
labor also created new opportunities for Klondike Kate. Take, for example, the following sound byte and publicity man’s dream: a surprised ticket agent for Northwest Airlines picks up the telephone one day to hear Kate’s husky voice declare:

_Sister, put Kate Rockwell Matson down on that 1:45 flight tomorrow afternoon. I’m going to New York and the telegram I’m holding here says your plane will get me there with time to spare. I’m going to be on the “We the People” radio broadcast Tuesday. This’ll be the first time I’ve been in a plane, too—think of that—and me with experiences that would fill a library._

Consider, too, just when Kate would turn up on the scene. Sometimes it was at the point of Nature Becoming Machine. Kate first came to the Klondike along with the locomotive whistle via the White Pass and Yukon Railroad in 1900, just as the glory days of the early gold rush were winding down and the corporate buyouts with their accompanying hydraulic mining and large-scale dredging operations were starting up.

Sometimes it was at the point of Nature Temporarily Halting the Progress of Machines. To reach Dawson from the shores of Lake Bennett, Kate had to take a riverboat down the Yukon and run the terrible gauntlet at Miles Canyon and the boiling White Horse Rapids. Hundreds of boats had already been wrecked there and inexperienced men had been lost at these two spots on the river. The tragedy and chaos of Miles Canyon and White Horse Rapids had caused the Mounties to take their own safety measures. The Mounties’ rule declared: “No women or children will be taken through the canyon in the boats. If they are strong enough to come to the Klondike, then they can walk the five miles of grassy bank to the foot of the White Horse.”

If Kate heard the rule, she ignored it or figured it didn’t apply to her. Rules, after all, were things to be broken. When the Mounties turned her away from the boats, telling her it was too dangerous for a woman, she thought it was ridiculous. After trying out her Irish temper and then her full charm, and seeing that neither approach would work, she reached into her bag of tricks for an old-fashioned coyote stunt—use cunning to outwit a fool.

She went back to town and found an old flannel shirt and a pair of overalls. Climbing into these, she tucked her long red hair into a tattered fur cap, smudged dirt on her face, and returned to the boat landing. A crowd of Yukoners was clustered on the bank, waiting for a big barge to cast off. At first Kate held back because Mounties were still patrolling the shoreline. Then she edged toward the front of the crowd. Just as the deckhand tossed off the ropes and the barge began drifting away from the riverbank, Kate swiftly and gracefully raced across the shoreline and leaped lightly onto the barge’s deck. A Mountie swung around as Kate was in midair. He gave out an angry shout and jumped up and down, his face turning as red as his tunic.

When she got to Dawson Kate worked the wolf whistle to her advantage while carefully avoiding the sound of the police whistle. She met up with and eventually bankrolled a swarthy young Greek immigrant bartender to the tune of $150,000. His name was Alexander Pantages. From Kate’s generous grubstake, Pantages went on to build the largest theater chain ever owned by one man. After having been jilted by Pantages, she again made an appearance just when the vulture-like process of the Los Angeles legal system was about to wet its beak in Pantages’s theatrical empire. Kate turned up at court and sat behind Pantages at his scandalous trial for alleged rape and assault just before his financial demise and the great stock market crash of 1929.

Then on to another transitional role. Back in the lower 48, at age 39, Kate elopes with a 20-year-old wrangler named Floyd Warner and tries her hand at ranching in eastern Oregon—“one of those spur-of-the-moment and spur-of-the-horse things.” When that doesn’t work out, she becomes Aunt Kate—a crone in training—and falls into some high-contrast movie of her own making, cooking and waiting on tables in dingy eastern Oregon cafes and construction camps throughout the West.

Kate’s story next sets the stage for tender romance and one of the Northland’s fondest legends. A three-year-old newspaper reaches an isolated miner’s cabin in the Klondike. The story chronicles Kate’s travels to Los Angeles to see the Pantages trial and reports that she is down on her luck and homeless. From the far-off Yukon, Johnny “the Silent Swede”
Matson, Kate’s “yam and yelly man” from the old days in Dawson, reads of her presence at the Pantages trial and says to himself, “By golly, that girl is in trouble.” He then writes her a love letter, offers to take care of her, and proposes marriage. The couple are married in Vancouver, British Columbia, by the Reverend George Pringle, the famed “sky pilot of the Yukon.” In photographs Kate shows off her gold nugget wedding ring and gold nugget necklace from her husband’s mine. Then she returns to Bend, Oregon. Her love affair and marriage to Johnny Matson helps carry on the “Queen of the Yukon” legend and brings it to a romantic, fairy-tale conclusion that secures it for all time. Moreover, this legend provides an alternative for Johnny Matson’s individualism in its most radical mountain-man form... the American West’s standard country-and-western-song lament of isolation and loneliness is turned back into a song of love and community.

In effect, Kate’s story becomes the perennial, slow-newsday content for a number of mass media technologies, all with voracious appetites. Her marriage to Matson returns her to the limelight as a full-fledged celebrity so that throughout the remainder of her long life popular magazines, Sunday supplements, and syndicated columns devoted space to retelling the legend of Klondike Kate and her love idyll. In her newfound career as a celebrity link between the old and new Wests, Kate’s byword was, “Mush on and smile.” She had another promotional photograph made of herself later in life that she sold or gave away as souvenirs to people she considered worthy. The postcard represents a wonderfully incongruous bridge, juxtaposing the old and new Wests that Kate knew only too well—the old West when Kate was young and the new West when she was old. She handwrote the slogan, “Mush on and smile” across the bottom of the postcard.

When she got to Dawson

When she periodically visited Portland, the local cops would always send a patrol car for her at the edge of town because she claimed she was afraid of driving in heavy traffic. From the end of World War II until her death in 1957 she made numerous paid public appearances, was the grand marshal of many a parade, and participated in pioneer pageants, festivals and centennial celebrations, and grand openings of new restaurants, supermarkets, and shopping centers.

When Kate was 81 and living in Sweet Home, Oregon, the headlines told of how the “Queen of the Yukon” had gone offstage for good. She had died in her sleep. But even after her death Kate had a few more curtain calls. Consider the episode that occurred in 1961, after fire had indeed consumed her passionate performance. Although legal hassles had postponed the scattering of her ashes for more than four years, rumors of the event were always kicking around the newsrooms in Portland and Seattle. Her ashes were finally scattered on the high desert in the dead of winter.

The day was overcast, with snow falling on the ridges. Ironically, the person who did the deed was a total stranger who just happened to be going in that direction and had agreed to carry out the task. News accounts state that the stranger was surprised at the color of Kate’s ashes as they were...
blown to the wind among the sagebrush. It was high noon during a desert storm. "There was a slight wind . . . and it was a perfect setting for anyone who felt that the desert in storm was magnificent."

Counterpoint to the Old West of Men
To understand this, consider how Kate employed props: the saloon, the train, the boat, the theater, the courtroom, the small cafe, the telephone, the telegraph, the radio, the airplane, the television and all the other items she would use in her stage shows or street theater performances. Kate played all these venues, but always with a uniquely feminine twist. All the stories about Kate's life are organized around certain habitations that make her life peculiarly transitional. Most of the Old West stories of Kate tell of the action usually happening inside; inside theaters and saloons, or inside the claustrophobic box where she hustled champagne, or inside railway trains. We constantly see the juxtaposition between her chance to entertain or be a companion offset against the awful solitude of the Yukon's cold tundra.

Although Klondike women were sexually potent and dangerous, they were not denied access to the premodern virtues the old West supposedly embodied. Klondike Kate was neither a whore nor a madonna, neither a schoolteacher nor a nun, nor a tourist, nor a pioneer housewife. She was a piece of work, and she was her own gal. And she played her part as a transitional figure on many levels.

Klondike Kate's role in bankrolling Alexander Pantages helped bridge the gap between one of the structures of art and science in the 20th century, taking a small-time theater operator and transforming him into a theater magnate. And with well-honed irony, her bankrolling of Pantages also allows another less well-told story to be brought to light, the story of a darker side of the old West— the cruel and violent side of men who did not turn their hostility against such culturally permissible targets as Indians, animals and Mexicans, but against the women they had allegedly placed on pedestals.

Western men, with most of their premodern virtues still intact, often became brutal or violent. Through the long season of Western history there are many accounts where they dominate woman not by moral force but by brute force. Kate built her own fortune in Dawson by spending time box hustling with the help of her lover, Alexander Pantages, who at that time was a singing waiter who would carry the miner's poke or the champagne between bar and box. When Kate finally left Dawson for good, she took a $150,000 nest egg with her.
Pantages created his own autonomy and individualism as much from Kate's initial grubstake and his treatment of her as from any of the values he might have derived from his personal combat with nature or his experiences in the budding entertainment market. Kate's grubstake enabled Pantages to go from rags to riches in five years. But he was a man without illusions or conscience. Pantages, writes historian Ellis Lucia, "possessed a toughness and native cynicism derived from a lifetime of rubbing elbows with gamblers, pugs, pimps and whores." Said another way, he spent much of his life involved with people in the black market, or in a market undergoing transition from illegitimate to legitimate.

When Pantages first got his start in show business, most entertainers were let in the back door and went out the same way as soon as their performance was over. By the late 1920s, however, the game had changed. Suddenly entertainers were becoming more than mere celebrities. They were sought after by the rich and famous as a means to promote some corporate enterprise or give a legitimate front to a once-shady past.

So the scene at Pantages's 1929 trial in the hallway of the Los Angeles court building is another interesting psychological bridge between Victorian manners and modern-day customs. The story goes that when Pantages and Kate passed each other in the hallway of the courthouse, Pantages looked the other way to avoid meeting Kate's eyes. Shortly afterwards, Kate was photographed with tears in her eyes, steadfastly quoting the code of the Klondike: "A sourdough will never squeal." Here was Klondike gold money going in opposite directions. The scorned entrepreneurial bankroller and the successfully bankrolled multimillionaire with a convenient memory loss. Part of Kate's heart was always there in the Yukon, and it molded and flavored her entire life.

Kate's was a complex personality. Why did she always return to the cabarets and variety halls where she took up with strange and questionable characters, sacrificing professional standards for the sake of money and excitement? Was she just lucky or did she really know that oftentimes the objects and images that are usually deemed worthy representatives of a period's high culture and eternal truth are not the images that really last?

There is another black and white photograph of Kate—my own personal favorite—that was taken toward the end of her life. It shows her sipping a milkshake through a straw. She has a twinkle in her eyes, and her fingernails look to be freshly painted—probably bright red. Kate was a transitional old West/new West figure. She was a working girl who used what she had to good advantage. And she took the image of the dance hall girl from a cliché to an archetype.

We can see in Klondike Kate's biography one of those Darwinesque charts showing the common ancestor of several species of modern female entertainers. Kate was the prototype of the turn-of-the-century party girl. She was a box hustler, and she knew all the "singling out" techniques for fleecing a sourdough's poke. Women like Kate were the forerunners of the B-girl and the taxi dancer of later years, and the Gypsy Rose Lee-type stripper—"Keep your skirts high enough to keep the boys interested, but low enough to keep the cops away." Kate was the prototype for movie starlets like Jane Russell and Alexis Smith, the Vargas pinup girl, the naughty calendar girl, the Hugh Hefner and Bob Guccione centerfolds, the Playboy bunnies, Gloria Steinem and women's lib, and finally again, the liberated woman telling the rest of the world to stand back and watch her smoke.

In the final tally, Klondike Kate's story is a biographical bridge from a choice generation. Kate lived and survived under two distinctly different civilizations, going with a flair from small-town horse-and-buggy days in Spokane and the wild frontier of Skagway and Dawson to megacorporation telephones, radio, television and screaming jets.

Oh, Kate, you could turn cartwheels and double flips . . . tricks unknown to common man. You could grubstake a rake or fleece a sourdough. I haven't had as much fun bellying up to a bar since. But I'm never far from joining the myth of good ol' Kate, mushing on and smiling, come what may, across the bridge from the old West to the new. The Victorian age made you fidget, Kitty dear, and I am sure no one heard the boom of the jet breaking the sound barrier above as we thumped and bumped across the barroom floor to become yet another immortal metaphor, our beaded memories and trinket symmetries served up exciting from another Mr. Big, always there . . . another secondhand store . . .

And that, Texas, is tough linen.

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Early in 1937 three Gig Harbor residents—Mike Katich, George Planich and Joe Cloud—met to discuss the idea of building a seiner to be used in the sardine fishery on the California coast. The three men had been engaged in the fishing business for many years. Katich had his first boat, the St. Nicholas, built at the Babare yard in 1914. Joe Cloud was involved in the seiner Harmony in 1927, and Planich had fished the Northwest and California waters since the 1920s.

Katich, Planich and Cloud, in the winter of 1937, contracted with the Mojean and Erickson Shipyard in Tacoma to build a new, state-of-the-art 74-foot sardine seiner to be finished in time for the coming sardine and pilchard seasons on the Oregon and California coasts.

When the shiny new Varsity slid down the ways at the Mojean and Erickson yard on July 7, 1937, the partners could not have been more pleased. The Varsity was beautifully constructed and equipped with the very latest in mechanical and electronic equipment. Of course, the latest in electronic equipment in those days consisted of a 65-watt Intervox radio telephone, and that was about it.

The owners selected a 160-horsepower four-cylinder Washington diesel engine to power the new boat. The 160 Washington provided sufficient power to move a vessel the size of the Varsity along quite well. On her trial runs the Varsity proved to be all that the partners had hoped for and more. Her owners were extremely proud of their new seiner and totally satisfied with the design and workmanship of her builders.

George Planich skippered the Varsity at first, but in 1939 the vessel was engaged in the herring fishery in southeastern Alaska. Planich did not make the trip north and skippered another vessel that season. As the sardine season approached, Mike Katich heard of a 25-year-old rising star in the California sardine fishery named Hubert Ursich. Katich was able to engage him to skipper the Varsity. Ursich lived up to his press releases and had a very successful season in California that year.

When the fishing season was ended, the crew stowed the net in the hatch and made ready to return the Varsity to her home port of Gig Harbor. Those aboard the Varsity when she left San Francisco for Gig Harbor were Joe Cloud; Mike Katich's brother-in-law and best friend, Vince Karmelich; the skipper, Hubert Ursich; Mike Puljan, the cook, of Aberdeen; Hubert Ancich; Steve Lemcke, the engineer; and Antone Mavar, Joe Cloud’s brother-in-law.

The Varsity had left San Francisco on Friday, February 2, 1940. She was making excellent time in spite of rough weather conditions and some fog. Perhaps making much better time than the crew had anticipated was a major factor in the events of the days that followed.

Believing they had just passed the Umatilla lightship, the vessel continued north and the crew imagined they had hours to run before reaching the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. In reality they had just gone by the Swiftsure lightship, hours north of Umatilla, and were running at full speed on a collision course with the treacherous west coast of Vancouver Island.

At about nine o’clock on the evening of Monday, February 5, 1940, Ursich made short wave radio contact with his brother George in Tacoma. The skipper indicated that the weather was rough, with a large swell and heavy fog, but he reported no problems and said all was going well.

A little more than two hours later, just before midnight, the Varsity overran her course, missing the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and crashed headlong at full bore onto the reefs at Vancouver Island, about six miles east of Pachena Point.

Lemcke, the engineer, suffered a
ORTHWEST COAST

broken arm when the initial impact occurred. This added misfortune may well have played a major role in his subsequent fight for survival. None of the other men was injured at impact.

When the Varsity struck the reefs she immediately began to break up in the heavy, pounding surf. As if the situation were not desperate enough, Ursich and his men believed they had struck the rocks somewhere on the coast of Washington. Adding further to the confusion was the fact that when the Varsity had left San Francisco some of the crew had chosen to take other means of transportation home. Ursich wasn't even certain how many men were aboard the vessel at that time.

The first word of trouble came via relayed short-wave radio distress signals received by marine radio stations as far north as Alaska and as far south as Astoria, Oregon. Captain Ursich reported, "The Varsity is on the rocks and breaking up quickly. Our position is south of Tatoosh Island—between Tatoosh and Umatilla and we need assistance immediately."

The Coast Guard cutter Redwing out of Port Angeles as well as the cutter Onandaga, based in Astoria, were quickly dispatched to search for the stricken Varsity. The vessels searched the Washington coast thoroughly but, not surprisingly, found no trace of the wreck or her crew. The Redwing searched as far south as the Quillayute River to no avail. Several smaller vessels were sent out of other Washington ports and Astoria and an airplane search was conducted along the entire length of the Washington coast.

Ursich believed he was reporting the correct position of the Varsity's distress. Sadly, of course, the Varsity was nowhere near the area being searched but rather was being pounded to pieces near Pachena at possibly one of the most rugged, desolate points on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The men attempted to launch the seine skiff, which was fully 24 feet in length and 8 feet abeam. Ursich believed the crew could readily reach the shore in such a substantial lifeboat.

A newspapers later reported Ursich as saying,

Some of the men were sleeping at the time of the collision and some were not. All seven of us got on deck and attempted to launch the big seine skiff, but a large wave washed all of us and the skiff into the surf. All seven of us got hold of the overturned skiff, but three of the men slipped off in a very short time and we never saw them again.

Ursich, Mavar, Ancich and Lemcke clung to the overturned skiff for more than four hours. Not only were they being pounded by the icy surf but must have also been aware that they were literally hanging on for dear life: life in the balance, in the sea off of Pachena, in the wintry month of February.

Ursich continued,

The sea was rough and pounding in against the rocks. Suddenly a big wave washed all of us but Lemcke off when we were just a short distance from shore. We fought our way into the shore and called to Lemcke but he said he was going to hang onto the skiff. We never saw him or the lifeboat again.

Perhaps the broken arm Lemcke suffered in the initial impact prevented him from trying to make it to shore.

When the surviving men reached land, their grueling ordeal was certainly not over. Unfortunately, the worst was yet to come. The men had been thrown ashore in a desolate cove surrounded by steep cliffs on three sides. Canadian officials later described the rocky cove as one of the worst along Vancouver Island's west coast. The three men were battered, bruised, freezing cold and totally exhausted from their ordeal in the pounding surf, but they were thankful to be alive.
reaching shore.

We spent the night in a cave lying on a ledge to stay above the crashing waves and high tide. We huddled together for warmth and agreed to keep each other awake as we felt any sleep might be fatal. We kept watching for some sign of our shipmates.

By Tuesday we were desperate. We were barefoot, hungry and suffering from exposure. Some consideration was given to trying to swim out of the cove, which would probably have been suicide. Then the Varsity’s big turntable washed ashore and, using rocks and a penknife, we were able to construct a ladder out of the pieces.

I
n their weakened condition the men were able to fashion a ladder of sorts, and although it weighed about 200 pounds they were able to lift it from ledge to ledge until they reached the top of the 60-foot cliff.

Meanwhile, back at home there seemed to be nearly as much confusion regarding what had occurred as there had been aboard the Varsity.

In an interview Antone Katich, Mike Katich's son, relayed his impressions of the events that took place during that week in February 1940. The younger Katich was 14 years old at the time and recalls vividly the concern and apprehension during the first hours after learning that the Varsity was in trouble. Antone Katich remembered:

My dad received a phone call telling him the Varsity was in serious distress. I don't recall who the phone call came from, perhaps the Coast Guard or a friend, I'm really not sure. I know my dad was very upset and immediately made arrangements to go to Port Angeles along with Hubert's brother Anthony Ursich in an attempt to get on a boat and go out to assist in the search for the Varsity. I don't know if he was successful in that attempt or not. I recall he was back in the harbor before long where he and Pete Babich tried in vain repeatedly to establish short-wave radio contact with the Varsity from the seiner Crusader, which was in the harbor at the time.

Katich related the uncertainty about who was aboard the vessel when she encountered trouble. Antone said,

At first it was believed that 11 men were aboard the boat. Through a series of phone calls my dad determined that some of the men thought to be aboard the vessel were, in fact, at home. Unfortunately, there was one thing we were sure of: Joe Cloud was aboard—so was my uncle Visco (Vince Karmelich). We were really worried.
Katich remembered his dad receiving reports of the Varsity being sighted on the beach near Tatoosh Island and of being seen in a swamped but still floating condition near the Swiftsure lightship, but as Katich said, “All of these reports, as well as a few others, proved to be false. As we later found out, the Varsity was not even anywhere near that area.”

At the rocky cove on Vancouver Island, the three survivors had battled their way to the top of the cliff. Once on the top the men realized the serious physical condition they were in. Their feet were bruised and torn and, in Mavar’s case, beginning to turn black. They were totally exhausted and hungry, yet they were aware that if they didn’t find help soon they were not going to make it.

The men found a trail at the top of the cliff and began to follow it as best they could. After walking some distance in one direction, they felt that they were going the wrong way, and so they turned around. Their instincts served them well.

Finally they stumbled onto a Canadian government telegraph line cabin about 12 miles from Cloo-oose, British Columbia. A lineman and former Mountie, William Fullerton, happened to be in the cabin at that time. Upon reaching the cabin the men collapsed on the floor. It was reported that had it not been for Fullerton’s attention and basic medical experience Mavar would have lost his feet.

After Fullerton had fed and tended to the men, he contacted the lighthouse at Carmanah and possibly also at Pachena to report that the three men had survived the wreck of the Varsity.

Canadian and American Coast Guard vessels immediately launched a massive search along the west coast of Vancouver Island for other possible survivors from the Varsity. Several Canadian fishing vessels joined in the search, and the United States Coast Guard requested permission from the Canadian government to conduct an air search of the island’s west coast. All of these attempts to locate the other members of the Varsity’s crew proved unsuccessful.

At home Antone Katich recalled learning with disbelief that three survivors had been found near Clooose: “We were happy the three men were alive and that gave us hope that the others would also be found. But on Vancouver Island? How could they be there?”

Katich added, “Our immediate concern was for the four men still missing. We were hopeful they also would be found. As the hours passed and further details were learned, our optimism began to fade.”

Near Clooose yet another episode in the Varsity saga occurred. A nine-man oar-powered surfboat had made its way through the breakers to the beach and picked up the three survivors. The surfboat went back out through the breakers and delivered the men to the United States cutter Onandaga. They were taken to Port Angeles and then transferred to a Seattle hospital. Ursich, Mavar and Ancich all recovered from their physical injuries. Recovering from the emotional element of their ordeal was, no doubt, more difficult.

Antone Katich told me,

I recall the feeling of despair when we realized all hope of finding the other four men had vanished. It seemed to strike us all at once. Cloud, Karmelich, Lemcke and Puljan were lost. For me personally, the loss of my uncle Visco Karmelich was devastating. I was very close to him. He was my hero, and I loved him very much. I cried like a baby.

There were many tears in the little town of Gig Harbor and in Aberdeen and elsewhere, too. But life goes on, and even now, over 58 years later, when fishermen or others get together and speak of old times or hardships in the past, it is certain that the Varsity and her crew are remembered.

Lee Malovich, a lifelong resident of Gig Harbor, is a maritime historian and author of articles on maritime history published in a number of national and regional newspapers and periodicals.
Comencement Bay shimmered in the sun on a July morning in 1869. In the tiny village of Tacoma, town founders Job Carr and Morton Matthew McCarver may have glanced out upon the water as a stately paddle steamer puffed by. They would have watched intently and wondered what it meant when the craft paused briefly as if to admire the broad harbor and Mount Rainier looming to the southeast. For this was the Wilson G. Hunt, and aboard were officials of the Northern Pacific Railroad, exploring Puget Sound in search of a western terminus. Also on deck and surveying the majestic scene with mounting enthusiasm was one of the most colorful eccentrics of the 19th century—George Francis Train. The popular lecturer, promoter and "crank" would file the panorama away in his restless mind. Many years later he would return to Tacoma in triumph after telling the world of the "City of Destiny."

Born in New Orleans in 1829, George Francis Train lost his parents to yellow fever at the age of four and as a youth was packed off to his uncle, Enoch Train, a prominent Massachusetts shipbuilder. Young George Francis proved himself a wide-awake, energetic lad, and by 1843 he was clerking in his uncle’s office, just as the great clipper ship era reached its apogee. Off the ways of Train & Company slid the Flying Cloud, Sovereign of the Seas, and other sea queens, winning for America an all-too-brief maritime supremacy; young George Francis Train took credit for developing the ultra-fast sailing ships and happily dubbed himself “Clipper Ship King.” He also took the notion to bribe some of his uncle’s Irish hands to ballyhoo America in their letters home to the “auld sod,” and added the great Irish-American exodus to his list of credits. In time, Train’s list would grow long indeed.

George Francis opened a branch office of Train & Company in Liverpool in 1850, and on the strength of his charm, optimism and gift of gab insinuated himself into American and English society. Brigham Young, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Daniel Webster, Zachary Taylor, Henry Clay, and numerous earls, dukes and duchesses, became fast friends. In the British shipping center Train caused a minor transportation revolution by daring to load his ships after sundown, and honed a growing bent for speechifying as a much sought-after dinner guest. Fired by the mingled vigor of Young America and Victorian England in her industrial, commercial prime, Train scoffed at European “old fogeyism,” styled himself an apostle of speed and push, and delighted in raising eyebrows with the gospel of Manifest Destiny: “America is the stage and the world is the audience, today!” His Liverpool friends began calling him “Express Train.”

Australia (and a new bride) were his next endeavors, and Train had the good fortune to open a partnership, Caldwell, Train & Company, in Melbourne at the height of a gold rush. He made a modest fortune, introduced the stagecoach and other “Yankee notions” to Australia, and picked up yet another title—“Young America.” Train toured China, one of...
“The true American defies competition and laughs sneeringly at impossibilities!”

The first Americans to do so, and, despite growing disdain for the Old World, spent much of the 1850s in Europe, hobnobbing with royalty and revolutionaries and promoting shipping ventures and streetcar lines.

From a Spanish aristocrat Train wheedled funds for 400 miles of railroad in New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania, and in Newport, Rhode Island, but domesticity was not to be. Ceaselessly leading huge crowds in Portland, he launched a journal called Spread-Eaglism to trumpet the message:

Young America is the vanguard of change—the coming age! His watchword is reform. He loves Truth—manhood—God. He despises humbug—exaggeration—hypocrisy. . . . Great events are hovering over our destinies. . . . The true American defies competition and laughs sneeringly at impossibilities!

Train returned to his native soil in 1862, disdained the Civil War as a “contract war,” and plunged into promoting the prime movers of Young America—railroads and real estate. A transcontinental railroad had been the national dream since the 1830s, and in 1860 Train approached the Astors and Vanderbilts for financing to build a line; he was laughed out of their offices, a rejection that left a permanent scar on his psyche. Two years later, though, the time was ripe, and Train took part in the creation of the Union Pacific Railroad and the Credit Mobilier, Union Pacific’s financing and construction entity, which would later become notorious for bilking the railroad out of millions. Again Train went to Wall Street, Union Pacific bonds in hand; this time, big money—Oakes Ames, Sydney Dillon, Ben Holladay, William Macy, Cyrus McCormack—bought in. Another credit, the first transcontinental railroad, was added to Train’s list: “My own subscription of $150,000 was the pint of water that started the great wheel of the machinery.”

George Francis Train predicted that the Union Pacific would be “civilizing” the West by 1870 and was duly ridiculed as a “madman and a visionary.” But early completion of the line and lucrative land deals in Omaha allowed Train to laugh in the faces of his detractors. In 1868 Train installed his wife and three children in palatial “Train Villa,” at Newport, Rhode Island, but domesticity was not to be. Ceaselessly scheming, and preaching a bewildering succession of Victorian fads, George Francis Train was a husband and father calculated to wear down the stoutest of familial edifices.

The Train children were made to sign a 29-point “contract,” which included such stipulations as that they hop around the bathroom under linen sheets for five minutes after bathing, rather than use a towel, and a daunting list of “no’s”—ice cream, olives, mineral water, fish, nuts, pepper, coffee, tea and other “warm slops.” Perhaps to everyone’s relief, Train was increasingly away from home on speaking engagements; soon the paterfamilias and his family became estranged. But George Francis never default on providing them a comfortable upkeep.

Train had by now discovered his one true love—hime. And he was happiest before a crowd. Dubbing himself the “Great American Crank,” he became a full-time orator, campaigning for “dictator” (promising to hang “murderers, thieves, politicians, an editor or two, and Congress”), and delighting thousands with his whimsical attacks on fogs, frauds and conventional wisdom. One reporter observed, “He beats his breast, clenches his fist, clutches his hair, plays ball with the furniture, outhows the roaring elements, steams with perspiration, foams at the mouth, paces up and down till he looks like a lion in a cage.” Fenianism, personal hygiene, free love, the gold standard, and the “psychological forces” were all grist for the Train mill. He became a newspaper staple, and in an age of cranks—P. T. Barnum, Robert Ingersoll, Ben Butler and Ignatius Donnelly—George Francis Train was in good company.

By 1869 Train’s energetic orations had made him “the most conspicuous man on the Pacific coast.” In May he held forth in San Francisco, haranguing a crowd of 5,000 on tolerance (“We all have some religion . . . but there are more ways than one to reach the beacon-light set up in our consciences. . . . A Chinaman has as much right to earn a living by his labor as any other man!”), money (“The suspicion of wealth is equal to its possession except when you want to use it for benevolent purposes!”), and, of course, himself (“There is one character I can play to perfection, and a very difficult part it is to play to most men, that of an honest man.”). Train denounced the British, praised the Irish, told jokes, did impersonations, and invited questions from the audience. Scattered hisses and shouts of “Humbug!” made not a dent: “I am going to tell you what I think and you have got to hear it whether you like it or not!” Cheers, laughter and applause followed his every aphorism. Citizen Train had found his calling.

Train made his Pacific Northwest debut on July 4, 1869, regaling huge crowds in Portland. Reporters for the Daily Oregonian found it an “impossibility” to keep
up with his shotgun delivery but summarized one speech on “temperance, education, the Laws of Health, the Enslavement of Women, and the Logic of Egotism,” to wit: “Don’t drink; don’t smoke; don’t chew; don’t swear; don’t gamble; love God—but don’t love God so much that you have no time to love your fellow men; love truth; love virtue; and be happy!”

He had come to Oregon at the invitation of Captain John C. Ainsworth, owner of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, and one of the Northwest’s prime movers, who had in earlier years skippered a Mississippi steamboat whose crew included a youthful Mark Twain. An ardent Train admirer, Ainsworth asked if the Citizen wouldn’t care to make a cruise of Puget Sound aboard his steamer, the Wilson G. Hunt. He would be in interesting company—James G. Swan, mayor of Port Townsend; Arthur Denny, a founder of Seattle; and officials of the Northern Pacific Railroad, hoping to locate their western terminal city. George Francis would be delighted.

Ocular good humor prevailed as the Hunt splashed northward from Olympia on July 7, enlivened by Train’s running commentary. But underlying this was a certain anxiety; Denny and Swan were in competition with each other for the terminus, and the Northern Pacific executives were under pressure of time and local boosterism to make a decision. But an inkling of what was to come presented itself as the little ship sighted Commencement Bay; the broad harbor and enfoldng bluffs begged for a city. Here, the Northern Pacific could create out of nothing the ultimate company town, the Great Metropolis of Puget Sound. By his later (and perhaps rather embellished) account, Train sensed this immediately, and blurted to the railroad men, “There is your terminus!”

At Victoria, British Columbia, the notoriously pro-Irish Train was refused admittance after declaring, “I will lecture on the downfall of England! Get out your guns!” The Hunt pulled in at Seattle for a day of sightseeing, and the Daily Intelligencer found Train “simply a talking fool, who honestly believes he is a great man.” Returning to Portland on July 13, Train informed reporters that he had seen Destiny: Puget Sound was the “Mediterranean of the Northwest,” a million fortunes would soon be made there, the wealth of the Orient and a great metropolis would grace her shores within a lifetime. Train’s pronouncements were sufficient to draw thousands of settlers to Puget Sound in anticipation of the Northern Pacific’s imminent arrival. Not all were impressed; popular Portland humorist E. L. Applegate lambasted Train as “an egregious humbug...a designing man...his principal and overwhelming characteristic is egotism.”

But critics scoffed in vain. A humbug, you say? Train gleefully appropriated the title as his own and moved on to other things—dallying with the Communes of Paris and Marseille during 1870 and making the first of four journeys around the world. This he did in 80 days, and he would go on to proclaim himself inspiration for the epic tale, Around The World In Eighty Days—“I was the Phileas Fogg of Jules Verne.” A three-year presidential campaign on the “Citizen ticket” followed; the “Man of Destiny” assailed the corruption of Ulysses Grant’s administration and proposed hanging the notorious New York Tammany Hall chief, Boss Tweed, from a lamp post. In the end, though, bossism and politics as usual won; the public, Train observed, preferred the familiar, even if it was patently corrupt—“The people love to be humbugged.”

By 1880 George Francis Train had seen much of the known world, made and spent several modest fortunes, and claimed credit for originating such sundry items as the built-in pencil eraser, the perforated postage stamp, the term “Young America,” financial trusts, and the railroad systems of America and Australia.
And he had landed in jail “15 times, without a crime,” for offenses real and trumped up—Fenian speeches and streetcar accidents in Great Britain, communism in France, financial chicanery in the United States, political adventurism in Italy. In December, 1872, Train wound up in New York’s Tombs prison after being found guilty of “obscenity”: publishing some of the racier Biblical texts in his latest journal, *Train Ligue*. His trial was the talk of Gotham, and in a packed courtroom, Train was found not guilty by reason of insanity, a verdict sealed by the Supreme Court. Customarily, Train was not daunted by the judgment but turned it to his advantage; for the rest of his life, “lunatic by law through six courts” was his motto. Notoriety paid, and Train molded himself to suit. Not that it took much stretching: “I found that whenever I was particularly in earnest about anything, the people would laugh and speak of it as an immense joke,” he mused later. “When I joked, people treated it seriously. . . . So everything I do now is more or less of a joke.”

But Citizen Train grew weary of trying to outshout a dimwitted world. At age 47, with little more than a watch and a suit of clothes in his possession, he retired as an “aristocratic loaf” to a park bench in New York’s Madison Square, feeding the squirrels and talking only to children—“because they are truth!” In his cluttered little economy flats at the Continental Hotel, the Ashland House, and finally Mills Hotel Number One, he spent his days and sleepless nights “incubating” schemes and inundating editors across the country with reams of “psychic verse” scrawled in red and blue pencil.

Three thousand miles to the west, Tacoma, a village of barely 100 souls, had won the Northern Pacific terminus competition in 1873. With or without the say-so of George Francis Train, “something akin to magic” had by 1885 wrought a city of 6,000 out of the wilderness. Saloons roared full blast, a forest of tall ships sprouted on Commencement Bay, and a turreted grand hotel—the Tacoma—materialized with a steam potato peeler in the kitchen and a live bear in the lobby. But in a boom-and-bust age, 1885 was, for most, “dull times.” Trade and construction had gone slack, the Tacoma Hotel staff often outnumbered the guests, and Northern Pacific stalwarts Frederick Billings and Charles Wright—pillars of the terminal city—fretted. Settlers who had blown their savings getting to Tacoma held on grimly, awaiting better days sure to come when the railroad opened its direct line over the mountains to the East, as promised within the next few years.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Train in the 1890s, at a party for his “little friends” of Madison Square.
LEFT: Randolph H. Radebaugh, Tacoma Ledger editor and publisher, 1880 to 1892.

not all were content to wring hands and wait. Among these was Randolph H. Radebaugh, the feisty owner of the *Tacoma Ledger*. A prototypical Victorian boom, Radebaugh had purchased the Ledger in 1880, helped found the Tacoma Board of Trade and Chamber of Commerce, and prodded his neighbors ceaselessly to be up and doing: “There should be a prompt and energetic reaching out for the trade all ‘round us! We have great promise—we want push. The Cascade branch is coming, but the city meantime is here and should do business.”

Push was something Tacoma’s larger rival, Seattle, had plenty of. Jilted, bypassed and traumatized by the Northern Pacific in 1873, the Seattle press had ever since been pleased to heap vitriol on Tacoma. The terminal city gamely returned fire upon the “city of sawdust,” but Seattle editors and fiery anti-railroad agitators—Thomas Burke, John J. McGilvra and William H. “Warhorse Bill” White—seemed to be prevailing. Things came to a boil in 1884 when the Seattle Post-Intelligencer began a vociferous campaign to revoke the Northern Pacific’s King County land grant. The following year Seattle incorporated her own railroad, the Seattle Lake Shore & Eastern, to cross the mountains ahead of the Northern Pacific’s Cascade Division. Tacoma looked on in apoplexy, and Radebaugh fumed. Happily, though, his circulation department was on its mettle.

Late in 1885 a copy of the Ledger found its way to the lobby of New York’s Ashland House, among whose residents was a bored and restless George Francis Train. Train picked up the paper and felt the years melt away: “Tacoma! Isn’t that the place I started some years ago?” The Great Crank rubbed his chin and hit upon the happy formula to backhand the Vanderbilts, who had spurned him in 1860, and boom Tacoma at the same time. Quivering with excitement, he dashed upstairs and scrawled off a cryptic and barely legible
Seattle! Seattle! Death Rattle! Death Rattle! Tacoma! Tacoma! Aurora! Aurora!

broadside to Radebaugh which, when deciphered by Mrs. Radebaugh, read:


Recognizing at once a kindred spirit, Radebaugh chuckled with glee—"Now we'll fix the P-I!" The Ledger chief gleefully accepted Train's proposition to "boom Tacoma over Planet on wings of Psycho," and on January 6, 1886, debuted "Train's Vander-Billion Psychos, New History of the Vanderbilts." It was goofy, it was surreal, it was barely coherent—and it hit Seattle right where she lived!

Florence and Athens live alone
In Mighty Names! (Engraved on Stone?)
Where Classic Story scored Art-Home!
Tacoma now Puget outranks
In LEDGERS! Colleges and Banks?
(And Giant Trees in Gang Saw Planks!)
Why not (away from Banditti)
Establish there (on Puget Sound)
Grand 'Psycho-(Tacoma)-City?'

Readers shook their heads and giggled. Sure, he was crazy (the man was a vegetarian, no less, and was said also to shun the company of adults and to avoid shaking hands so as not to be robbed of electrodynamic energy). But he sold papers, and he sold Tacoma. Radebaugh delightedly trained his "Psycho-Krupp" cannon on his "Yeslerville" adversaries: "O. K. Tacoma says to all 'Psycho' don't mind Call and Chronicle! They are very jealous pack over there at Seattle! Trouble with them is 'Psychos' do not boom Seattle! But when they write such bilious comments they advertise 'Ledger Psychos' good!!!"

Chronicle editor F. C. Montgomery scorched the "blatherings of that pyramidical idiot, George Francis Train . . . . Radebaugh has either taken sub-contract to people lunatic asylum or else his own giant mind is tottering?" But the Livest Man in Two Hemispheres only blathered louder:

Seattle! Seattle! Death Rattle! Death Rattle!
Tacoma! Tacoma! Aurora!
Aurora!
Your 'Pyramid' is feeble when
You come abreast Tacoma Men
With your 'Seattle-Blatherings'!

Keep up Type Boom of hound in Tomb
Your 'Cultus' (Idiotic) shows
How dismal is 'Town Catacomb'!

"America's Victor Hugo" brought smiles and new confidence to Tacoma, even as the Northern Pacific made the happy announcement that it would rush the completion of the Cascade Division. The Ledger proclaimed a "new era dawning" as Tacoma's population hit 8,000, closing in steadily on Seattle's 11,000. "The future is pregnant with promise," crowed Radebaugh.

The sound of the builder's hammer and saw echoes from every thoroughfare, a hopeful spirit has taken possession of every hand and heart in our young city! Tacoma is the "city of destiny!" It has withstood the combined assaults of all jealous municipalities, it has asserted itself after struggling along through difficulty . . . it will strive to attain the rank of the empire city of the Northwest . . . . Seattle, Seattle, death rattle, death rattle.

Quoth Citizen Train:

CITY-of-DESTINY! How Seattle hounds with Hydrophobia!
(Laughter)
Look at the mad yelp of Dying Wolf! (Oh!)

City of Destiny! It was a moniker tailor-made for the brash boomtown. Julius Dickens, editor of the Steilacoom Express,
first used the term in the 1870s, according to Tacoma histro-
rian Herbert Hunt. But George Francis Train made it com-
mon currency, and it didn’t mean Seattle. Tacoma’s glory
years were upon her, and when the last spike of the Cascade
Division was driven high atop Stampede Pass on June 1,
1887, giant portraits of Charles B. Wright and George
Francis Train beamed approvingly down upon Tacomans
dancing in Pacific Avenue.

Settlers poured in, land prices soared, and mansions, brick
business blocks, and “$100,000 corporations” sprouted over-
night. The press gushed over the gilt-edged lists of Tacoma
property owners—Wright, Billings, Ben. B. Cheney,
Charlemagne Tower, Simeon G. Reed—all formidable
names in the world of lumber, railroads and finance. School-
children sang L. F. Cooke’s “Tacoma, the City of Destiny,”
and shrieked, “Seattle Seattle, death rattle, death rattle!”

Train summed it all up: “Tacoma stands by North Pacific
enterprise as grandest colonizer of Cosmos! ... No longer
between wind and water, North Pacific grand terminus can
now boom! Let New England enterprise come to
City-of-Destiny! Come and grow up with live Tacomans in ‘Grand
Shipping Port of Fate!’”

through psychic verse (and a little hard work),
Tacoma had attained her destiny. His job done,
Train resumed his Madison Square rustication.
This ended abruptly in March 1890. Nellie Bly
beat Train’s old 80-day global record by 10
days, and the Citizen meant to retaliate. His proposal to the
New York World that he checkmate Bly in return for a
$1,500 lecture fee was rebuffed. Train then turned to
Radebaugh: “I’ll lecture in Tacoma and raise at least $1,000
for expenses. I’ll go ‘round the world in less than 70 days.
Great publicity for Tacoma!”

A delighted Radebaugh agreed, and Train hurried west to
a heady reception in his pet city, taking in over $4,000 in two
packed lectures. To reporters Train painted a fanciful picture
of his relationship with Tacoma:

Twenty-one years ago, on the OR&N steamer Wilson G.
Hunt, supplied me by Captain Ainsworth, I launched this
magic town of nation’s great inland sea. ... Olympia and
Seattle made big bid for historical point and paid me their silver
dollars for lectures, but there where we found shanty of old
Carr, at the old sawmill keeping company with a grizzly bald-
headed eagle and a polecat, I planted the future.

Before smoking footlights the three-time globe-girdler
rhapsozed over the city’s amazing growth—“Look at it! I
can find in New England today probably fifty towns ... that
have not got the population in two centuries and a half that
you have got here in two decades!” Train expounded upon
his now-famous egotism: “I am the only man that has never
been classified! As a boy I wanted to be known—I couldn’t
help it. ... In the backwoods of Massachusetts I used to yell
out my name in the bunghole of a barrel—George Francis
Train! George Francis Train!”

As customary, Train invited questions: Why did he boom
Tacoma? “The people of Tacoma were the first to discover me,
to quit calling me names, and to do me the justice to which I
have been entitled for 40 years. ... I had planted an egg out
here, and I wanted to see the chicken!” What should Tacoma
do about her saloons? “Tacoma has as much right to have
saloons as any other business.” Why did he love children? “The
child is drawn to me because I am truth.” Sure, he was a crank—“All the great men of history were cranks!” Crankism would give Tacoma “the biggest boom since the world has been created!” Citizen Train closed the proceedings with a rousing cry of, “Seattle, Seattle, death rattle, death rattle!”

The Post-Intelligencer sarcastically proposed sending the wizened old daughter of Seattle namesake Chief Seattle, Princess Angeline, along to keep Train company. The dignified elder would have none of it: “Chief Seattle was my father. He is dead, and if I should start off with George Francis Train, my father’s spirit would be very angry. Angeline does not want any truck with George Francis Train, or any other fools.”

Train had to make do with Ledger city editor Samuel Wall; at six o’clock on the morning of March 18 he stepped off a brass plaque in front of the Ledger building and pointed his nose toward Japan.

A Jules Verne succession of steamers, trains, rickshaws, rowboats and junks sped the “peripatetic humbug” from Tacoma to Yokohama, Hong Kong, Singapore, Aden, Brindisi, Paris, London, Dublin, New York, Omaha and Portland. Like Phileas Fogg, Train left from one conveyance to the next, one step ahead of schedule change, typhoon and red tape. To bally captains and customs agents he barked, “I am George Francis Train! I built the first Pacific railroad! I am the original Phileas Fogg, four times around the world!” Under this onslaught, bureaucracy relented and Train hurtled onward.

To all within earshot he dined tirelessly the merits of global cooperation, a transpacific cable, Asiatic trade, colonization of Siberia and the coming crossroads of the world—Tacoma. Only closest to home, when Radebaugh’s special train met him at Centralia and not Portland, did Train's elusiveness sag, and he vented his disappointment upon the “Asts and Vanderbilts of Tacoma.” A roaring welcome on Pacific Avenue banished the indignity, and Train (in a white suit and “doubledecker” hat emblazoned with “George Francis Train around the world in 60 days”) returned in triumph to the brass plaque in the sidewalk 67 days and 13 hours after his departure.

The Great Crank was feted until even he grew weary of adulation, and he retired to a cabin in south Tacoma, which Train equipped with toys and games for children. The kids scattered in other directions, and Train grew desolate. “What can it all mean?” he mused to Sam Wall. “There seems to be nothing left for me but to return to silence.” On a rainy fall evening he boarded a train for New York, unnoticed and unremarked.

A year later, though, he returned to Puget Sound and again circled the globe, this time in 60 days, on behalf of the Bellingham Bay community of New Whatcom. Train bid farewell to the Pacific Northwest with an admonition to end the rivalries he had once inflamed: “Puget Sound towns must stop battling Puget Sound! They must hang together, or hang separately.”

As the 19th century faded, Citizen Train faded with it, returning to his Madison Square park bench and the children whose innocent directness and sense of wonder so matched his own. Train’s long hair had turned white, and in his rumpled white linen suits he bore passing resemblance to Mark Twain. He published Penny Magazine (price, two cents), still promoted himself for “dictator,” and continued to fulminate against meat-eating, the Spanish-American War, the gold standard and imperialism. In 1900 Train dictated his memoirs and sought to explain his apparent lunacy:

Many persons attribute to me simply an impulsiveness . . . as if I were some erratic comet, rushing madly through space, emitting coruscations of fancifully colored sparks, without system, rule, or definite objective. This is a popular error. I claim to be a close analytical observer of passing events, applying the crucible of Truth to every new matter or subject presented to my mind or my senses . . . . Readers of this book may think I have sometimes taken myself too seriously . . . . I try not to be too serious about anything—not even myself.

His aim in life? “I wished to add a stimulus, a spur, a goad—if necessary—that the slow old world might go on more swiftly, ‘and fetch the age of gold,’ with more leisure, more culture, more happiness.” And always, there was the raging, relentless ego: “I am plaintiff against the whole world. I have been in 15 jails for expressing my opinion, but I never robbed even a hen roost . . . . I go around the world every 20 years, to let it know that I am still alive!”

Though he vowed he would live to be 200, George Francis Train could not triumph over time or waning celebrity. On January 18, 1904, this strange and luminous spirit of the 19th century passed peacefully into the beyond. The Tacoma News eulogized “probably one of the most picturesque figures in the history of America.” As his body lay in state at New York, thousands paid their respects—adults in collars both frayed and velvet, kindred egotists, long-forgotten friends, and many, many children.

Kurt E. Armbruster, a Seattle native and a University of Washington graduate with a degree in history, is currently writing a history of railroad development on Puget Sound.

COLUMBIA 42 WINTER 1998-99
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Grab your hiking boots and fuel up the car, because Marge and Ted Mueller have created an excellent guide to exploring geology in the Columbia River Basin. From fundamental geological terms to headlamps and sunscreen, *Fire, Faults & Floods* has covered all the basics.

Created by floods that occurred about 17 million years ago, the Columbia River Basin is home to basalt dike walls, cataracts, coulees and much more. These terms can be overwhelming to some, but the Muellers’ thorough explanations, accompanied by maps, pictures, charts, and a detailed glossary, make the events that created these natural beauties understandable to even the novice geologist. Altogether, the Muellers describe 53 different trips—from Haystack Rock, Oregon, to Mount Jumbo, Montana—and their lucid directions make these geological finds accessible to everyone in the Northwest.

The trips vary in difficulty, which makes this book useful for a wide range of interests. Some sites require simply pulling over to the side of the highway while others require a day of hiking. For each trip the authors provide a map of the area, a brief explanation of what you can expect to see, and information about the nearest town and its amenities—such as gas stations and grocery stores. The Muellers explain the geological significance of your destination of choice and the ways in which the area has been transformed. Here the terms and theories learned in the introduction are put into practice. The book encourages readers to stray from the path and explore. However, do not wander too far—some of the surrounding lands are private property.

Marge and Ted Mueller clearly know their way around the basin and are familiar with its vastness. Even so, they still examined many primary and secondary sources to create this book. Their attention to detail is amazing, and this is the real strength of the book. The Columbia River Basin is often overlooked when discussing the beauty of the Northwest. Seasoned travelers know that the Northwest is beautiful not only for its lush forests and snowcapped peaks, but also for its geological treasures. The Muellers’ book ultimately leads to a better understanding of geology, the Columbia River Basin, and the Northwest.

**Fire, Faults & Floods**
A Road and Trail Guide Exploring the Origins of the Columbia River Basin

Reviewed by Josh Doolittle.

Josh Doolittle, a native of eastern Washington and a product of its schools, currently teaches in Japan. He is widely traveled on both sides of the international date line.

Pacific Northwest Women, 1815-1925
Lives, Memories and Writings

Reviewed by Sandra Haarsager.

Our understanding of women’s roles and our ability to hear women’s voices in the Pacific Northwest has been heightened recently by a series of richly detailed published works. Here is another in that series, an anthology of passages written by women in Washington and Oregon.

Women’s voices—their concerns and their power—resonate in many places in this work. They are the voices of 30 diverse writers, but also of the women who gave them this space, editors Jean Ward and Elaine Maveety. Also diverse are the forms of writing presented here, from autobiography and diary to poetry and polemic, from such well-known writers as Abigail Scott Duniway, Narcissa Whitman, Frances Fuller Victory and Sarah Winnemucca to a number of influential but less well-known women, including former slave Amanda Johnson, pioneer settler Susanna Ede and reformed prostitute Lydia Taylor.

Challenges faced by anthology editors involved what to include and how to organize the volume. In this case the editors grouped the contributions around four themes that ran through women’s lives then and still do—connections with nature (both positive and negative), coping with difficult circumstances, caring for family and community, and communicating both privately and publicly. Some of the works span more than one category.

The editors have made prodigious efforts to provide detailed biographical and historical information about each of the writers. The introductions to the passages alone are worth the price of the book. Sometimes, however, there is a frustrating lack of information about a selected passage’s context, purpose, circulation or success. Private writing is mixed with professional writing. The editors make no attempt to evaluate or level out the quality, which ranges widely, in part because some works, like letters, were not intended for publication while others are filled with imaginary characters.

The flaws of this volume are flaws anthologies often share, even the good ones. The selections are of necessity quite brief. Why were these writers (and passages) chosen and not others? Why was Idaho dropped from its traditional place as part of the Pacific Northwest? There are some puzzling omissions, such as Eva Emery Dye, the prolific and popular writer whose historical novel about Sacagawea did much to make the Shoshone woman into a Northwest icon.

This book is a valuable resource for many reasons: its insights into women’s concerns and how they wrote about them in a regional context; the wealth of biographical material; and the multifaceted perspectives it brings to our thoughts about gender, class and place in the history of the Northwest. Lastly, it is wonderful to hear these women speak. I hope there will be other anthologies like this—there is plenty of material, as Ward and Maveety ably demonstrate.

Sandra Haarsager is a professor in the University of Idaho School of Communication. Her most recent book is *Organized Womanhood: Cultural Politics in the Pacific Northwest, 1840-1920*. 

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Origins of the Columbia River Basin
Created by floods that occurred about 17 million years ago, the Columbia River Basin is home to basalt dike walls, cataracts, coulees and much more. These terms can be overwhelming to some, but the Muellers’ thorough explanations, accompanied by maps, pictures, charts, and a detailed glossary, make the events that created these natural beauties understandable to even the novice geologist. Altogether, the Muellers describe 53 different trips—from Haystack Rock, Oregon, to Mount Jumbo, Montana—and their lucid directions make these geological finds accessible to everyone in the Northwest.

The trips vary in difficulty, which makes this book useful for a wide range of interests. Some sites require simply pulling over to the side of the highway while others require a day of hiking. For each trip the authors provide a map of the area, a brief explanation of what you can expect to see, and information about the nearest town and its amenities—such as gas stations and grocery stores. The Muellers explain the geological significance of your destination of choice and the ways in which the area has been transformed. Here the terms and theories learned in the introduction are put into practice. The book encourages readers to stray from the path and explore. However, do not wander too far—some of the surrounding lands are private property.

Marge and Ted Mueller clearly know their way around the basin and are familiar with its vastness. Even so, they still examined many primary and secondary sources to create this book. Their attention to detail is amazing, and this is the real strength of the book. The Columbia River Basin is often overlooked when discussing the beauty of the Northwest. Seasoned travelers know that the Northwest is beautiful not only for its lush forests and snowcapped peaks, but also for its geological treasures. The Muellers’ book ultimately leads to a better understanding of geology, the Columbia River Basin, and the Northwest.

Josh Doolittle, a native of eastern Washington and a product of its schools, currently teaches in Japan. He is widely traveled on both sides of the international date line.

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**Fire, Faults & Floods**
A Road and Trail Guide Exploring the Origins of the Columbia River Basin

Reviewed by Josh Doolittle.

Josh Doolittle, a native of eastern Washington and a product of its schools, currently teaches in Japan. He is widely traveled on both sides of the international date line.

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Edited by Robert C. Carriker.

Pacific Northwest Women, 1815-1925
Lives, Memories and Writings

Reviewed by Sandra Haarsager.
Snowbound
Reviewed by JoAnn Roe.

Without the sophisticated communications equipment available today, parties venturing into the wilderness often have found themselves in dire straits. Snowbound is the engrossing tale of the ill-fated hunting party of Will Carlin, Abe Himmelwright and John Pierce. The three men left Kendrick, Idaho, on horseback in mid September 1893 to enter the Bitterroot Mountains, shepherded by Martin P. Spencer, a reputable guide, and George Colegate, cook and wrangler. The party was well-provisioned and well-armed; the autumn weather should have been excellent. What could possibly go wrong? Well, almost everything.

At Kendrick, locals warned the party that unusually early snows were predicted. George Colegate minimized the severity of his prostate condition and failed to pack the catheters critical to the prevention of uremia. The guide, Spencer, deferred to Carlin even when common sense dictated otherwise. The scene was set for tragedy.

The party left Kendrick on September 18 and slogged along in rainy, cold weather. Almost immediately Colegate’s distress became obvious, and by the fifth day he could scarcely get on or off his horse. Spencer suggested they send someone back with Colegate, but Colegate himself insisted on proceeding. Worsening weather drove the party to detour to the Lochsa fork of the Clearwater River, where they made camp. Despite the obvious hazards of staying and the plight of Colegate, the Carlin party hunted, bagging grouse and an elk and unsuccessfully shooting at a bear.

Indecision plagued the guide and Carlin even as Colegate became so filled with fluid that the skin on his legs actually split. Unable to leave on horseback because of snow, the men built two rafts and attempted a descent to civilization on the rapids-strewn waterway. Ben Keeley, a nearby resident hunter, was hired to assist the Carlin party. On one raft Spencer rigged up a chair to which Colegate could be tied. By November 11 the party was down to one raft and was blocked from further progress by an impassable waterfall. Colegate was expected to live more than a day, and the men made the agonizing decision to leave him behind while they tried to walk out. On November 22 a search party met the starving remainder of the Carlin party emerging from Lochsa canyon. Search parties were unable to reach Colegate. The abandonment was criticized by the Colegate family, some members of the media, and Keeley, the hired hunter, who hoped for financial gain. The controversy raged on into history.

The author has used Carlin’s diary, Himmelwright’s book, and reports of the United States 4th Cavalry and 25th Infantry (who were involved in the searches) to assemble a narration that reads like a novel yet is historically accurate.

JoAnn Roe, a Bellingham resident, has written books on the Columbia River, Stevens Pass, Seattle, and the North Cascades Highway. She is a past recipient of the Washington Governor’s Writers Award.

The Rogue River Indian War and Its Aftermath, 1850-1980
Reviewed by Bradley J. Birzer.

Examining the history of the historiographically neglected native Oregon coastal peoples, E. A. Schwartz offers an intriguing thesis. Local white Oregonians, he contends, used federal government policies toward the Indians for their own purposes, often thwarting and subverting high ideals expressed in Washington, D.C. White Oregonians, especially in the 19th century, used federal funding allocated for Indian policy for their own agendas and internal political power struggles. The native coastal peoples, caught in the middle, met with extensive loss of life and land.

Schwartz divides the book into roughly two equal parts: the Rogue River War and its aftermath. In the former the author describes in fascinating detail the history of white and native interaction prior to hostilities, the tragic events of the war, the somewhat fanatical personalities involved, and the immediate and devastating effects on the Indians. Though the war was a typical 19th-century land grab by whites, it also served as an early pork-barrel war. In other words, the local whites were as much interested in getting land as they were in obtaining federal monies to fight the natives. While the Indians lost 80 percent of their population and 8,000 square miles of their land, white Oregonians proudly billed the federal government $6 million for their brutality.

The second half of the book examines those native peoples who survived the excruciating bloodshed of the mid 1850s. Schwartz provides an excellent overview of United States federal policy toward the Indians from 1856 to the 1980s. He considers the role of the Oregon natives in the Civil War, Grant’s Peace Policy in the 1870s, allotment in the 1880s and 1890s, the New Deal Indian Reorganization Act in the 1930s, termination of special privileges in the 1950s, and restoration of tribal recognition in the late 1970s. Through all obstacles, Schwartz notes, the Indians actively fashioned as nice a life as possible. Though neither a tribal history nor a more fashionable ethnohistory, this book contributes greatly to scholarship on American Indians. And in the process, Schwartz, an accomplished writer and researcher, delivers an engaging and captivating read.

This reviewer’s only complaint is that Schwartz at times creates a division between the policies of the federal (good) and Oregon (bad) governments. The evidence, as Rogue River War seems to show, indicates that government at both levels was manipulative and self-interested, with the Indians simply caught in the fallout. Despite this minor point, it is an excellent book.

Bradley J. Birzer received his graduate training in history at Indiana University-Bloomington. He is currently teaching at Carroll College in Helena, Montana.

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Beyond War and Injustice

Regarding Donna Sinclair's article (COLUMBIA, Fall 1998), historian Alvin Josephy is correct: what happened to Red Heart’s band of Nez Perce was likely the most unforgivable act of General Oliver Howard’s war against the “Dreamers” in 1877. Chief Joseph, who battled Howard that year, redeemed, in the end, the Nez Perce’s integrity.

Josephy’s viewpoint is that Chief Joseph is the hero of the Nez Perce people and that Lawyer had been a mere tool of the Christian establishment at Lapwai. Joseph had been an articulate defender of his people against oppression. The enduring legacy of the Nez Perce War for the United States is that Joseph remained committed to the cause of his people through countless injustices. He entered the war with reluctance.

The relevance for the West of the Lewis and Clark bicentennial lies in a review of how the United States treated the Nez Perce people, whose legacy in Washington state is extensive. So much has happened since the Corps of Discovery reached Weippe Prairie.

Joseph Cataldo, the Catholic priest who founded Spokane’s Gonzaga University, led the peace prayers in the Nez Perce language at the final meeting between Howard and Joseph before the war of 1877. Cataldo understood that the Nez Perce would never die easily—they endure, beyond war and injustice.

—Jonathan Feste, Spokane

TO OUR READERS

CORRESPONDENCE and calls regarding COLUMBIA’s contents should be directed to the COLUMBIA editorial office at the WSHS Research Center, 315 North Stadium Way, Tacoma, WA 98403, 253/798-3918 (fax 253/ 597-4186). Membership inquiries and address changes should go to the WSHS Membership Office, at the Washington State History Museum, 1911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98402, 253/798-5902 (fax 253/727-9518). To find COLUMBIA ONLINE, look up the Society’s web page at www.wshs.org.

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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.

More Power to You


Klee Wyk


O, Christmas Tree!


Kathleen Eloisa Rockwell


The Wreck of the Varsity


Citizen Train and the “City of Destiny”


My Life in Many States and in Foreign Lands, Dictated in My 74th Year, by George Francis Train. New York: William Heineman, 1902.


Tacoma Daily Ledger, January 1886-July 1887.
Discover Washington: Come In Out of the Rain!

Traveling Exhibit: Nov 27 - Jun 27
"From Earth and Sky: Indian Art of the Americas" at the Washington State History Museum
Also visit "Remembering Medicine Creek," Oct 17 - Jan 10 and see the treaty that shaped U.S. / Indian relations, now here through Jan 10

Float Down the Columbia
From the headwaters to the Pacific - see the Columbia River in our three-screen theater

Enter A Plank House
A re-creation of a Native American gathering place

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Along our recreated Northern Pacific Railroad, from Tacoma to Spokane to Yakima

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Washington State History Museum
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Sun 11 am - 5 pm
1-888-BE THERE
(1-888-238-4373)

Washington State Capital Museum
Tues - Fri 10 am - 4 pm
Sat - Sun Noon - 4 pm
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1-360-753-2580