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Cover: This drawing by contemporary artist Roger Cooke depicts the members of the Lewis and Clark expedition in stormy weather, resolutely paddling their canoes along the Columbia River between what William Clark called “Dismal Nitch” and “Point Distress.” The inhospitable shoreline combined with adverse weather to give the canoes a severe pounding and halt the party’s progress toward the Pacific Ocean for several days. See related story beginning on page 17. (Museum Collections, Washington State Historical Society)

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On January 29 the History Museum was honored to host our members and special friends at an opening reception for September 11: Bearing Witness to History. In case you were unable to join us, I'd like to share with you some highlights of the evening. The program opened with the Tacoma Fire Department Honor Guard, accompanied by pipers, marching into our Grand Lobby to post the colors. Brian Trunk, also with the Tacoma Fire Department, then sang a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem, after which Deputy Chief Dominic Marzano of the Kent Fire Department and Washington Task Force One delivered some remarks. Marzano was deployed to Ground Zero following September 11th and had insights to share with our guests about the impact of that day on the emergency response personal in the city and on New York as a whole.

As guests entered and exited the exhibit gallery, they could view from the arch window a large United States flag suspended from two Tacoma Fire Department ladder trucks parked on Pacific Avenue. The sight was spectacular, and we thank the Tacoma Fire Department for all of its involvement and support.

If you have not done so already, I hope you will come to the museum to see September 11 in the coming weeks. The exhibit focuses on the human stories of that day; viewing it is a powerful and touching experience.

—Brenda Hanan, Development Manager
It Takes Humor As Well As Whimsy to Name Names...

By Austin Post

The title of this article was taken from the concluding sentence of a piece by A.H. Sylvester, "Place Naming in the Northwest," printed in a 1943 issue of American Speech, a quarterly magazine published by Columbia University Press. This, in turn, was reprinted under the headline, "From Paddy Go Easy Pass to the Lakes of the Ladies," June 16, 1944, in the Wenatchee Daily World. In that article Sylvester described several dozen out of an estimated 3,000 place names he submitted to the National Board on Geographic Names during his career, which he began as a topographer with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in the western states during the late 1800s. In 1908 he became supervisor of the Wenatchee National Forest, from which position he retired in 1931.

I became interested in place names while working in the Chelan (now Wenatchee-Okanogan) and Mount Baker (now Mount Baker-Snoqualmie) National Forests beginning in 1939. In 1960 I began doing extensive glacier photography and research funded by two National Science Foundation grants to the University of Washington, Seattle. After that I was a research hydrologist with the USGS for 18 years. This included extensive field work in remote back country where even native place names were scarce, lost, or, due to recent changes in the topography, nonexistent. Not too surprisingly, the many research parties from various state and national organizations as well as universities scattered throughout the country were utilizing totally different unofficial names for the same features, particularly in Alaska.

To end this confusion I began, as a sort of hobby, researching old documents relating to native sources, names adopted by early miners, pioneers, and mountain climbers. Together with those suggested by the various field parties, these names were then submitted to the state and national boards for official approval. In all, during the past six decades, more than 65 place names submitted by me were approved for features in Washington, around 30 in British Columbia, and well over 150 in Alaska. Practically all of these place names originate from native sources or pioneers and are descriptive, being derived from nearby features, or honor various outstanding individuals.

Such names, however appropriate, required very little imagination. Names like East Fork, West Fork, Salmon Creek, or Bear River are all too common. (There are more than 80 place names beginning with Moose in Alaska and 20-odd Boulder Creeks in Washington). So it's a considerable relief when a bit of creative humor slips through, and some of these unusual names are the focus of this article.

There is no better place to begin than with the alpine "Lakes of the Ladies," named by a 1910 Forest Service party led by A.H. Sylvester to explore the back country of Icicle Ridge near Leavenworth. Although this area had been crudely mapped, the party discovered one unrecorded mountain lake after another. While naming geographic features after living persons is a no-no these days, this was not the case in 1910. And so the Sylvester party began naming the lakes after sisters and wives; once these sources had been exhausted, they used the names of sweethearts, friends, and even a queen. So in the following days, Lakes Margaret, Mary, Florence, Alice, Flora, Edna, Augusta, Ida, and Victoria were mapped. The next party in the area found yet another unrecorded lake, which with great glee they named Lake Brigham! Sylvester, who saw humor in this, submitted the name for approval and as a result was able to report, "Brigham is on the map, surrounded by his harem."

Sylvester also had fun submitting a name sent in by one of his rangers—Pomas Creek. This name, usually reserved for apples, was puzzling until the ranger explained that it was derived from a thick accumulation of pumice in the stream valley relating to a major eruption from nearby Glacier Peak some 10,000 years ago. Finding the misspelling amusing, Sylvester submitted it that way, and so it remains today.

Chinook jargon, a trade language composed of words taken from various native Indian and European languages, was much used in the early days of the Northwest, and many of these words are in use today as place names. Sylvester used them extensively. Take Klone Peak, for example,
named after his dog Klone. This word is Chinookan for the number three, which, in dollars, was what he paid for the canine. He added that it should actually have been called Klone Sitkum, as the dog soon killed a chicken that cost an additional 50 cents.

Klone was also cleverly utilized by Sylvester in naming three lakes. In this case he appended “aqua,” making up the euphonious name, Klonaqua Lakes. He explained that he was not mixing Chinook and Latin here either, as “qua” also meant water in the local native Wenatchee language.

Now let’s turn to some of the names I myself submitted for various research parties. One of these appears to mix Alaskan native and Latin sources, but this is not so. The name is Lacuna Glacier, which sounds like pure native Alaskan. It is located in central Alaska where practically all native feature names end in “na” (meaning water—particularly river, glacier, or creek), such as Chuitna or Tana. But in this case the source is Latin, meaning pit, ditch, or lake—all of which well describe this large, beautiful, surging glacier’s contorted surface.

Years ago in the Whatcom County Museum in Bellingham I came across an old document containing another place name with a humorous history. One of these appears to mix Alaskan native and Latin sources, but this is not so. The name is Lucuna Glacier, which sounds like pure native Alaskan. It is located in central Alaska where practically all native feature names end in “na” (meaning water—particularly river, glacier, or creek), such as Chuitna or Tana. But in this case the source is Latin, meaning pit, ditch, or lake—all of which well describe this large, beautiful, surging glacier’s contorted surface.

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One made-up name resulted from confusion over an obscure native word, as only with great difficulty could it be spelled or even pronounced. A scientist friend, Richard C. Hubley, proudly came up with this tongue-twister of a name for a beautiful glacier in the Thunder Creek drainage near Eldorado Peak. Dick then suddenly died under tragic circumstances, and largely for this reason his friends and colleagues wished to preserve the name he had chosen for the glacier. The problem was, no one could remember how to spell or pronounce it. So we made up a similar name—only in this case we made sure it could be spelled and pronounced quite easily: Klawatti Glacier. It supposedly translates to “white swan.”

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In what must be the rarest of incidents, two different names for an Alaskan peak were proposed almost at the same time by two different parties, each completely unaware that the other was doing so. The Wrangell Mountains have a superb series of icy peaks, none of which had been climbed back in the early 1960s. Keith Hart, an avid Alaskan mountain climber himself and at the time associated with the Alaska Board on Geographic Names, told me that local climbing enthusiasts referred to three peaks in the Wrangell range as the Harpies, after the fascinating winged monsters of Greek mythology that had women’s heads and lured men to their death. The two peaks in view at the head of a fine valley glacier began...
the Twaharpies, Ocyptee (13,550 feet) and Celano (13,500 feet), and the next peak north was named after another harpy, Aello (14,445 feet). I submitted these names, and all were duly officially approved. At practically the same time, a joint Japanese and American climbing party was making the first ascent of Aello! They celebrated the event with all due honors, ceremoniously naming the peak Mount Kobe, after the home city of the Japanese party! But Aello won out, and all three harpies remain on the map today!

Sometimes official names appear on the map by happenstance. Such was the case when Pete Isto, of the USGS unit in Fairbanks, was checking and field-editing newly compiled topographic maps of Alaska. This was an enormous job and in doing so he must have salvaged from extinction hundreds of native and pioneer place names during his career. Isto had accumulated a vast file of aerial photographs and I for my work would borrow and return prints from these stacks. On one vertical view I happened to notice that the shadow of a mountain cast upon a snowfield bore a striking resemblance to a dog’s head, which I noted on the photo with an arrow pointing to the feature. Imagine my surprise to find Dogshead Glacier prominently shown on the map of this region when it was published. This name may puzzle map users because the shape of the ice hasn’t the faintest resemblance to a dog. Only the shadow on it, as viewed from the plane when the photo was taken, had that appearance.

Another place name with an interesting history adorns a feature on the west side of Lituya Bay, Alaska. Relic, stagnant ice from a former glacier that filled the bay more than six centuries ago still remains buried under a thick cover of moraine debris. Through the years this debris has become so thick as to practically stop the buried ice from melting further, and a forest of mature hemlocks has grown on its surface. From the air, portions of this forest have a very confused appearance. Because they are leaning in all directions, the trees could be said to look tipsy. Greg Streveler, then a Glacier Bay Park biologist, and I had the good fortune to investigate this forest in 1973. Amidst clouds of voracious mosquitoes, moose flies, and fierce tangles of devil’s club, we did indeed find the trees to be leaning haphazardly. Even so, it took several hours to find a collapsed pit where the underlying stagnant glacier was exposed, providing evidence that the ice was very slowly melting and, as suspected, upsetting the trees’ stability.

Our proposed name was Drunken Forest, but somewhere up the line the term was considered too indecent for a place name; Tilted Forest eventually passed muster and is now officially recognized.

The origins of the next two names were described by “Slim” Welsh, who was Skagit District assistant ranger in Mount Baker National Forest back in 1948. Slim could come up with endless classics of his own, but these, he said, date way back to the early days:

Dollar Watch Mountain? Why, the first guy that ever went up there found a dollar watch nailed to a tree! Couldn’t blame whoever did it, though. It sure kept poor time.

Lacuna Glacier, Alaska Range, Alaska. This large valley glacier is subject to periodic surges in which the ice abruptly breaks up and surges ahead several miles in a period of generally less than two years. The glacier then stagnates and very little motion takes place until the next surge develops. Following surges, subsequent surface melt of the contorted ice occasionally forms lacunas, as shown pock-marking this glacier.
Three Fools Creek? Comes from a sign tacked up on Three Fools Pass. Put there by three prospectors who had spent the whole summer punching holes in rocks in the Devil's Creek country which is all slate. Damn fools, all right.

Quite another situation is the region of mixed-up names in the Agnes River area of the North Cascades. It seems that early topographers mixed up the names of two mountains—North Star and Bonanza—on the first maps of the region, and so they still remain. On the west side of these mountains are two creeks—Swamp Creek and Glacier Creek. I have been assured that these names are also switched, so that the glacier is at the head of Swamp Creek and the swamp is actually in the Glacier Creek valley. Confusing indeed.

At the head of the present Swamp Creek, Jack Blankenship had a mine prospect in the early days, and when it came my turn to name something after him it seemed logical to propose his name for the mountain where the prospect was situated. But when the list of approved names was issued it proved that the peak being named Mount Blankenship and a nearby mountain named Dark Peak—in honor of George Dark—were reversed. That was 40-some years ago, and the names have been that way on the maps ever since. I guess it's best to leave it that way—at least things will remain mixed up consistently!

One never knows for certain which names will pass a board on geographic names without a murmur and which will be rejected out of hand. Sometimes, it seems, the decision must depend on what the board members had for lunch that day. One board member strictly frowned on any name presented as humorous or whimsical. Such names were all but guaranteed to be instantly rejected. Yet the identical name, presented in total seriousness, would occasionally pass muster. Take Grizzly Bar, situated near Taku Glacier, just across from the Brassiere Hills (which, in actuality, do closely resemble their namesakes). My boss, Mark Meier, insisted the boards would never approve it, but they did. Yet another name that showed up on official maps was Mount Waw, after a “mythical North Coast character.” The fact that the letters W-A-W also happen to be the initials of Walter A. Wood, director of the Arctic Institute of North America, was pure coincidence, I’m sure.

Now we come to a whimsical name of a different sort. At Columbia Glacier, near Valdez, Alaska, is a sizable mountain rising out of the ice, a classic nunatak, which is an Eskimo word describing such features. In 1899 Professor G. K. Gilbert referred to this as the “great nunatak” in his reports, so I submitted the name Great Nunatak for official approval and it was entered as such in the files. Columbia Glacier is a famous tourist attraction and on a too-typical foggy morning, two tourist vessels were grooping their way through the soup, one leading the other whose radar was out. The fog was thinning as they slowly approached the glacier, and over the radio one of the skippers delightedly announced he could “see the Nanatuk” ahead. This mispronunciation quickly became a byword and was soon transferred to two nearby lakes, Nanatuk Lakes, the reasoning being that a “nanatuk” must be the opposite of a nunatak—i.e., rather than a mountain sticking up out of the ice, it was a hole in the ground filled with water.

Also on the subject of nunataks, in the 1940s a new mountain top began emerging from the down-wasting of the Brabazon Icefield near Yakutat, Alaska. In this instance, Eskimo and Latin words...
Hohlinsock Lake and Griddlecake Glacier, Bering Glacier, Alaska. Medial moraines form stripes that cover the surface of Bering Glacier in this vertical photograph. The “sock” is the striped ice in the middle of the photo and Hohlinsock Lake is the white, iceberg-filled pothole in the “heel” (bottom right). Griddlecake Glacier (white) flows into the medial moraine-covered ice from hills to the right, forming the “griddlecake” by pushing out into the larger glacier and forming loops in the medial moraines.

were combined to coin the name, “Novatak,” using “nova” (new) from Latin and “tak” (mountain) from the native language. Novatak Glacier derived its name from this new mountain, which most years increases in size as the surrounding stagnant glacier ice slowly melts.

Another unusual name, also in Alaska, comes from Russian sources. A large island first became exposed in Vitus Lake in the early 1920s due to the recession of 127-mile-long Bering Glacier, the largest glacier in North America. Through the years this island was completely uncovered, proving to be much the largest of several being similarly exposed. This brought to mind the fact that during the Pleistocene ice ages the land now under Bering Strait—known as Beringia—was uncovered by a lowered sea level. This island being exposed by the receding ice inspired the name Beringia Nova.

Even more recently, a USGS field party had some fun with a name for a tiny gravel bar situated in this same Vitus Lake. As the glacier recedes, the lake is littered with icebergs large and small, and some of them are so obscured with rocks and debris as to resemble dry land. Two “distinguished” hydrographers (who shall remain nameless) making a survey in an inflatable boat assumed that these inconspicuous gravel patches were covering dirty ice floating in deep water. They ran high and dry on what proved to be two tiny islets composed of rocks solidly affixed to the lake bottom. In the navy, pollywogs are greenhorn sailors who haven’t yet crossed the Equator, and wallypogs are even lower simpletons—strictly morons in their lowest form. So the name Wallypogs was submitted to commemorate this mortifying case of dim-witted navigation. It took several exchanges of correspondence to explain, but finally the name was approved.

The board members must have been feeling unusually benign that day, as they also approved the name Hohlinsock Lake for an iceberg-filled puddle that, in truth, does slightly resemble in its surroundings a striped stocking with a giant hole in the heel, desperately in need of mending. Nearby is Griddlecake Glacier, also in need of repair—several decades ago the white ice terminated in a near perfect circle, but with the recession currently taking place the griddlecake is rapidly shrinking and in time may disappear completely.

Here is an example of how arbitrary boards on place names can be. With so many decisions to be made on unimaginative and repetitious place names, perhaps even they can’t resist displaying an occasional trace of irony. In the Chugach Icefield, near Valdez, Alaska, is a nunatak several miles long, rising out of Tazlina Glacier, which from the air (with a stretch of the imagination) does somewhat resemble what used to be called a brontosaurus. This name was suggested by mountain enthusiast Larry Nielsen, leader of several climbing expeditions exploring this virgin mountain wilderness back in the 1960s. Before submitting the name, though, it struck us all that it was just plain mean to force one of those tropical, jungle-loving monsters to spend eternity in that icy domain all alone. So we suggested another dinosaur name, Diplodocus, for an adjoining mountain. In the end, the board approved the name Brontosaurus but rejected Diplodocus, stating that “need for companionship” was an insufficient reason for approval. So poor old Bronto has had to shiver up there in the snow and ice in lonely grandeur all by himself. Someday we just might resubmit the name Diplodocus, this time claiming that the rock looks like one. That just might do the trick.

Austin Post, a former United States Geological Survey hydrologist and aerial photographer, recently received an honorary doctor of sciences degree from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in acknowledgement of his contributions to glaciology. Post is coauthor, with Edward R. LaChapelle, of Glacier Ice (University of Washington Press, 2000).
Someone new to the Pacific Northwest and seeing the Columbia River for the first time could have no idea what the Great River of the West looked like before the building of the big dams. The Columbia's character and its muscle are generally hidden from view, deep in the old river channel and in the guts of machines that span the river like stair steps, from Bonneville Dam near Portland to Mica Dam at the river's far northern turn in British Columbia. People looking at the river for the first time probably would not think about the history swamped by the great dams, the towns that had to be relocated, the tribal lands and sacred sites covered by reservoirs, and the farms that became lake beds. They likely would hear about the Columbia's changed ecology, especially the listing of threatened salmon runs under the Endangered Species Act, and worries about pollution from industries, agricultural run-off, and radioactive nuclides from leaking waste drums at the old Hanford Engineering Works near the Tri-Cities. They could not miss the river system's monumental dimension and the iconic presence of the dams.

The Columbia, historian Richard White has argued, is an "organic machine," an apt metaphor for a fully
controlled and managed system of hydroelectric turbines, massive irrigation pumps, and mechanical locks that transformed a part of nature into a power cornucopia and a series of flat-water reservoirs that link the Pacific Ocean with far interior river ports. It is an audacious construction, an ambition only the most hopeful and confident could accomplish.

Few residents, old or new, wonder when it happened and why. Fewer still consider that indigenous people began pulling salmon from the Columbia more than ten millennia ago, yet it took only four decades to create the Columbia River system—a slight wink in the river's history. Even fewer question whether its development was inevitable or probable. The curious find out that the history of the Columbia's systemic transformation during the 20th century is laden with complexity, is nondeterministic and unpredictable. What we see today on the river is powerfully organized, almost magical in its synchronization. How it became so rationalized is a messy history.

The most important decisions came in the years immediately following World War II. The year 1949 stands out as perhaps the most crucial, when policy decisions confirmed earlier plans and abandoned potential alternatives. It was just before the hyperventilated "red scare" gripped the country's politics and just after a stunning come-from-behind electoral victory by an underrated president. It was also smash in the middle of the Pacific Northwest's fervent crusade to become a major region in the nation. In 1949 several lines of political, economic, and cultural importance intersected in the discussions, debates, and decisions about the fate of the Columbia River.

Oppo-site Page: In 1947, 10 years before the completion of The Dalles Dam, Chinese workers in Seufert's Salmon Cannery east of The Dalles "slimed" tons of fish each spring during the Chinook salmon run. Sliming required the stripping of the fish's slick covering and cleaning out the belly in preparation for cutting and fitting in cans.

The transformation of the Columbia River began years before 1949 and with some fanfare. In the spring of 1933 newly inaugurated President Franklin D. Roosevelt made good on his campaign promise uttered the preceding fall in Portland when he directed federal monies at two huge public works projects—Bonneville Dam near Portland and Grand Coulee Dam in north central Washington. Roosevelt used public works to address fundamental economic issues by creating employment and stimulating regional development in three of the nation's river basins—the Tennessee, the Missouri, and the Columbia. What the New Deal began on these rivers changed them dramatically and refashioned the regions they drained. Grand Coulee and Bonneville dams blockaded the Columbia, the second largest river by volume of flow in the United States and the river with the greatest hydroelectric potential on the face of the globe. Roosevelt's action put the river on a new course, literally and figuratively. Despite the audacity and singularity of the Bonneville and Grand Coulee projects, the critics—and there were many—raised legitimate questions from the outset. What could a destitute region do with all of the electrical power the dams would generate? Did people in the Northwest want to turn over the river landscape to industry and transform places like the Columbia River Gorge into gigantic mill sites? Could the fish and fishing industry survive the dams? What would be sacrificed by building the dams? Who would gain, and who would lose? Between 1945 and 1950, the answers to these and other questions became clear, as river planners constructed the modern system we see realized today.

The central document in the modern history of the Columbia River is called the "308 Report," a white paper of sorts that outlined where and how major rivers were potential hydroelectric and navigational improvements. The report on the Columbia landed on the President Herbert Hoover's desk in 1932, but it was his successor who had the good political luck to be the president who carried out two of the most promising projects.

Building big dams, as historian Paul Josephson has recently written, is an example of "brute force technology," the kind of action that is transformative and nature-changing, that generates consequences and contingencies never imagined by its designers. To some degree, the history of the Columbia River...
The Columbia system is the story of the use of brute force technology and the dynamic repercussions river planners had to address. What they understood about their creation's consequences and the contingencies incurred is at the heart of the story. A classic example of the role of contingency on the Columbia is the Bonneville Project Act of 1937. Faced with the prospect of selling and distributing the abundant power that would be generated by Bonneville Dam, the federal government approved creation of a marketing agency that decided to offer power to customers in the Pacific Northwest at uniform rates throughout the region, specifying that public utilities always would have first dibs on available power for sale. This legislation set a standard and a tone for federally financed power projects in the region, while it also affected non-federal power producers and overall planning for development of the Columbia River. In short, building Bonneville Dam posed many more questions and created many more contingencies than the immediate problems it originally addressed—unemployment and economic development.

This outcome is not unique to throwing dams across rivers. Major government initiatives often create more problems than they solve. The Columbia River experience, however, had a unique set of contingencies. First, not all groups and economic interests in the region gained from the dams, and many opposed them from the beginning. Second, the shape of the system—precisely how Columbia River Basin development took place—offered episode upon episode for the whole idea to be challenged, critiqued, and modified. Third, as economic and political conditions changed in the region, the general conception of the river's importance and the centrality of its development changed. Fourth, decisions about river development created a conversation about the Columbia River that engaged a broad cross-section of Pacific Northwesterners. Finally, the necessity of political decisions cut that conversation short and left the region to experience the consequences.

In this context, the year 1949 begins on Memorial Day of 1948, when the Columbia and its tributaries raged out of their banks, paid no heed to flood-control structures, and left death and destruction from southeastern British Columbia to the lower Columbia, including the total destruction of Vanport, Oregon, the massive wartime housing project on the south bank of the river between Portland and Vancouver. President Harry S. Truman, then positioning himself for an uphill election campaign in the fall, declared the flood an emergency and ordered federal agencies to provide material, labor, and personnel to alleviate suffering in the flooded areas. Truman went further, as he wrote the head of the Federal Works Agency, by requesting the secretary of the army and the secretary of the interior to begin at once a review of the long-range plans of those agencies for Columbia Basin development, with a view to proposing such modifications as may be appropriate in light of the present disaster.

The Bureau of Reclamation in the Department of Interior had already completed a major study of the Columbia River Basin and its reclamation potential in 1947, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers was nearing completion of an important updating of its original “308 Report.” Truman asked that the agencies confer on basin-wide planning with an eye toward flood control, but the larger political message was more important—Truman reacted to the flood emergency by calling for reinvigorated planning.

In the summer of 1948 the prospect of basin-wide planning was a familiar and contested topic. Ever since the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in 1933, the idea of river basin authorities as an efficient means to plan coordinated development had been popular with some interest groups—organized labor, the Grange, public power associations—and highly unpopular with others—chambers of commerce, private power companies, agribusinesses. Truman's call for a review of Columbia Basin plans, along with other actions, signaled Pacific Northwest politicians that he was considering a renewed and re-energized campaign for a Columbia Valley Authority (CVA).
Congress had entertained and defeated several CVA bills by 1948, and the political battle lines had become well-established. The proponents argued that a CVA would eliminate the wasteful overlap, competition, and political sniping that characterized the competition for water development sites between the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation. The corps had built Bonneville Dam, while the bureau had constructed the dam at Grand Coulee. In 1948, although the two agencies had been discussing an arrangement that would allow them to “pool” project funding dedicated to Columbia Basin work, their mutual suspicions had defeated completion of an agreement.

Speculation about the Truman administration’s willingness to launch a new effort to pass a CVA bill created heated conversations in 1948 because of recent conflicts over Columbia River Basin development plans that had exposed rifts within the Department of the Interior, engaged regional interest groups in pitched battles, and stimulated substantial protest from Indians with treaty fishing rights on the river. The conflicts began in 1945, but they had come to a head in Walla Walla in June 1947 at a testy public meeting of the Columbia Basin Inter-Agency Committee, an unwieldy group that had been charged in 1946 with the impossible task of making everything in natural resource planning work smoothly in the basin. At issue in Walla Walla was a proposal by the Department of Interior that dam building in the Columbia Basin be restricted to tributary streams off the main stem and that a 10-year moratorium be placed on building dams below the site of McNary Dam and on the lower Snake River. The opposition of commercial and sports fishing interests and the Indian treaty tribes was so great, one federal official admitted in 1947, that the region stood “at the crossroads”:

We can either develop a friendly and advantageous long-range program, which will properly evaluate and take into consideration each and all of our resources, or we can pursue the policy of each interest going its own way, which would result in loss of maximum benefits, unbalanced regional development, and antagonism between interests.

More than 200 people attended the Walla Walla meeting. Advocates for full and speedy development of the Columbia included Herbert West, former mayor of Walla Walla and president of the Walla Walla-based Inland Empire Waterways Association, who focused exclusively on building the four lower Snake River dams. Dissenters and supporters of the 10-year moratorium included Indian treaty fishermen, fisheries biologists, and commercial fishermen, who charged that the program of development, as the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) testimony at Walla Walla indicated, would “mean the extermination of the largest part of the [fish] populations which spawn above Bonneville dam.” While some proponents of the moratorium agreed that there might be room for compromise, Indian representatives adamantly opposed any additional dams on the lower Snake and Columbia rivers, pointing out that damage to the fish runs would cripple them economically and violate fishing rights guaranteed in the 1855 treaties.

The committee rejected the moratorium, but they struck a deal with the opponents. In lieu of the potential damage to fish runs, the federal government would fund the Lower Columbia River Fisheries Plan, a mitigation strategy they had worked on since 1946 that would protect fisheries on the lower river. With promised funding of $20 million, the plan had three components: improvement of lower river fish habitat, increased investment in fish hatcheries, and identification of fish sanctuaries—i.e., rivers that would remain free of fish-blocking dams.
Truman's stunning electoral victory in 1948 changed the political dynamics of the nation, especially in the Pacific Northwest. As Commonweal magazine put it in early 1949: "The West was enormously influential in putting Harry Truman back into the White House, and it is asking for, and going to get, its pound, not of meat, but of water."

Some Truman men in the Northwest were staunch advocates of a CVA. Former United States senator from Washington Hugh Mitchell, for example, had introduced one of the early CVA bills and then organized the League for CVA when he failed to win re-election in 1946. In 1948 he rode Truman's coattails back to Washington as a member of Congress and stood ready to go for a CVA again. Washington's United States senators, Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson and Warren Magnuson, also signed on to support another try at a CVA in the new Congress. By early January 1949 administration officials had begun fashioning a new CVA bill from pieces of earlier proposals. Democratic political groups in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho tentatively agreed to join the effort if the White House made it a priority.

Truman responded energetically by appointing one of his top political advisors, Charles Murphy, to head up the effort in the White House. In the Northwest, Truman assigned the task to Assistant Secretary of the Interior C. Girard "Jebby" Davidson, a lawyer who had worked at the TVA and Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) before being appointed Secretary Julius Krug's second at the Interior Department. A native of Louisiana, Davidson had a reputation as a keen political mind and a suave advocate for liberal Democratic goals. He also had a deep knowledge of the Northwest because of his years in Portland with the BPA.

The new bill looked a lot like earlier proposals. Truman's CVA included a reorganization of water-project-related bureaus in several departments into one semi-corporate administration with responsibility for planning and overseeing projects in the Columbia Basin. The plan specified governance by a three-man appointed board, with the requirement that at least one live in the region.

The complicated legislation addressed a range of topics from electrical power distribution to acquisition and development of dam sites. Truman's bill, however, benefited from the lessons of earlier failures and, foremost, from the regional demand for rapid and efficient Columbia River Basin development. Still, the fact that it looked like a TVA transplanted to the Northwest left it open to criticism. Opponents, like newly elected Governor Douglas McKay of Oregon, asked:

What's the matter with the way we're doing it now? We don't need to delegate authority to a board or a commission to regulate the economy of the Northwest.

A Seattle Times editorial complained:

There is no need for establishment of a "province of the Columbia" with almost unlimited powers over the industrial and agricultural development of the region. All groups and varied interests believing in continued economic growth of the Pacific Northwest along democratic lines should become vocal to prevent...
CVA measures before Congress from becoming the law over the Columbia.

The Portland Oregon Journal called it an "authoritarian type of development." Other critics used stronger language. The National Association of Electric Companies charged that the CVA was a "move toward a 'superstate.'" Intemperate sorts called the CVA nothing less than socialism, perhaps even communism. In Column Right, a conservative political newsletter, a fearful writer warned that a CVA would threaten the region:

Let no propaganda deceive you. It is your liberty that is being fished for. Do not rise to the bait of this New Deal dream without recalling the cost of that liberty and the fact that once it is gone, it can only be regained by the force of arms. . . . CVA is not merely a question of the price of electric power, coordination of industry, or any other similarly smoked sausage. It is a question of whether a nation so regimented can long endure.

The League for CVA and pro-CVA organizations faced stiff, organized opposition, but they succeeded in introducing the issue through local Grange chapters in the region and through pro-labor and public power newspapers. Jebby Davidson and other proponents debated the merits of a CVA with opponents in semi-public venues such as the City Club of Portland and in public halls in Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, Boise, Eugene, and other cities and towns. The opponents, principally private utilities, chambers of commerce, reclamationists, and industries, funded the Pacific Northwest Development Association and churned out anti-CVA propaganda throughout the spring and summer of 1949.

In Portland the debate included dueling feature articles on the successes and failures of the TVA published in the Oregon Journal and the Oregonian. As a Democratic newspaper, the Journal's anti-CVA stand seemed out of step, but Democrats did not despair because the Republican Oregonian was strongly pro-CVA. Major daily newspapers in the region tended to criticize the CVA proposal, and papers in smaller regional centers largely turned thumbs down to it. Besides Jackson, Magnuson, and Mitchell of Washington, Senator Harry Cain and Congressman Walt Horan (both also from Washington) initially supported a CVA as well. In Oregon, United States Senator Wayne Morse and State Senator Richard L. Neuberger lined up in favor of a CVA as well. The governors of the four Northwest states—Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana—however, rejected the idea, fearing a loss of state prerogatives ranging from infringements on their own water projects to loss of control over water rights. The governors were so forceful, one political commentator noted, that they seemed to react to a CVA "with the alacrity of fire horses answering a four-bell blaze."

Nonetheless, the CVA boosters engaged their opponents optimistically. As Davidson wrote to Charles Murphy in the White House: "So far the Republicans and power companies are against [the CVA], and the Democrats, labor and farmers are for it. What more could we ask?" In truth, though, politics in 1949 did not favor a CVA. Even the Socialist Party in Seattle issued a press release in May, criticizing the CVA proposal as authoritarian and dangerous. By early autumn the attacks had worn down the advocates, who were outspent in the propaganda war more than 100 to 1. Some politicians who had privately and publicly favored a CVA backed away. In August, Oregon's Wayne Morse, who had been threatened by conservative Republicans with a primary opponent in his re-election...
LEFT: Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes drew criticism from private power advocates for promoting public power in the Pacific Northwest. His prickly personality and well-publicized brusqueness made him an easy target of complaints about federal power policies.

BELOW: Industrial, commercial, and private power opponents of the proposed Columbia Valley Authority organized the Pacific Northwest Development Association in the 1940s to halt expansion of federal power projects in the Columbia River Basin. This is the back cover of a pamphlet published by the association in 1949 severely criticizing President Truman’s CVA bill.

As the CVA battle raged in the region and politicians continually waved their wetted fingers into the wind, federal and state fish managers worked at the Lower Columbia River Fisheries Plan, and interest groups like Herbert West’s Inland Empire Waterways Association kept pounding the Army Corps of Engineers to go for appropriations to start the new dam projects, especially The Dalles and the lower Snake River dams. At the same time and for reasons quite apart from the “308 Report” or other federal plans, Tacoma City Light—the city’s public utility—decided to apply for federal and state hydroelectric licenses for two high dams on the Cowlitz River. Alarmed at the possibility that the free-flowing and salmon-rich river would be blocked to fish, commercial and sports fishing interests—and state fish managers—organized to protest approval of the Mayfield and Mossyrock dam projects.

Although Tacoma City Light’s plans had no connection to the development of the Columbia main stem, the Cowlitz River’s attributes as a salmon stream made it one of the “backbone” rivers in the federal government’s Lower Columbia River Fisheries Plan. With this in mind and defending the state’s interest in fish management, the Washington State Legislature waded into the controversy in early 1949 by passing legislation declaring the Cowlitz a “salmon sanctuary,” a river dedicated to spawning salmon and therefore closed to dam construction. Public hearings on the issue drew large crowds to meetings in Olympia, Toledo, and Longview. Tacoma City Light officials promised to pay attention to fish ecology, but the opponents listened skeptically. As one defender of the Cowlitz stated:

The people should have a right to vote “Yes” or “No” on the dam question. If Tacoma needs power, let ‘em put bid, suddenly came out against the bill. By year’s end, Truman had become convinced that he could not get the CVA bill approved in the 81st Congress.
in more dams where they already have power sites. The Cowlitz River is one of the finest fishing streams in the Northwest. Let's raise enough hell so that the monopolies will know we are alive.

Using terminology usually applied to the private power industry, the speaker clearly objected to loss of local control as well as the destruction of the Cowlitz fishery, which all agreed was the most productive salmon stream (aside from the Snake River) in the Columbia Basin. Other Cowlitz defenders took the issue to a higher forum. One Lewis County resident testified:

This is not a question of kilowatts, jobs, dollars, [or] votes. It is a question of RIGHT and WRONG.... This action we are now contemplating is not a 50-50 crime of man against man, it is a crime of man against his Creator.... If we commit this crime against our Creator, we will be punished accordingly, both individually and collectively.

In ways parallel to the CVA discussion that hummed throughout the Columbia Basin, the Cowlitz question crowded other stories off newspaper pages, as unlikely political allies joined hands—some labor unions and local chambers of commerce against the dams; public utilities and private utility interests in favor of the dams; sports fishermen and state fish managers against; industry and other labor unions in favor. It took nine years and four major court cases before Tacoma City Light prevailed in the United States Supreme Court in 1955, where the decision approved building Pelton Dam on the river.

By the end of 1949 the regional discussion about the fate of fish and dams on the Columbia had tilted decidedly toward the dam-builders' ambitions. Officials in the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation had responded to political conditions and contrived a joint working agreement in the Columbia River Basin that promised better efficiency. Meanwhile, the disputations over the Cowlitz and Deschutes rivers made clear that the river developers were getting the upper hand. The Lower Columbia River Fisheries Plan—that offsetting strategy agreed to by the corps—had been forced on the defensive, and it seemed likely that fish sanctuaries could not withstand political assault. Despite valiant efforts by Jebby Davidson and others, the Truman administration could not find the votes for their version of a CVA. Major economic interests in the region—reclamationists, navigation companies, private utilities, chambers of commerce—had demonized the CVA plan sufficiently to make it politically unattractive.

Looking back more than half a century, we are struck by the missed opportunities to wrestle contingencies to the ground and possibly relieve us of our problems on the river today. Could the CVA have rationalized Columbia River development well enough to avoid creating lopsided victories for the “winners” and such thin protections for the “losers”? Could an extension and continuance of the conversations initiated after World War II—which buzzed so intensely in 1949—have offered the region and its politicians ideas and workable solutions? It is tempting to say “yes,” but that is not how it happened. What we can say, though, is that people in the Pacific Northwest had their opportunities in 1949, and what happened that year made a great difference.

William L. Lang is professor of history at Portland State University and former director of the Center for Columbia River History. He is co-editor (with Robert Carriker) of Great River of the West: Essays on the Columbia River and is completing a study of the failed Columbia Valley Authority.
The Northwest Peace Jubilee, held in Tacoma at Stadium Bowl from June 30 to July 7, 1919, was dedicated to the men of the Northwest who fought in World War I. The crowning of Miss Columbia to preside over the celebration was decided by popular vote and helped raise money for a Memorial Fund. Ella Gangye, pictured here in the flower-decorated auto, came in third in the voting. The highlight of the weeklong celebration is described in the souvenir program as a Grand Military Spectacle by the men from Fort Lewis titled “Somewhere in France” with 750 performers, twenty-two thousand square feet of scenery, trenches, dugouts and war effects. Also included were field guns, escort wagons, rolling kitchens, mounted wrestling, mule skinners contest, trench fighting at night, destruction of the village and final victory by the doughboys.

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Birch bark canoes constructed by northeastern Indian tribes revolutionized travel for 17th-century European explorers and entrepreneurs who ventured into the dense forests at the heart of the continent in search of mythical geographic passages and riches in furs. Early French explorers such as Samuel de Champlain quickly seized upon the importance of the Indian design that allowed light, maneuverable canoes to be paddled facing forward versus the early European attempts to row, facing backward, in heavy longboats on rapidly flowing rivers.

Sold Our Canoes for a Few Strands of Beads

By Robert & Barbara Danielson

Above: This replica dugout canoe on display at Fort Clatsop approximates the size and form of the canoes Lewis and Clark constructed at Canoe Camp on the Clearwater River in 1805.
North American rivers. Utilization of the birch bark canoe was a singular factor that enabled Europeans to penetrate the vast northern continental interior. However, across the Great Plains in the West another solution to water travel was necessary as no tree produced bark that would sheath wood-frame canoes. (Exceptions to this were the small, flatwater cedar frame and Western white pine bark canoes—the so-called sturgeon-nosed canoes—used by some bands of the Kalispel, Kutenai, and Salish Indians.)

The answer to the problem was dugout canoes constructed entirely from single logs. This construction form reached its supreme level on the West Coast where Indians, freed from a migratory hunting and gathering economy primarily by a sedentary salmon economy (the resource came to them), were able to allocate time and human resources to the development of religion, arts, and the building of elegant, thin-walled, and ornamental canoes. Inland, however, the less stable economies required canoe building but in a more rude and practical form. It was this latter form of canoe building that the Lewis and Clark expedition adopted as they penetrated the last miles of what would become the American West.

Canoes were obviously essential for transporting expedition members, baggage, trade goods, guns, powder, lead, and scientific instruments on the waters of the Columbia River in order to reach their ultimate objective—the Pacific Ocean. But the canoes’ importance in hunting and relations with the Indians as well as their role in strategic designs to return home may be less appreciated. Canoes were much more than wooden flotation devices. The way canoes were utilized on the Columbia River demonstrates once again that the two major elements contributing to the overall success of the expedition were thorough advance planning and the ability to adapt when things did not go as planned. The Moulton edition of the journals of Lewis, Clark, Ordway, Gass, and Whitehouse is used here to make a definitive canoe inventory and to elucidate trade details for canoes, the handling of canoes at portages, and the fate of the expedition’s canoes.

On October 7, 1805, the expedition—33 in number plus two Nez Perce chiefs, Shoshone guide Toby and his son, and Lewis’s dog Seaman—resumed their journey by water from Canoe Camp near present-day Orofino, Idaho. For the first time, gravity and currents were in their favor as they traveled down the Clearwater River with about two tons of baggage in four large canoes and a “small pilot canoe.” The size of the dugout canoes is never explicitly stated in the journals. The large canoes were probably 35 to 40 feet in length and the small canoe about 25 to 30 feet long. The canoes were constructed from ponderosa pine logs felled next to the river and laboriously formed by burning out the central cavities and shaping them with small hand tools. A clue to the mass of the large canoes may be found in the journal of Reverend Samuel Parker who followed Lewis and Clark down the Columbia River 30 years later. Scouting for mission sites in June 1836, he descended the Columbia in a large Indian canoe obtained at Fort Walla Walla and stated that 20 men were needed to carry it “on their heads and shoulders” around the rapids at “La Dalles.” The dugouts used by Lewis and Clark may have been of similar size or perhaps even heavier.

Despite extremely rough water, rapids, falls, rocks on the rivers, severe winter storms in the Columbia River estuary, and numerous repairs, all of these ponderosa pine dugout canoes served the expedition well with no catastrophic failures. They were abandoned only when much lighter, more agile, Indian canoes

Edward Curtis photo, taken at the Long Narrows c. 1910, of a Wishram canoe that resembles the canoe Lewis acquired below Celilo Falls. As the stern cannot be seen, it could be either a Cutwater or Chinook form.
became available, accidental losses occurred, or horses became the preferred mode of travel on the 1806 return journey.

It was a rough ride down the Clearwater and Snake rivers. By Captain William Clark's account they passed 39 rapids, 15 of which they labeled as "bad" on the Clearwater River; and 34 rapids, of which 9 were "bad," on the Snake River—a distance just short of 200 miles. The canoes took a battering over several of the worst rapids, but only on October 15, as they neared the confluence of the Snake and Columbia, was it necessary to portage some of the baggage. Nonetheless, the peril to the party and their canoes on the Columbia River tributaries was real and recognized. Clark wrote on October 13: "We should make more portages if the Season was not so far advanced and time precious with us." The Pacific Ocean was still far distant, but they felt they must reach their ultimate objective before winter. That meant taking risks and endangering their only mode of transportation as they passed through the treeless Columbia Plain.

The mid-Columbia presented smoother sailing for the expedition, and for the next 122 miles after leaving the confluence they encountered only 12 rapids worth noting; 7 of them "bad," including the notorious "muscle shell" rapids (later known as the Umatilla Rapids). The day they passed this rapid, Private Joseph Whitehouse reported: "We found the day pleasant and the Navigation of the River easy, excepting at the Rapids several of which we passed...without any accident happening." But difficult passages lay ahead.

The first of the two major barriers to river travel between Canoe Camp and the lower Columbia was reached on October 22. All the baggage was unloaded and carried around the Great Falls of the Columbia (Celilo Falls, now submerged) on the north side and the empty canoes taken down the south side of the river the following day. Neither here nor at any other time is there any indication that any of the ponderosa pine canoes were actually lifted and carried—the wet weight of these vessels was simply too great. Sergeant Patrick Gass states: "We had to drag them 450 yards round the first pitch which is 20 feet perpendicular." They were then lined down the remainder of the narrow channel (temporarily losing one canoe) and paddled over to the camp on the river's north side. It was there, just below the railroad bridge near the modern town of Wishram, that the first change was made in the little flotilla.

Captain Clark wrote in his first draft of October 23: "Exchanged our Small canoe for a large & a very new one built for riding the waves." He described it as "butifull of different Shape & Size to what we had seen above wide in the middle and tapering to each end...curious figures were cut in the wood." Clark added that the man who sold him the craft had himself "purchased it of a white man below for a horse...neeter made than any I have ever Seen and Calculated to ride the waves, and carry emence burdens, they are dug thin and are supported by cross pieces of about 1 inch diamater..."
At Fort Clatsop on February 1, Lewis described the four “forms” of canoes used by the Indians below the “grand chatarac” (Celilo Falls), and he used much the same words to describe the third and most common form: “[i]t is usually 30-35 feet long, and will carry from two to twelve persons. 4 men are competent to carry them...say a mile without resting.” Clearly, this third form of canoe represents the canoe purchased at Celilo Falls. James Ronda identifies the form of Clark described on October 23, 1805.

Regardless, this canoe (probably constructed of western red cedar) would prove to be the canoe of choice in the following months for small hunting parties and rough water situations. Meriwether Lewis had made an excellent trade at Celilo Falls. Whether it was 30 to 35 feet long is debatable due to later characterizations, repeated and consistent, of its being “small.” Regardless, this canoe (probably constructed of western red cedar) would prove to be the canoe of choice in the following months for small hunting parties and rough water situations. Meriwether Lewis had made an excellent trade at Celilo Falls.

T HE EXPEDITION CONTINUED downstream from the falls on October 24, running the Short Narrows of The Dalles in the five loaded canoes—the non-swimmers walking with the valuables—and continuing on to the “Great Mart” (the center of trade in the Pacific Northwest) at the head of the Long Narrows. It was necessary to make a partial portage of a mile on the 25th, some carrying the valuables by the worst of the Long Narrows and others standing on shore with ropes in case of capsizing; but the dangerous narrows were navigated safely. The corps camped at Rock Fort (located now in the city, The Dalles) where trees once again appeared on the hillsides. Here they collected pine pitch to repair the canoes, dried the baggage, and hunted before proceeding down the gorge. The expedition resumed the voyage on October 28 and arrived at the Columbia River’s second great barrier to water travel—near the western end gorge—on October 30.

The Upper Cascades of the “Great Shute” (just down river of present-day Stevenson, Washington) was perhaps the most formidable barrier on the Columbia River and required that the canoes be unloaded and the baggage carried (the Indians also carried their canoes) at least half a mile. Joseph Whitehouse wrote on the 31st that they “took down two [large] canoes 1 at a time over high rocks on rollers, by main [man] strength and by being in the water which ran between Sd. [Starboard] Stone & large rocks.” On the following day Whitehouse reports that they carried all the baggage and took down “the other two large canoes, and the Sm[all] Indian one.” According to Clark, the Indian canoe was carried around the “Great Shute” on November 1: “We set about taking our Small Canoe and all the baggage by land 940 yards of bad Slippery and rocky way.” They could carry the Indian canoe but struggled mightily with the others, using “rollers” or, as Clark described it, “we got the 4 large canoes over by slipping them over rocks on poles placed across from one rock to another, and at some places along partial streams of river.” On November 2 they portaged the Lower Cascades (at the downstream end of “Brant Island,” present-day Bradford Island, at Bonneville Dam), and took the partially loaded canoes down one at a time—they were now past the last rapids and on tidewater. Unknown to the expedition, tidewater meant that they had only to descend about 9 vertical feet to the Pacific Ocean—9 feet left out of 7,373 feet at Lemhi Pass, where they had crossed the Continental Divide.

The men and canoes had taken another battering at the Cascades, but even more difficult times lay ahead at their ultimate westerly destination. It took six days to reach the broad estuary of the Columbia over relatively placid water. There they spent the next 18 days on the north side of the river in what is now the state of Washington, enduring terrible winter storms that inflicted severe blows to the ponderosa pine canoes. However, the two-month river voyage had not prepared the expedition with their four clunky dugouts and one Indian canoe for the “great fury” and “emence waves” of the Columbia estuary. The day after the first sighting of the “ocian” (November 7) at Pillar Rock, the “swells were so high and the canoes roled in such a manner as to cause several to be very sick.” The dugouts were not designed for the swells and waves encountered at the mouth of the Columbia River, and caution would be exercised as they made their way through waters the like of which no expedition member had ever experienced.

After cautiously coasting the perimeter of Grays Bay on the 8th, they found “the swells or waves so high that we thought it imprudent to proceed,” and they landed on the east side of Grays Point about 20 miles short of river’s mouth, remaining there until November 10. Once ashore their chief concern was for the canoes, but even so one sunk and three others filled with water as they lay pinned down on the open beach between masses of driftwood shifting in high tidewater and steep, densely vegetated hills. Clark wrote that the flood tide came in accompanied with emence waves and heavy winds, floated the trees and Drift which was on the point on which we camped and tossed them about in Such a manner as to endanger the Canoes very much, with every exertion and the strictest attention by every individual of the party was scarcely sufficient to Save our Canoes from being crushed by those monterous trees maney of them nearly 200 feet long and from 4 to 7 feet through.

One might expect the expedition’s enthusiasm for reaching the Pacific Ocean to be rapidly waning, but Clark goes on to say that the party “are cheerful and anxious to See further into the Ocian.” They hadn’t come over 4,000 miles to stop short now.

When the weather improved somewhat the next day, November 10, the expedition managed to inch toward the ocean along the shore for about nine miles until they were stopped short of present Point Ellice, which they graphically named Point Distress. Here they were again pinned down on another totally inhospitable piece of rugged shore. Their sole
tactical objective became to reach a decent campsite, and that was only possible by canoe. Their vessels and skills, however, were not up to the task of taking on the violent waters of the estuary in the prevailing weather, but the local Indians soon showed them how it could be done.

At noon on the 11th, "5 Indians came down in a canoe; the wind very high from the S.W. with most tremendous waves bracing with great violence against the Shores, rain falling in torrents...our canoes...at the mercy of the waves." The Cathlamets were merely selling fish, not performing an act of bravado. Clark had only praise for them, "...certainly the best Canoe navigators I ever saw."

Breakout from their terrible location became imperative. The next day three men attempted to round Point Ellice in the cutwater Indian canoe, which Clark described as being very similar to the canoe that had brought the five traders from across the estuary to their camp the day before. The attempt failed. Later that day they had to load and sink the canoes with rocks to "prevent their dashing to
The following day, November 13, Privates John Colter, Alexander Willard, and George Shannon were dispatched in the Indian canoe; they successfully rounded the point and located a good camping site a short distance downstream at what came to be called Station Camp, near present-day McGowan.

Now it was the dugouts' turn. One of the dugouts was "much broken by the waves dashing it against the rocks" on November 14 but was successfully repaired. On the same day Lewis, hunter George Drouillard, and Privates Joseph Field, Reubin Field, and Robert Frazer set out in another dugout to round Point Ellice with five additional men who would return with the dugout while Lewis and his party struck out by land to determine if "any white men were below within our reach." Lewis hoped—in vain, as it turned out—that they might find sea traders who could aid their cause. When they reached the Pacific they would reconnoiter the north side of the Columbia and the coast above it.

The dugout returned safely albeit half full of water. The next day, November 15, Clark attempted to pass Point Ellice in an unloaded dugout but was driven back by the violent waves. Undaunted, at mid afternoon the "wind lulled" and Clark had the dugouts "loaded in great haste and Set out, from this dismal nitich...proceeded on passed the blustering waves." The corps encamped near Pillar Rock once again, crossed without incident where the river narrowed, and then descended the island-cluttered south shore to set up a base camp on Tongue Point (named Point William by Clark) on the 27th. During their landing, one of the pine dugouts "was split to [two] feet," the last damage the canoes incurred on the Columbia prior to winter encampment.

On November 29 "Lewis and 5 men Set out in our Small Indian canoe" to hunt elk and locate a winter camp, "the swells and waves being too high for us to proceed down in our large Canoes, in Safety." Elk were found to be abundant, and an appropriate camp site was found on the present-day Lewis and Clark River. By the end of 1805 Fort Clatsop was completed and the nearly three-month wait began, after which the weather would permit their return upriver. Now it was time for survival, trading, re-outfitting, journal writing, natural history observations, map making, strategic planning, and waiting in what seemed like eternal rain.

The canoes played an absolutely essential role in hunting and putting food on the table. During their time at Fort Clatsop several major changes occurred in the fleet. Sergeant Patrick Gass estimated that 131 elk were taken during the corps' residence at Fort Clatsop, and probably most of the butchered animals, by far their main food and leather source, were retrieved and transported to the fort by water. Canoes were also used to move men partway to the salt-making camp on the Pacific Ocean and to travel upriver to trade for sturgeon, anchovies and wapato. The constantly wet, dense coastal rainforest made travel by land difficult at best, and whenever possible the men traveled by canoe.

Not all went well with the expedition's canoes at Fort Clatsop, despite the apparent ease with which the Indians handled and maintained their large number of fine canoes in the face of powerful Pacific storms and tides. On January 11 the "Indian Canoe" was taken out by the tide and given up as lost on January 12. Lewis "lamented" the loss of this most valuable asset. However, it was recovered on February 5 with a whoop and celebratory gunfire from hunter Reubin Field. Another canoe, "one of the large perogues," was temporarily lost for three hours when the tide broke the cord and carried it away. Lewis wrote that "had we lost this perogue also we should have obliged to make three small ones, which...would be a serious undertaking." Here and on November 29 Lewis reintroduces the term "perogue," applying it to watercraft very unlike those they had used on the Missouri River. The January 14 entry by Lewis also explicitly establishes that they had a total of four "perogues," confirming that none of the large pine..."
dugouts had been lost or damaged beyond repair prior to their arrival at Fort Clatsop.

The meaning of the word “perogue” (actually pirogue—Lewis's spelling is retained here) has been much debated. Clearly, the meaning varied among expedition members and changed with time. On the Columbia only Lewis used the term. Clark referred to all vessels as canoes, even when copying Lewis’s entries at Fort Clatsop in which Lewis used “perogue.” Although Lewis sometimes collectively referred to all vessels as canoes, at other times he referred to the large pine dugouts as perogues and all Indian watercraft as canoes. The other journal writers differentiated as to size by using the adjectives “large” and “small” (or “light”) for the canoes. Thus, almost all references on the Columbia River to either a large canoe or perogue refer to the dugouts constructed on the Clearwater River.

Following a detailed February 1 description of the four types of Indian canoes used on the Columbia River, Lewis stated that “they [Indians] prize their canoes very highly; we have been anxious to obtain some of them, for our journey up the river but have not been able to obtain one as yet from the natives in this neighborhood.” Acquiring “some” Indian canoes developed into part of the overall return travel strategy as Lewis expressed it on April 2 at present-day Washougal:

...to exchange our perogues for canoes with the natives on our way to the great falls of the Columbia or purchase such canoes from them for Elk skins and Merchandize as would answer our purposes. These canoes we intend exchanging with the natives of the plains [Columbia Plateau tribes] for horses...as will enable us to travel altogether by land.

Canoes had become more than just a means of travel—they were also thought of as a way to facilitate the transition to land travel to reach the Nez Perce, who were looking after the expedition’s horse herd, in time to cross the Rocky Mountains by early June and reach St. Louis in 1806.

Canoe problems continued at Fort Clatsop when two perogues were damaged by the tide on March 3. A more serious problem arose on March 11 when a perogue sank and was lost in the Netul River (now called the Lewis and Clark River). Searches were made for the perogue on March 11, 12, and 13, but it was given up as lost and never recovered. Also on March 11 Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor briefly lost their cutwater Indian canoe when it drifted away while he was trading upriver with the “Cathlahmahs” (Cathlamets). He borrowed a canoe from the Indians to return to Fort Clatsop; on his return he found the errant canoe and secured it for later retrieval. George Drouillard, one of the ablest men of the party, recovered it on March 17.

The possible loss of two canoes on March 11 as well as the approach of April 1, the proposed departure date, may have precipitated the active pursuit of additional Indian canoes. On March 13 Drouillard was sent to “the Clatsop village to purchase a couple of their canoes if possible.” The Clatsops,

The Columbia River below Celilo Falls where a railroad bridge pier now rests on the small island in the center of the channel. The 1805 baggage portage ended at the far right, near the base of the hill; the canoe portage is upstream, not visible in the photo.
however, proved to be tough traders. Drouillard returned the next day with the Clatsops who brought "an indifferent canoe," which they refused to trade for Lewis's "laced uniform coat"—the expedition's best trade item (besides guns). A second Clatsop canoe was brought for trade on March 15, but once again no deal could be struck, even for the artillerist's coat. Private Joseph Whitehouse wrote that Drouillard was dispatched on the same day to the Cathlamet village to purchase a canoe.

On Monday, March 17, Drouillard returned not only with the Celilo Falls cutwater Indian canoe that Pryor had stashed, but also with a "Cathlahmah" canoe acquired in trade for Lewis's uniform coat and half a carrot (a spindle-shaped bundle of rolled and twisted tobacco). Now they had sold off one of their most valuable items; Lewis realized that for the Indians "a canoe...is an article of the greatest value except a wife...we yet want another canoe..." Clark continued, "As the Clatsops will not sell us one, a proposition has been made by one of our interpreters and several of the party to take one in lieu of 6 elk which they stole from us this winter."

The meat of six elk shot by Drouillard had been taken on February 6 by Clatsops who then brought back three dogs as "renumeration" on February 12; but the dogs ran off. On February 22 Drouillard went to the Clatsop village "to get the dogs which the Clatsops have agreed to give us in payment for the Elk they stole..." and returned on February 24 with two dogs. This was not quite the end of it, for on March 18 Whitehouse writes, "Our officers sent 4 men...in order to get a small Canoe which belonged to the Clatsop Indians. They returned in the Evening with the Canoe." This canoe was the one used by Reubin and Joseph Field and Drouillard when the expedition ascended the Columbia River. Indeed, it may be that Drouillard was the "interpt" who suggested, according to Clark, that they steal the canoe. In any event, they had already received two dogs for the elk, and on March 24, when confronted by the canoe's "Cathlahmah" owner on the Columbia River, they paid him an elk skin for it. In their haste to return upriver they were in no mood to argue the fine points of a questionable acquisition.

On March 22 Drouillard and the Fields brothers left Fort Clatsop in a small Indian canoe as an advance hunting party to a camp beyond Point William (Tongue Point). The homeward voyage had begun. The next day Sergeant Gass wrote, "We were employed...in dividing and packing up our loading; and distributing it among the canoes, which were five in number, three large and two small...at 1 o'clock, left fort Clatsop." Thus the canoe inventory on March 23 at the beginning of "our homeward bound journey" was three small Indian canoes and three large pine dugouts, or "perogues." From the Columbia River estuary to the Long Narrows of The Dalles the perogues served as freight and passenger vessels while the light, maneuverable Indian-made canoes carried parties of two to four for hunting, gathering pitch, and short reconnaissances. The exception to this pattern was when Clark and eight men explored six miles up the Multnomah (now Willamette) River in a single dugout.

Once on the Columbia River, Lewis and Clark were initially satisfied that they had enough canoes—they were offered one for sale on March 23 by a party of Chinooks, but the captains declined, "being already supplied..." However, on April 1 they had a change of heart and tried to purchase a canoe for six fathoms (36 feet) of white wampum beads, but the deal was quickly cancelled by the Indian seller. Maybe this was just too good a deal for Lewis to refuse, or perhaps it represented a change in strategy as expressed the following day at present-day Washougal (Provision Camp). Thinking ahead to when they would retrieve their horses from the Nez Perce, Lewis wrote of their plan to exchange dugouts for canoes and canoes for horses so that they could travel by land. "A large stock of horses" would be necessary to transport their baggage over the mountains and would also serve as a "certain resource for food." The hungry westward passage over the Bitterroots had not been forgotten.

It appears likely that the strategic plan to acquire horses at the earliest opportunity had already been decided upon at Fort Clatsop. (No horses were found by the expedition or later explorers below the White Salmon River, 170 miles upriver from the mouth of the Columbia.) The descent of the Columbia and Snake rivers by canoe in the fall of 1805 had been an expeditious, if risky, way to travel. But ascending the same waters in the spring freshet was an entirely different proposition. Clark would no doubt have been reminded
of the 80 or more rapids they had passed as he prepared his maps at Fort Clatsop.

April 9 found the expedition at the foot of the Lower Cascades, with Drouillard and the Field brothers on the north side of the river in the "smallest canoe" (the stolen one) and the rest of the party camped on the south side with the other five vessels. The next morning the dugouts were taken across the south channel to Brant (Bradford) Island, towed upstream a quarter mile past the lower rapids and paddled to the north shore. Sergeant Pryor and Private John Collins followed in the two Indian canoes after collecting "rosin" for "paying" the canoes. All the loaded canoes were then towed up to the end of the portage (a distance of about two miles) one at a time.

Drouillard's canoe went first. Once unloaded, according to Gass, it suffered a broken elk "chord" and was swept downstream below the Lower Cascades. There it was caught and returned to the portage by Indians who were rewarded with two knives. The corps lined the other canoes "to the lower end of the portage of the big Shoote and unloaded in the large eddy... and carried all the baggage on the top of the hill, and Camped." The "large eddy" is at the site of historic Fort Rains and the steamboat "Middle Landing" and about two miles above the November 1, 1805, camp. The beginning of this long portage was well downstream of the 1805 portage of 940 yards. The 1806 portage was variously estimated at 2,800 yards, one and a half or two and a half miles.

The whole next day, April 11, was spent taking the three Indian canoes and two of the perogues from the beginning of the portage to the island campsite of October 30 and 31, 1805, and the April 12, 1806, camp above the "big Shoote" (Upper Cascades). The river was in partial flood stage, "up to 20 feet higher" than when they had descended in the fall. This made the portage long and required them to line the perogues and two of the Indian canoes for the entire five mile distance. Drouillard's small Indian canoe was carried along the portage trail and the others were lined up with "great toil and danger" by 22 men, with additional help from the local Indians, for a distance of three miles.

Ordway described how the second dugout was brought up: "This large canoe filled twice with water at the worst pitch but with some difficulty and hard fatigue got them safe up towards evening by the assistance of a number of Indians at the worst pitch & C. and halled the large canoe up by force although she was full of water." The men were too "much fatioqued" to bring up the third perogue; nonetheless Drouillard and the Field brothers were sent ahead to "Crusatte's river" (now called Wind River) to hunt and await the rest of the party. It had been a tough day.

In the rain the next morning Lewis and "every man that could be of any service" attempted to take the third perogue above the Cascades from the large eddy:

In hauling the perogue around this point the bow unfortunately took the current at too great a distance from the rock, she turned her side to the stream and the utmost exertions of all the
Edward Curtis photographed this Indian canoe a few miles above the Cascades of the Columbia (c. 1910) where Lewis traded for two canoes to replace the loss of a Clearwater perogue in April 1806.

No attempt was made to recover the craft. Lewis looked ahead and figured that the loss would "compel us to purchase one or more canoes of the Indians at an extravagant price." Putting the loss of a second Clearwater dugout behind them, they set out to carry the baggage over the portage. About 22 men ("all hands") each carried four loads of baggage, which may have totaled between 3,000 and 4,000 pounds. They distributed the four available canoes (Drouillard was upriver hunting) on April 13 and set out, but they quickly realized that the heavy loads rendered the "vessels extremely inconvenient to manage and in short rather unsafe...." As he had done so often in the past, Lewis calmly understated a precarious situation.

Lewis set about resolving the canoe shortage by crossing the river to an Indian village in the vicinity of present-day Cascade Locks. He traded two robes and four elk skins (Ordway says two pieces of blue cloth and two elk skins) for two canoes. In addition, he acquired four paddles and three dogs for some deerskins. The price was much lower than the Chinooks and Clatsops had demanded at the mouth of the Columbia. Now fully outfitted with five Indian canoes and two perogues, the corps headed upriver with Ordway in charge of the two new canoes (it was his perogue that had been lost).

Arriving at Rock Fort on April 15, Lewis and Clark began to fulfill their overall travel strategy to acquire horses so they could travel by land. At eight o'clock the next morning Clark crossed the river to the area known as Rockport and commenced trade negotiations for horses. However, the Indians were not to be rushed into any trades for horses. After his unsuccessful bartering attempt at Rockport, Clark moved up to the head of the Long Narrows—the "Great Mart" and the main Wishram-Wasco village. On November 17 Clark set out his "merchindize" on a rock and was open for business. The dealing was tough; the prices were high. However, by the end of the day the party had acquired four horses, and Clark had notified Lewis back at Rock Fort of the local Indians' great reluctance to trade for horses. Sending word to Clark to double the price offered for horses, Lewis reckoned they would need 12 horses to carry all the baggage, and he set his men to making 12 pack saddles. Lewis was still confident that they could trade Indian canoes for horses once they reached the "Mussel shell rapid where horses are more abundant and cheaper."

On April 18 Lewis set out up the river to the Threemile Rapids (as named by latter-day steamboaters and located below The Dalles Dam) where they unloaded the canoes and dugouts, made a portage of 70 paces, lined the vessels up the rapids, reloaded (one "canoe" was split and its baggage carried, according to Gass), and proceeded on to the Big Eddy (behind The Dalles Dam near present-day Spearfish Lake) to camp. The Long Narrows was in flood, and Lewis judged conditions too "formidable" to pass either "up or down them in any vessel."

The next day they planned to portage the entire two-mile length of the Long Narrows, but they could not take the two "perogues" any farther—presumably because they were too heavy to carry and the water too wild to line them. So the dugouts became firewood, a commodity in short supply now that they had reentered the Great Columbia Plain. At this point the expedition was totally dependent on Indian canoes and horses for hauling their baggage and any personnel unfit to walk.
On April 19, with the aid of the four horses Clark had purchased, the baggage was transported past the still intact pictograph, "She Who Watches" (which they didn't notice), to the head of the Long Narrows. The five Indian canoes were taken out of the water, partially dried to lighten them, and carried to the Wishram village near present-day Horse-thief Lake State Park (not to be confused with the railroad town of Wishram). They began the portage at three in the afternoon. It was no small matter to carry the five canoes. As Clark wrote, "All hands brought over the Canoes at 2 lodges which was accomplished by 5 P.M." This was the only time that all five of the Indian canoes were actually carried. During this day and the one following, the increasingly serious game of trading underwent a major change.

Lewis and Clark managed to acquire five additional horses on April 19, but at a high cost. They were forced to trade three kettles which left them only an absolute minimum number to cook with for the remainder of the voyage. Still short of horses, Clark led an advance party upriver from the head of the Long Narrows to the site of a Tenino village just below the Great Falls of the Columbia (Celilo Falls) to acquire more horses. By this time Lewis was becoming frustrated at the difficulty of the trading and severely "reprimanded" Alexander Willard when he lost one of the horses.

Lewis's patience wore even thinner the next day when it was discovered that the Indians had "pilfered six tomahawks and a knife" and he found that further attempts to trade for horses were futile. He had acquired only two "indifferent horses for which I gave an extravagant price." The canoes he had so counted on exchanging for horses proved to be nearly worthless. He decided to take the ten horses they had acquired and two canoes loaded with the baggage that the horses couldn't carry and proceed upstream to bargain with perhaps more cooperative Indians. As for the other three fine Indian Canoes: "I barged my elkskins old irons [perhaps his branding iron, etc.] and two canoes for beads." Beads! The third canoe "for which they would give us but little I had cut up for fuel." The next morning he ordered "all the spare poles, paddles and the balance of our canoe put on the fire as the morning was cold and also that not a particle should be left for the benefit of the Indians."

While Lewis was experiencing limited horse-trading success and near unlimited frustration with the Wishrams, Clark fared even worse with the Teninos, albeit under more civil circumstances. On the 20th he displayed all his wares, which included "a blue coat, Callico shirt, a handerchief, 5 parcels of paint a Knife, a wampum moon, 4 bracelets of yellow beads...my large blue blanket, my Coat Sword & Plume." He went on: "I used every artifice decent & even false Statements to entice those pore devils to Sell me horses." But that day he got none.

The next morning he admitted defeat and just waited for the arrival of Lewis and the remainder of the party. At the same time, after burning the last particle of the canoe, Lewis departed the Wishram village to join Clark below the Great Falls. The two remaining canoes were "loaded heavily" and Sergeant Gass and three men took them upriver from the head of the Long Narrows. With "some difficulty" they passed the Short Narrows and arrived at the Great Falls after a five-hour upstream struggle of six miles. Lewis and his men joined them, and the full party of the expedition, now reunited, portaged around the Great Falls, carrying the baggage and the two canoes. The expedition camped above the falls on the north shore after sending the two canoes on ahead to the vicinity of present-day Deschutes River—Patrick Gass and Reuben Field in one, John Colter and John Potts in the other. That two men could navigate each loaded canoe upstream indicates how light and manageable these Indian canoes were.

On April 22, still deficient in horses, the land party continued walking along the river's edge, making sure they came in contact with all the Indians possible in order to trade for horses, dogs, Shappelell (cous— a native tuberous root), and wood. The land and water parties were not united again until April 23 at the camp near present-day Rock Creek, the site of a large Tenino village. Here they had a pleasant evening, the first in a long time, with smoking, violin playing, and dancing. To add to the occasion, "the natives promised to barter their horses with us in the morning we...hope that we shall be enabled to proceed by land from hence with the whole of our party and baggage."

They arose early on April 24 in anticipation of a successful day of trading and the hope of being able to proceed unhindered to the Nez Perce villages and the mountain trail back to the United States. Having purchased three horses and hired three more (for a total of 22), they were able to cease their laborious canoe travel up the Columbia River. Lewis wrote, "The natives had tantalized us with an exchange of horses for our canoes... but when they found we had made our arrangements to travel by land they would give us nothing for them.... Drewyer struck one of the canoes and split off a small piece with his tomahawk... they offered us several strands of beads for which were accepted." The Teninos had bargained in good faith, knowing that once the expedition was committed to traveling by land their canoes had little or no value. In response to the residual frustration of the failure of the grand strategic trading plan, the hard bargaining positions of the Indians downstream, and the hardships endured by the tight-knit party, Lewis demanded and got at least a small victory. They were loaded up by two o'clock in the afternoon and with "6 fathoms of white beads" in their packs they "proceeded up the river between the hills and its North shore," continuing the homeward journey by land across the barren Columbia plain.

Robert and Barbara Danielson are natives of Washington and currently reside in Calgary, Alberta. They are both retired field biologists and keen students of western history, especially of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

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From the earliest immigration of Japanese to the Pacific Northwest in the late 19th century, Tacoma became home to many of these immigrants. In fact, the first Japanese consulate in the region was established there in 1892. The new residents established businesses, but many found employment in logging and sawmills. In 1924 the Tacoma Japanese Telephone & Address Directory was issued. Almost entirely in Japanese, it provided names and addresses of Japanese residents in Tacoma and those working in the various lumber camps throughout southwest Washington. Regarding the latter, it provides information not easily found elsewhere. Workers in the camps at National, Doty, and Eatonville are listed, to name only a few. This wonderful, and possibly unique, resource was recently added to the Society's Special Collections.
The Life and Poetry of a Japanese Pioneer Woman in Washington

By Gail M. Nomura

In the imagination of most of us, the pioneer woman is represented by a sunbonneted Caucasian traveling westward on the American Plains. Few are aware of the pioneer women who crossed the Pacific Ocean east to America from Japan. Among these Japanese pioneer women were some whose destiny lay in the Pacific Northwest.

In Washington, pioneer women from Japan—the Issei or first (immigrant) generation, and their Nisei, second-generation, American-born daughters—made up the largest group of nonwhite ethnic women in the state for most of the first half of the 20th century. These women contributed their labor in agriculture and small businesses to help develop the state's economy. Moreover, they were essential to the establishment of a viable Japanese American community in Washington. Yet, little is known of the history of these women. What follows is the story of one Japanese pioneer woman, Teiko Tomita. An examination of her life offers insight into the historical experience of other Japanese pioneer women in Washington.
Beyond an oral history obtained through interviews, Tomita's experience is illumined by the rich legacy of tanka poems she wrote since she was a high school girl in Japan. The tanka written by Tomita served as a form of journal for her, a way of expressing her innermost thoughts as she became part of America. Indeed, Tsugiki, the title Tomita gave her section of a poetry anthology—meaning a grafting or a grafted tree—reflects her vision of a Japanese American grafted community rooting itself in Washington through the pioneering experiences of women like herself.

The tanka provided a natural and common vehicle of expression for Japanese immigrants like Tomita. Coming from a country that had instituted compulsory education in the late 19th century, Issei were often highly literate. But one did not have to be highly educated or uniquely gifted to compose tanka. Although the haiku—the Japanese short poem of seventeen syllables arranged in three lines of five, seven, and five syllables—is better known in the United States, the tanka is the more traditional poetic form. The tanka is a Japanese short poem consisting of thirty-one syllables arranged in five lines of five, seven, five, seven, and seven syllables, successively.

Japanese have from ancient times used the tanka to express their deepest emotions. Lyrical verse in the earliest collections of Japanese poetry used the brevity of the tanka form to speak of life, love, and the grief of separation. Commoners as well as aristocrats wrote tanka, which for centuries remained the most popular means of poetic expression for men and women of all classes. Concentration and compression are the essence of the tanka, and in its brief thirty-one syllables Japanese were able to convey what might otherwise have required many pages or even volumes.

Japanese immigrants like Tomita brought this poetic form with them to America and recorded their new lives through it. Issei-composed tanka in America reflected the imagery, feelings, and sensibilities of an immigrant generation taking root in a new land. Teiko Tomita used a traditional Japanese image—the cherry tree—in many of her tsugiki tanka to speak metaphorically of the grafting process of the Japanese immigrants to the rootstock of America. Using the traditional poetic form and traditional metaphors, Tomita created new meanings expressing the Issei immigrant experience. In writing of this immigrant experience, so different from life in Japan, Issei poets also created new metaphors and images and added new vocabulary. Tomita's early tanka in eastern Washington mention sagebrush and deserts unknown in Japan, and some of her tanka contain English words. The Issei-written tanka was itself adapted to the new land, the poet adapting its content and language while maintaining its ancient form.

In an interview, Tomita recounted that she was born December 1, 1896, in Osaka Prefecture, Japan, the second of nine children in the Matsui family. She graduated from a girls' high school, and while there learned to write tanka. Her teacher gave her the pen name "Yu-kari," which she used even in America. She went on to take a year-and-a-half-long course at a normal school, which earned her a certificate to teach at the elementary school level. She taught until her marriage in 1920.

Most women in Japan at that time married before they were 25, and as Tomita approached her mid 20s she was urged to marry. Family-arranged marriages were the norm in Japan, rather than love marriages, since marriages were more of a contract between families than between individuals. Through a go-between, she was matched with her husband, Masakazu Tomita, who was farming near Wapato, Washington. She was shown his picture and told of his background and character. She met with his family in Japan, in the neighboring prefecture, and was impressed by them. Tomita and her husband-to-be exchanged letters for two years before their marriage, as a get-acquainted period. In late 1920, Masakazu Tomita returned to Japan for the marriage ceremony. The newlyweds then traveled in Japan for a couple of months before going to
Wapato, in February 1921, to farm on the Yakama Indian Reservation.

Tomita's husband had promised her grandparents, who headed the extended family, that they would return in three years; and the grandparents consented, expecting her to work in America for three to five years at most. No one knew that the three-year stay would turn into more than six decades, though Tomita says that when she got to Washington and saw the poor conditions there, she knew they would not be able to return to Japan in so short a time. Indeed, she would never again see her parents.

Tomita's poems indicate the feelings of Issei women toward the families and life they left behind in Japan. Although starting a new life in America, the women still had solid roots in their homeland. Family ties were strong. In one poem Tomita recalled the parting words of her parents:

"Live happily,"
Said my parents
Holding my hands,
Their touch
Even now in my hands

Tomita always remembered her parents' words of hope for her happiness in the new land. The warmth of her parents' love as expressed in their parting words and touch helped sustain her through the years of separation. Tomita herself passed this hope of happiness on to her own children in America.

Separation from her family gave Tomita new insights into the depths of family ties. This is apparent in a poem about her father that grew out of an incident that Tomita liked to recount over and over again. Marriage meant for her that her husband and children became the focus of her life and thoughts, and that work left little time to feel any longing to return home. She claimed that she had no thoughts of returning to Japan, no sadness over her life in America. But her husband once saw her in the fields, shedding tears. He thought that she had become homesick after receiving a letter from her father. At dinner that night, he sympathized with her, saying he understood that she longed for her home, far away from the harsh land of Yakima. To his surprise, Tomita replied that she had no thoughts of returning to Japan. Rather, she had cried upon reading the letter because it revealed a gentle, caring father she had not understood:

The father I thought so strict
Where did he conceal
Such tender feelings
Revealed in those gentle letters
Many days I cried

"Those gentle letters" inquired after her well-being and happiness in the new land. Tomita came to have a fuller picture of her father than the severe figure of her childhood. She came to understand the love of father for child. The tears were tears of understanding. The strength of ties with family and homeland over the thousands of miles separating them is apparent in another tanka by Tomita, encapsulating her emotions upon receiving a package from her family:

When I think
It is from Japan
Even wrapping paper
Seems so close to me
It's hard to throw it away

Issei women had settled in the Yakima valley since the 1890s, but even in 1921, when Tomita came to Wapato, the valley was still a raw frontier. Instead of moving from Japan to a richer life, Tomita embarked on a primitive pioneer life. In Kazuo Ito's book *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America*, Tomita wrote that her Wapato house
"was only a little better than a shack, being a two-room cabin hastily put together." Although everyone she knew in Japan had electricity, in Wapato "there was no electric light, so I had to polish oil lamps every morning. We had one small stove in there which took wood or coal, and from time to time I picked up roots of sagebrush and used it as fuel, too." There was no running water. Water had to be drawn from the well outside.

The weather, too, was not gentle. Tomita recalled that in deepest winter it was so cold in the house "you could hear the eggs in the cupboard in the kitchen cracking," and "the place where the sheet was turned down under our chins at night got covered with frost from our breath." When summer came roaring in, "it was scorching hot with a temperature of more than 100 degrees," and at night the Tomitas would have to "spread a blanket under the peach tree" to sleep on.

Tomita helped her husband with the farming on the Yakama Indian Reservation, where he had leased land to grow hay. But in 1921, the year she arrived, and again in 1923, Washington passed stricter anti-alien land laws, which anti-Japanese agitators pressured the Department of Interior to apply to the Yakama Indian Reservation. The Yakama Indian Agency was forced to stop issuing leases to Japanese Issei, since the new anti-alien land laws prohibited not only the ownership of land but the renting, sharecropping, and issuance of leases to those who had not in good faith registered their intent to become citizens. Inasmuch as the Japanese were denied naturalization rights by United States law strictly on a racial basis, they could not in good faith register their intent to become citizens. They were therefore ineligible to lease land either in Washington or on the reservation.

The Tomitas lost the lease rights to their farm on the reservation. Luckily, Tomita's husband was an accomplished agriculturist, and a white nursery owner quickly hired him as foreman for a nursery in Satus. Tomita served as cook for the laborers working under her husband. She recalled having to cook in shifts in her small house, first serving the work crew, then her own family. It was in Satus that her first child was born.

For Tomita, Satus was an even more remote, isolated area of Washington than Wapato had been. She had to walk five miles to see another Japanese face. Isolated as she was, she took solace in writing tanka for herself, recording her life and thoughts. Issei pioneer women often lived in very isolated regions of Washington. Tomita conveyed in a poem the loneliness and monotony of this life, in which the only way to distinguish one day from another might be the sun's rising and setting:

*Neighbors are five miles far away*
*Many days without seeing anyone*
*Today, too, without seeing anyone*
*The sun sets*

This isolated life was common to most pioneer women of the West, as was exposure to the harshness of nature. The houses built by the pioneers with their own hands were not proof against the elements. Tomita's poems speak eloquently of this ceaseless intrusion of nature:

*Yakima Valley*
*The spring storm raging*
*Even in the house*
*A cloud of sand*
*Sifts in*
The Yakima valley was a desert that with water and sweat could be made to bloom. They worked the land, transforming desert and sagebrush into fertile fields of alfalfa, onions, tomatoes, beans, and melons. But hard work did not ensure success. In another poem, Tomita expressed her realistic assessment of the immigrants’ struggle to cultivate the land:

Sagebrush desert to fertile plain
A transformation, I hear,
But when the windy season comes
There’s no transforming the sandstorm

The persistent sand was a constant reminder of the desert that could reclaim the newly fertile land at any moment, and of the tenuous hold on success that the Japanese as aliens had on the leased land. At any moment the whirling sandstorm could engulf them and return the fertile plain to sagebrush desert. Tomita’s poems evoke not only the grit of desert sand in the newly developed Yakima valley but also the severe desert heat:

As we busily pick beans
Even the breeze stirring
The weeds at our feet
Feels hot

Perseverance in the face of adversity characterized the early Issei women. This spirit was taught to the children who worked in the fields with their parents. Tomita wrote:

“Soon the heat will be gone”
While picking beans
I encourage my children
And myself

In encouraging her children to persevere in adversity, Tomita strengthened herself to persevere for her children. Tomita’s poems offer a key to her motivations for enduring and continuing to
tame and cultivate the burning frontier. Her use of the symbolism of grafted cherry trees, particularly, makes clear the way she viewed her place in this new land:

Carefully grafting
Young cherry trees
I believe in the certainty
They will bud
In the coming spring

The cherry blossom is a Japanese symbol not only of spring but of Japan and the Japanese people themselves. In the grafting of cherry trees, Tomita saw the grafting of the Japanese immigrant onto the root stock of America, where the graft would continue to grow and become a permanent part. The importance of this symbolism is again underscored in her choice of the title, “Tsugiki” (a graft or grafted tree) for her section of the Issei poetry anthology, Renia no yuki. She viewed not only her past work in the nursery as grafting but perhaps also her own self. In the poem above she expressed her belief in a coming spring when the grafted tree would bud and grow, just as the hopes and dreams of the immigrant Japanese would be fulfilled. The centrality of this hope of a coming spring is expressed in another poem:

Whirls of storming winter
I tolerate
Believing in spring
To come again

By believing in the certainty that the grafted tree would bloom in its new environment, she was able to endure the winter of travails. Perhaps, though, the blossoms would be the next generation, not Tomita’s own. Meanwhile the grafting process was an arduous one, as another poem indicates:

Grafting cherry saplings
Along long furrows
The August sun
Burns on our backs
The small economic gains made by the Tomitas were erased by the outbreak of war between the motherland and the adopted land in December 1941. Since they were denied naturalization rights, all Japanese immigrants were aliens—now enemy aliens. Furthermore, even their American-born children were considered suspect. The old anti-Japanese agitation was rekindled and this time succeeded in perpetrating one of the most massive violations of civil rights in American legal history. With no formal charges of any wrongdoing, more than 110,000 Issei and their United States-citizen children were removed from their homes on the West Coast to incarceration in concentration camps. They were not allowed to return to their homes until 1945. Although most Seattle Japanese were interned in Minidoka in Idaho, those in the outlying areas of Seattle, like the Tomitas, were interned in Tule Lake, California, in 1942. In late 1943 they were moved to Heart Mountain in Wyoming where, ironically, Tomita was reunited with Japanese from the Yakima valley, her first home in America.

Immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor rumors circulated in the Japanese community that military men were searching all Japanese homes for any incriminating evidence that would link them with Japan. Later, there was talk about something fearsome called “camp.” Under this pressure, Tomita gathered up her precious poetry manuscripts, took them to the fields and burned them, fearing that the private thoughts recorded in her tanka might be twisted into something harmful to her family. This remains one of the most painful memories of the war for her. Much of the poetic record of her life was wiped out.

Despite the destruction of the manuscripts, not all the poems were lost. Many of the burned tanka remained etched in Tomita’s mind, to be recalled in later years. Easily committed to memory, poetry has often been the device of oral tradition’s preservation of preliterate history, passed on from one generation to the next.

When war broke out between Japan and the United States in December 1941, it looked as though spring would not come, even for the next generation. The war years were difficult ones for the Issei women. After years of struggling, the little they had gained was wrenched from them overnight. Forced by the government to leave the land they had pioneered, they were imprisoned in even more isolated and desolate regions of America than they could have imagined. The incarceration camps were located in remote desert areas. Yet even here, surrounded by barbed wire, the creative spirit of the Issei inmates persisted. The creative arts in the camps found expression in forms ranging from polished sagebrush roots to accomplished poetry. Many Issei learned to write Japanese poetry for the first time in camp and continued even after they had left.

At Heart Mountain, Tomita and other Issei attended lectures and classes...
in poetry to while away the seemingly endless years of incarceration. Tomita began to keep a journal of her class lectures as well as of her poems—a fresh book to replace the volumes she had burned. Her book of poems shows the changes she made from one draft to another, to final form. In poetry many Issei found the solace Tomita noted in a poem written in 1943 at the Tule Lake incarceration camp:

*Within the iron stockade*
Always composing poems
*From the sorrows of war*
A little consolation

As she had done in the Yakima desert, Tomita turned to poetry to comfort herself. But, as always, her poems also reflected hope. In the midst of the sorrow and uncertainty of imprisonment, in January 1943 she could still write:

*In the war concentration camp*
The New Year's Day's sun rises
Look up at the light.
Which breaks up the darkness of night

New Year's Day meant the hope of a new start, the hope that the darkness of the past year might be pierced by the light of freedom. But freedom did not come quickly. The war continued. Tomita's 1944 poems reflect the inner turmoil of Issei caught by a war between their country of birth and the adopted country that had not accepted them:

I read the war news
Today again
My heart clouds
And my thoughts are frozen

When the war finally ended in 1945, the Tomitas were living in Minnesota, having secured a work release earlier in the year. The war that had torn them from their homes and made prisoners of them had ended, but the war's end was bittersweet news:

*Among whites jubilantly shouting*
"The war is over"
My husband and I
Cried throughout the night

Japan was defeated, horrifying atomic bombs had been dropped, and Japanese Americans had at last been released. Joy and relief at the end of the grief and hardships of the war combined with the sadness of war's destruction and the uncertain future. Tomita worried over the fate of her family in Japan and their mutual concern over her fate in America:

*For the first time in five years*
Letters are permitted to the home country
Today I only write
"We're safe"

The link with family in the home country was reestablished. The silence brought by war ended with the simple message, "We're safe."

They were safe. They had survived another hardship, but once again they had to start from scratch. She wrote:

Returning home from the iron stockade
Five years ago
Reconstructing our lives
Is no small thing even now

Her poem reflects the cold reality for Japanese Americans that even after returning from the concentration camps they still faced a long struggle to rebuild their lives. Although it was indeed "no small thing," Tomita did rebuild her life. Because of the incarceration, the Tomitas had not only lost their nursery business but had no capital to invest in another venture. Tomita took the only wage job available to her: she became a garment worker in Seattle. This job opened new worlds for her.

Sewing alongside other immigrant women in Seattle, Tomita gained closer contact and better understanding of women from other ethnic groups. The poems written while she was a seamstress reflect a growing awareness of the commonality of experience and emotions she shared with her coworkers. In one poem she wrote:

*A German woman and I*
Sewing together
Sharing the same feelings
Speaking of the war destruction
*In each of our home countries*

Although they came from two countries separated by thousands of miles and by different cultural traditions, here in the workplace the two women shared their wartime experiences and became one.

While her prewar poems dealt mainly with herself or her family, Tomita's poems were now enlivened with observations of other people. In contrast to the isolation of her former rural life, her urban workplace offered a microcosm of the multi-ethnic, multicultural American society of which she was a part. In a series of more narrative poems, Tomita observed some conflict between white and black workers, but in general her poems suggested a sisterhood among the women workers that cut across ethnic lines.

Tomita's poems bring to life the variety of women she worked with, among them a black woman who had such a fine voice that when she sang, it rose clear and strong above the roar of the sewing machines; and a Filipino woman, seemingly very cheerful and carefree, who learned a little Japanese to help her communicate with Tomita. Tomita savored and valued these experiences:

*For many years*
Mixed among workers of different races
I sew
I'm used to it
Such life is enjoyable
Tomita’s growing appreciation of interaction with other ethnic groups is further demonstrated in a series of poems about her Italian neighbors. The first in the series notes the presence in her neighborhood of many Italians. She admired their industry, which made her feel an affinity with them. In the next poem she again took up this theme:

In their hard work
Italians are like we Japanese
Daughters and wives, too
Work all day in the fields

It was in their shared history of the hard work of farming that Tomita found a commonality of experience with these European immigrants. And the feelings were mutual, it seems, for in the next poems we see that at least one of the Italian neighbors had become a friend. Beyond sharing hard work and vegetables with his Japanese neighbors, he shared the experience of separation from the homeland:

Mutually shared feelings
This Italian
Speaking fervently about
His homeland

In the postwar period we see Tomita’s poems reflecting not only a more urban, multi-ethnic awareness but also a more global viewpoint. Fully understanding the terrible costs of war, Tomita is well aware of the world events that may lead to a war for which her children would have to pay the highest price:

My son is still young
I daily pray
For eternal peace
In this violent world

In particular, she had become ardently opposed to the nuclear arms race, devoting a whole series of poems to this subject. News of the Bikini Island nuclear test victims moved her to write:

Reading of the condition
Of Bikini patients
Incurable disease
The power of science
Is rather a curse

She notes that Japan is a leader in the nuclear disarmament movement:

A country that experienced
The death ash
Japan’s accusing voice
Voice of desperation

In another poem in the series, Tomita observed that a ban on nuclear bombs has already been written with the blood of Japan, the only country to suffer an atomic bombing. But she notes, sadly:

Regardless of the earnest prayers
Of the suffering country
Nuclear bombs
Are steadily produced

After decades of hard work, Tomita was finally able to realize her dream of owning a home. Her joy in the fulfillment of the dream is recorded in a series of poems:

I enjoyed drawing pictures
Of my desired house
The long held dream
Became a reality

The dream became a reality just when they had virtually given up hope of achieving it in their generation:

The dream I passed
On to my children
How many years!
The house is finished

But this joy at a dream finally fulfilled in America was short-lived. Her Sunnydale home was directly north of the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Soon the roar of the jets shook her house:

The runways are to be expanded,
I hear,
The roaring sound
Is drawing closer to me

The airport expanded, she wrote, despite the complaints and puzzlement of the surrounding people. Its expansion changed the environment:

Farms and houses, too
Before I’m aware
I see their shadows no more
The runways are being built expansively

As houses and farms disappeared, the people disappeared. The Port of Seattle responded to complaints about noise and low-flying jets by removing the people who complained. It acquired by eminent domain the property of people like Tomita to form a buffer zone around the airport. In 1967 the Tomitas were once again forced to relocate. More fortunate than some, they were able to move in with their daughter’s family in Seattle.

The realization of time passing is very much a part of Tomita’s later writings. Reflecting on the decades of pioneering that had flown past, she wrote:

Long ago are the days
I helped my husband
Cultivate the raw land
And raised our children
We two have grown old

Another poem continues the theme of old age:

My husband
Reading with bifocals
So many decades of struggles
Engraved deeply
In the wrinkles on his face
Thoughts arose of the unfulfilled aspirations of youth. For Tomita there were the dashed hopes of continuing her studies. In a series of poems she recalled these hopes of scholarship, symbolized in a treasured box given to her as a graduation prize:

As a lifetime memory
Placed in a suitcase with love and care
For thirty years
A lacquer calligraphy box

She remembers the words that accompanied the prize—words admonishing her to continue to train her mind and soul. But since coming to America:

Too busy were
Thirty years of life
In a foreign country
Never used the brush and ink

There had never been time for her formal studies. She had written her tanka in isolation in the fields of Yakima. Even after moving to the Seattle area, though she had been able to join a tanka club, she had not been able to attend the monthly meetings because the nursery had required her constant care. Her life, she said in an interview, could be summed up in one word, isogashii (busy)—a life filled always with things she had to do. As for thoughts of the luxury of studies:

Never to return are the days
When I put my heart and soul
In my studies only
I grow old in a foreign country

Although she may have had to set aside her aspirations in the grafting process of settling in America, there was always the belief in the fulfillment of dreams for the next generation, when the grafted tree would bloom and bear fruit. The struggles would be well worth the pain for Tomita if her children could fulfill their own dreams and aspirations. Tomita revealed in the fact that her children had not been adversely affected by the family’s hard life:

My daughter has
A rainbow-like dream
Cheerful as she is
The poverty of me her mother
Haven’t stained her life

Memories of the poverty of much of her life in America, with repeated setbacks, led her to write:

When winter comes
I wonder what it was

That enabled me to endure
Heartrending sorrows

It had been for her children that she worked, and it was the hope of their spring that sustained her through the winter of struggles and sorrows. In her poems she celebrated the triumphs of her children as they went off to college, got married, and started new, exciting jobs. Her poems reveal a conviction on her part that her children would not suffer the trials and tribulations she had endured:

My son’s start in life
Like a clear morning
Without a single cloud
Limitless blue sky of hope

Her struggles did not adversely affect the lives of her children but rather seemed to have ensured their future. She could write hopefully in 1968:

The centennial of
The Japanese immigrants in America
Our next generation
With a great future before them

Fifteen years later Tomita could look back on more than six decades of life experiences in the United States and conclude:
The bitter ordeals I have suffered
One after another
As I remember
Now without sorrow
Filled with grace

Tomita's later poems reflect a continuation of her thanksgiving that her grandchildren, too, are enjoying the spring out of the travails of her winters. In a series of poems in the summer of 1983 she wrote of her trip to the East Coast to attend her granddaughter's graduation from Sarah Lawrence. With commencement comes a new flowering for the third-generation tsugiki, and a celebration uniting the generations. The ties that bind the generations together appeared strong as her grandchildren made efforts to communicate with their grandmother in Japanese:

From my granddaughter in New York
A letter in Japanese
As I read it
Tears of joy overflow

Aside from their literary merits, the poems presented here provide valuable information and insight into the life and times of Teiko Tomita. Each poem is a diary entry relating a significant event or thought. Often a series of poems gives a full account of a particular incident in her life. Even more than a diary, the poems reveal the inner thoughts and emotions of the author. Tanka critic Hideko Matsui, in an article in Cho-on, the Japanese poetry magazine to which the Seattle tanka club sent their selected poetry for publication, believes that although poems such as Tomita's have a simple, classical, moving quality about them, their importance is mainly that they relate the immigrants' history in the traditional form of the Japanese tanka. In fact, both the historical value and the literary merit of Issei poetry deserve a great deal of further discussion.

For Tomita and a great many other Issei, poetry was a means of recording their lives for posterity as well as an artistic release of their emotions. They wrote tanka as poetic expressions of their lives and thoughts. In writing their tanka they were conscious of their role in recording their history—a history they believed would not be included in general histories about American immigrants.

Despite great hardships, the Issei immigrants did indeed adapt to their new environment. For some, like Tomita, poetic expression helped make that adaptation more endurable. Their poetry, in turn, helps us grasp the history of that adaptation and survival. Tomita's life provides an outline generally representative of the Issei woman's harsh life in Washington. Like Tomita, most women who came were wives of settled immigrants. Many were "picture brides" whose marriages had been arranged by their families through the exchange of pictures with Japanese male immigrants living in Washington. After 1921, because the Japanese government did not issue passports to picture brides, most grooms, like Tomita's husband, traveled to Japan to marry and brought their wives back with them.

In 1924 Congress passed a new immigration and naturalization act that prohibited the immigration of "aliens ineligible to citizenship," a category the United States Supreme Court had created in its 1922 Ozawa decision and 1923 Thind decision, ruling that Mongolians as a racial group and people from India were not eligible for naturalization. Thus no new immigrants from Japan, male or female, arrived after 1924. Still, because the Japanese males had been able to send for wives from 1908 to 1924, there occurred a dramatic increase in the numbers of women of Japanese ethnicity in Washington. The Japanese women who came between 1910 and 1924 played a crucial role in the growth of a Japanese American community in Washington. The summoning of wives like Tomita reinforced the commitment to permanent residency in America more than economic stakes in farms and businesses. There was a settled family life with the coming of wives and an emergence of Japanese American family units with the dramatic increase in American-born children between 1900 and 1930. With the birth of the second generation, there was a transformation from immigrant society to permanent settlers, as Issei began to focus and identify their own future in terms of the future of their children in America. The arrival of women was an integral part of the process by which Japanese immigrant society sunk its roots into American soil. The arrival of women guaranteed that a community with a family life could be established in America. The Japanese community developed a family orientation around schools, churches, clubs, and associations. The women brought
both community and Japanese culture with them. Often highly educated, like Tomita, they preserved such values as love of learning and an appreciation of the arts.

Tomita's lifetime of work in the Yakima valley, Sunnydale, and Seattle underscores the fact that Japanese pioneer women were not only wives and mothers but also workers. Their labor was indispensable in the operation of farms, small businesses, and labor camps, as well as in family enterprise such as small shops and tiny farms. Japanese women played a vital economic role in the new land.

The majority of Japanese women initially lived in rural areas, helping their husbands till the soil as farmers. Japanese agriculturalists were especially prominent in Washington. In urban areas, women entered small businesses operated by their husbands, such as laundries, markets, restaurants, and boardinghouses, or they became domestic servants, seamstresses, and cannerly workers. Labor camps that provided workers for railroads, lumber camps, and mills were often run by Issei men. Many Issei women worked in these labor camps. As Tomita did in her Yakima years, the women cooked for the large group of workers employed by their husbands.

Japanese women performed tasks essential to the maintenance of the family by earning income, rearing children, preparing meals, shopping, and tending the sick. Because of their essential role in running the family and their valuable economic role, the women enjoyed greater power in decision-making for the family than did their counterparts in Japan. Moreover, in the pioneer setting the Issei women were free of the traditional control of the mother-in-law, another factor that greatly enlarged their influence in the family.

In the 1930s the power of Issei wives in the family increased as the men aged. Many Issei men in the 1930s were over 55. As the men aged, their wives—on average, 10 years younger—took on increased economic responsibilities and made more of the important decisions. Thus women increasingly became the focal point of the Japanese American family.

After the war the Issei pioneers, now nearing retirement age, had to begin their lives over again. Like Tomita, many Issei women whose assets and capital had been taken from them by the incarceration went to work in garment factories or into domestic service. Tomita's postwar urban life also reflects a general shift of Japanese Americans after the war to urban residences and occupations.

In the postwar years, hard work once more bore fruit—though not as great a harvest as might have been possible given more hospitable conditions. The children of the pioneers—the Nisei—married and had children of their own. A third generation was born. The Issei women looked back on their years of struggle and saw in their grandchildren the fulfillment of their young hopes when they first came to America. They believed the tsugiki to be strong and firmly rooted in its adopted land. The children and grandchildren, the second and third generation branches of the tsugiki, are blooming in the spring that has finally come. Tomita wrote in May 1983:

The seeds I planted
Sprout and grow up
Even in this very old body
Joy overflows

Through the struggles of Tomita and other Issei pioneer women, the history of Washington has been enriched.

The Great Flood
Next to the Columbia River, south of the Yakama Indian Reservation in Washington, sits a little park near the community of Roosevelt. On the grass rests an angled boulder half the size of a Volkswagen Beetle. A sign before this rock explains that it originated upriver but was transported downstream thousands of years ago by the Spokane Flood. This makes it an “erratic,” one of many displaced boulders scattered throughout the Columbia River Gorge and across the landscape stretching from Lake Pend Oreille in Idaho south to Eugene, Oregon.

An inspection of these erratics made one geologist particularly curious. What forces, he asked himself, were strong enough to carry rocks, some weighing 200 tons and the size of a master bedroom, hundreds of miles from their point of origin? This geologist was J. Harlen Bretz, a Seattle schoolteacher who left his job to study for a doctorate in geology at the University of Chicago. In the summer of 1922 he returned to the Pacific Northwest—to eastern Washington—to perform field research. For seven summers Bretz continued this work, picking at rocks and crystals that kept him curious about what forces wrenched this land into its convoluted shape. Bretz named the gnarled geology of eastern Washington the Channeled Scablands, describing it thus: “Like great scars marring the otherwise fair face of the plateau are these elongated tracts of bare, or nearly bare, black rock carved into mazes of buttes and canyons.” John Elliot Allen and Marjorie Burns recount his adventures in their book, Cataclysms on the Columbia:

Bretz’s earliest investigation was all by foot; he could not at first afford a car; but even later, when he acquired an early model, enclosed-body Dodge, much of the Scablands was nonetheless inaccessible to motor vehicles. Either way, by foot or car, Bretz and his party (typically composed of wife, son, daughter, collie dog, and a collection of students) were primarily limited to sighting across the broken and fragmented expanse of the Scablands.

Without the aid of satellite photographs, Bretz used his memory and field notes to piece together an overview of eastern Washington’s features. The more he looked at dry waterfalls and channeled topography, the more convinced he became that this region once hosted a natural catastrophe of epic proportions.

Several things led him to this conclusion. Bretz wondered why canyon mazes were braided throughout the Channeled Scablands. Erosion was too slow to have created their appearance. Rivers usually munch away at their beds and banks, cutting downward to form a single, deepened channel as their path. But the scablands looked too rough, gouged, and slipshod to be caused by simple erosion. The land appeared as though carved by some quick, strong, sloppy force.

With maps in hand, huffing over this bizarre landscape, Bretz also inspected potholes such as those at Quincy Basin near Grand Coulee. When a river rushes, it carries stones that swirl around eddies, eroding surrounding rock and eventually creating bowl-shaped depressions. Bretz was acquainted with such potholes. But their dimensions in eastern Washington—acres in size—were outrageous. Again, Bretz wondered what mighty force could have created them.

**An Epic Geologic Event that Shaped Landforms and Ideas**

*BY TOM MULLEN*

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**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Harlen Bretz coined the term “scablands” to describe the channeled gorges in eastern Washington that were carved by a massive flood.

**BELOW:** Erratics are boulders that did not originate where they are found. The Bretz floods slammed boulders, such as the one in the photograph, dozens of miles downstream from their point of origin.
Another eastern Washington landscape feature that perplexed Bretz was the profusion of huge dry waterfalls that looked as though they were lifted from a land of giants. Dry Falls in Grant County, north of Pasco, stands 400 feet high and some three and a half miles wide. Although the falls are now dry, Bretz thought the quantity of water that ran there must have been immense.

In addition to scoured channels, gargantuan potholes, and massive dry waterfalls, the erratic rocks transported down the Columbia River Gorge mystified Bretz. Respecting the value of field work and common sense, Bretz matched the land he viewed with knowledge gained from education, then formulated a theory about how this oddly shaped geography gained its features. He concluded that the force that ripped, shook, carved, and blasted this landscape thousands of miles in area must have been a flood.

Bretz knew that his theory had two problems. The first was one of perception. His notion was untimely. In the geological community, floods and catastrophes were out of vogue as significant agents of topographic change. The more biblically aligned theories of cataclysms having shaped earth’s features (including Noah’s flood) had been replaced by a more moderate precept of “gradualism,” in which erosion and long stretches of time were the principal devourers and builders of canyons and mountains. Gradualism implied that earth’s topography was molded at an infinitesimally slow rate over many millennia. Bretz knew that his flood theory was likely to be met with skepticism.

A second problem was physical. Where could the water for such a huge flood have originated? What prehistoric lake could have supplied enough liquid to crash down river carrying 10 times the volume of all the rivers on earth combined? Uncertain of the answer, Bretz considered glacial runoff from the Cordilleran ice sheet as a possible source.

In 1923 Bretz published two papers. In one of them he mentioned his belief that the scabland features were caused by what he called the “Spokane Flood.” As expected, his fellow geologists and former students attacked the theory. In 1927
colleagues invited Bretz to Washington, D.C., to speak about his flood, then took turns bashing the theory. In the face of overwhelming disdain, Bretz stood his ground. He suggested that his critics consider the big picture of how the scablands were formed and not just apply inadequate theories about how fragments of the land's features originated. As always, he grounded his answers in field experience.

After Bretz proposed his flood theory, a simple question loomed: where did the water come from? In 1910, more than a decade before Bretz proposed his theory, a geologist named Joseph Thomas Pardee described ancient Lake Missoula. This great glacial lake existed in the late Pleistocene epoch, before the last ice age began receding some 15,000 years ago. Pardee wrote to Bretz in 1925, suggesting that he consider waters from glacial Lake Missoula as the source of his flood. However, Bretz did not actively pursue this possibility.

In 1940 Pardee presented a paper at a meeting in Seattle, Washington, of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He unveiled evidence showing how ancient Lake Missoula could have been the flood source that carved the scablands into their intricate forms. Pardee's approach was low key, but the facts in his paper, "Ripple Marks in Glacial Lake Missoula," riveted the audience. He described wave marks in the land—features 15 meters high, spaced roughly 150 meters apart—carved by an ancient surge of water. In the decades following this presentation, Bretz's flood theory finally gained universal acceptance.

The most recent ice age, the Pleistocene, began 2 million years ago. During this era virtually all of Canada was repeatedly covered by glacial ice sheets—slow-moving rivers of ice—which also covered Alaska, Idaho, Montana, and northern Washington. Over time glaciers advanced and retreated—the most recent advance reaching farthest south about 15,000 years ago. Ice moved through the Purcell Trench in northern Idaho near today's Lake Pend Oreille. It dammed the Clark Fork River in northwestern Montana and created Lake Missoula behind a 2,500-foot wall of ice. In other words, this glacial lake was created when the Cordilleran Ice Sheet branched into the Bitterroot Mountains and plugged up Clark Fork River. The backed up waters ran thousands of feet deep and comprised a volume of 500 cubic miles, a quantity equal to that held today in Lakes Erie and Ontario combined.

Between 13,000 and 17,000 years ago, Lake Missoula covered 3,000 square miles of land. As the lake water deepened, it put pressure on the ice dam, forcing water to slip under the ice and eventually causing the dam to fail catastrophically. This break hurled almost 400 million cubic feet of water per second across eastern Washington, a deluge that raced at speeds up to 65 miles per hour, with a volume 60 times the flow of the Amazon River. The flood whooshed across more than 400 miles of the state. Imagine the volume of 10 times all the rivers on earth rushing at once across the Columbia Plateau—enough liquid to inundate 16,000 square
Palouse Falls was formed when water from the Bretz floods fell over a precipice extending the entire width of the plateau pictured above and created a massive backward “eddy” that scoured away the rock below and created the broad waterfall that exists today.

Bretz withstood decades of criticism before his theory was embraced. The rebuttals he faced were similar to those thrown at Alfred Wegener, a German climatologist who proposed a new, monumentally significant theory of geology. For years before Wegener was born in 1880, cartographers making maps of the world noticed how Africa and America looked as though they were once joined. Yet the majority of the scientific community—renowned and educated specialists—considered this possibility nonsensical. In his 1915 book, The Origin of Continents and Oceans, Wegener wrote that 200 million years ago the continent of Pangaea broke into two lesser continents—Laurasia and Gondwanaland. Twenty million years later, these two smaller continents split apart again. He postulated that these pieces have constantly drifted over a basaltic ocean floor to become the continents that exist today.

In 1924, just a year after Harlen Bretz published his paper about the scablands, Wegener’s book was translated into English. Like Bretz, he was bombarded by criticism. Wegener perished on the snows of Greenland in 1930, by which time his Continental Drift theory had been largely forgotten. It was not until the 1950s that the theory was revived, accepted, and used as the basis for a modified theory of plate tectonics that is now unquestioned.

Acceptance of Wegener’s theory vindicated a centuries-old suspicion bolstered by common sense: any child looking at a map of the world can see that certain continents look as though they were once joined. In a similar way, any geologist regarding a vista of the entire Channeled Scablands would see that they appeared—as Bretz noticed—to have been formed by a massive deluge.

Bretz was more fortunate than Wegener in that he lived long enough to see his theory accepted. In 1979, when Bretz was over 90 years old, the Geological Society awarded him the Penrose Medal, the nation’s highest geological award. A plaque dedicated to Harlen Bretz in 1994 states that he “patiently taught us that catastrophic floods may sometimes play a role in nature’s unfolding drama.” On that plaque there is a quotation from Bretz, one that Wegener certainly would have agreed with:

“Ideas without precedent are generally looked upon with disfavor and men are shocked if their conceptions of an orderly world are challenged.”

Although his theory was at first unpopular, Bretz believed the evidence provided by field research. His decades of patient persistence were well rewarded.

Tom Mullen spent over a decade working as a water resources consultant in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and the United States. He is author of Rivers of Change: Trailing the Waterways of Lewis and Clark (2004).
EXPLORATIONS
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NOTICES

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

Nineteen Forty-Nine

Sold Our Canoes for a Few Stands of Beads

Tsugiki: A Grafting

The Great Columbia Flood

The subject of Canadian explorer and map maker David Thompson has intrigued numerous authors and historians since his memoirs were discovered and published in 1916. Toronto-based free-lance writer D’Arcy Jenish adds to this bibliography with Epic Wanderer: David Thompson & the Mapping of the Canadian West. Jenish chose to produce a full biography of Thompson that featured the “drama” to complement the facts found in primary sources and in-depth scholarly studies. The resulting narrative appeals to student and lay audiences, and thoroughly sets Thompson’s story within the pivotal late 18th- and early 19th-century era of North American history. In addition to the exploration theme suggested by the title, the author incorporates commercial, international, and cultural rivalries, as well as socioeconomics of the Thompson family.

Jenish allots about half of the book to Thompson’s time in the West. The other half focuses on his “retirement” in the East, including new perspectives about Thompson and his family. Although the mapping theme continues throughout the book, other aspects of life in eastern Canada complement the traditional western themes. Jenish colorfully summarizes the prolonged story of Canadian-American boundary settlements, and the immediate impact of the War of 1812 on the North West Company as it transported a year’s take in furs east through the Great Lakes, which had suddenly become a war zone.

Jenish successfully illustrates Thompson’s remarkable skill and persistence. Descriptions of Thompson’s field efforts are lively and exhausting, and include a very understandable summary of the “practical astronomy” of the times. Also clearly depicted are Thompson’s persistent (and unsuccessful) efforts to convince the British of the value of the Columbia Plateau and the importance of his maps.

Through a basically chronological presentation, dates are used sensitively, with smooth insertion of background issues and flashbacks. The book includes no endnotes, but the bibliography lists key scholarly interpretations, and the text incorporates extensive references from Thompson’s own daily journals and related primary source material. Occasionally Jenish oversteps in his efforts to personalize and dramatize Thompson’s thoughts and motives. He does, however, balance the occasional celebratory bias with an extensive summary of scholarly debate regarding the significance of Thompson’s work.

The image quality (maps, documents, prints, and sketches) is disappointingly gray-screened and difficult for reading or geographic reference. One clear, large, color image of Thompson’s mountain panorama sketches (from the Fisher Rare Book Library) would have wowed the reader with their delicacy and detail. In addition, artistic interpretations by Bruce McDonald and C. W. Jefferys mislead readers into believing that these are primary source images of Thompson.

Overall, Jenish produces an informative and readable biography of David Thompson within the historical context of his era. The author succeeds in presenting Thompson as a remarkable individual, a very human being, and a character through whom a whole era can be viewed.

Marsha Rooney is curator of history at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture in Spokane. She is the program chair for the Washington Museum Association 2005 meeting.

Washington State Government and Politics
Reviewed by Blaine Garvin.

Every state needs one: a careful academic study designed to help the citizen understand what the heck’s going on in the capital even while it serves the needs of political science and public administration professors trying to help students who are too dazzled by faraway wars or fractious Washington in-fighting to appreciate the intricacies and wonders of “subnational government.” That of Washington state is getting to be time-honored, at least in the eyes of a small but faithful readership. Washington State Government and Politics is not a one-time offering but rather the latest incarnation of a series of such works put forward by (mostly) professors at Washington State University. Political Life in Washington, the 1985 version, still has a place of honor on my shelf. The new book comes with the prestigious sponsorship of the Thomas S. Foley Institute for Public Policy and Public Service, whose official home is at Washington State University in Pullman.

State government is a hard sell. The “devolution revolution” of the 1980s and 1990s may have made state government more important, but it did not make it more glamorous. It will probably always be true that students would rather know about the Middle East or the European Union than about Washington’s Department of Social and Health Services. Can we blame the media one more time? The media notoriously neglects state government, especially if the capital city is a small town where major dailies and TV stations are loath to assign too many reporters. It makes sense, then, that David Ammons, the one reporter who contributed to the book, works for the Associated Press.

This is a sad situation, since state government affects our lives daily. A good book can help. And this is a pretty good book.
Competent, professional, and generally readable, Washington State Government and Politics will make it possible for all interested parties to get their bearings.

It's not a big book. Its 11 chapters average less than 20 pages. Subtract the space devoted to useful maps, charts, tables, and notes and they are even shorter. So do not expect depth. Be satisfied with brevity and competent coverage of all the major topics: the three branches of government, parties and interest groups, public opinion, budgeting, and public policy. If there is a slight letdown it is in the area of policy where only environmental and natural resource policy gets chapter-length treatment.

Blaine Garvin is a professor of Political Science at Gonzaga University in Spokane. He has more than 30 years of experience in teaching courses on government to students and the inquiring public.

Lewis and Clark Trail Maps
A Cartographic Reconstruction, Volume III

There are good reasons to look at maps. Maps link inner and outer worlds and provide essential orientation to bolster our sense of security. From maps we can know better where we are in the physical world and how, if need be, we can return to those places we have found printed on the map.

Prior to his landmark journey, Captain William Clark had already learned much about the value of maps. Once headed up the Missouri River he was quick to inquire for indigenous knowledge in the lands they were traversing. These encounters between indigenous map makers and Clark speak volumes about the complex nature of communication between people of widely different cultural backgrounds as well as the gulf between written and oral traditions. On the journey itself Clark became an accomplished student of aboriginal maps—some drawn with sticks on sand, others on hides.

Maps, after all, are artifacts that tell us about the assumptions and values of the map makers as well as the cultures they embody. The record of indigenous map making suggests a world view imbued with fluid and meaningful relationships between land and people, while maps reflecting western traditions tend to rest on the fixed certainties of latitude and longitude.

Plamondon's third and final volume, The Trail Maps of Lewis and Clark: A Cartographic Reconstruction, picks up from the continental divide and follows the explorers to the mouth of the Columbia River. Like its two predecessors, it is a multi-layered masterwork for anyone willing to invest the time and energy. How fortunate that the author's powerful resolve was met by his capacity to complete this major work before his passing just prior to its publication. Plamondon has left a body of work that is not only definitive but has created a beautiful testament to his map making skills.

Many places mapped in this book have been dramatically altered by the dams of the Snake and Columbia rivers. It takes a certain quality of imagination to look into the landscapes traversed by Clark and Lewis. Within Plamondon's work we can see beyond the contours of today's Columbia and into the lines that trace her original shores. We can note the places of "strong rapids" where now a sluggish reservoir stands. Read the many accompanying journal quotations by John Ordway, Patrick Gass, Joseph Whitehouse, and Lewis and Clark, and places such as Long Narrows, Celilo Falls, and the Cascades jump back to life. The reminders are helpful. Though gone from our view, these exciting places remain a living presence within their respective landscapes.

Plamondon's work is nothing short of a brilliant effort created by a man obviously obsessed with detail. Therein lies the challenge to the reader. The trail maps deal with vast distances that attempt to convey a huge volume of data. Simply put, to enjoy the book requires a considerable investment in the Corps of Discovery, and the going isn't necessarily easy. Even though I am familiar with places along the Columbia, many times I have become lost in Plamondon's maps and had to go back to the "Index Maps and Legend" to once again find my way into his detailed maps. Reading the journal entries requires patience, not to mention the usefulness of an adequate magnifying glass. The book's publisher, Washington State University Press, plans to issue individual maps from the book on request; after viewing one, I can attest that these are much larger and far easier to read. When approaching the book, think of the Oxford Dictionary. It contains a world of information but is only valuable to those who work at getting it.

Many who go in their vehicles to follow the travels will find the map book extremely useful, particularly along places where roads and interstates make it possible to take in the surroundings from the place of now. It is exciting to read choice selections from the journals of the expedition's members in the presence of these places. Doing so helps us join with elements of that story. Given the strong ethnographic bent of the journey, we also gain a deeper appreciation of the people whose land they traversed.

Willam D. Layman, a mental health counselor with a private practice in Wenatchee, is author of Native River: The Columbia Remembered (2002) and a recent recipient (2005) of the Center for Columbia River History's James B. Castles Award.

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