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ON THE COVER

The cover of the Great Northern Railway’s annual report for 1956, showing a diesel electric locomotive emerging from the West Portal of the Cascade Tunnel, was modified only slightly to serve as the cover image for this edition of COLUMBIA. Courtesy Scott Tanner.
As 2018 draws to a close, we’re celebrating another great year for COLUMBIA magazine, and we want to express our gratitude for the support we receive every day from loyal our readers.

With history available in so many places these days, we hope you share our belief that the printed word still has an important place among the many sources for great stories about the people and places that make the Pacific Northwest such an interesting region.

We’re also grateful to the writers, photographers, museums, archives and publishers who share their work with us. We couldn’t bring you COLUMBIA without the assistance of hundreds of people here in the Old Oregon Country who share our passion – and your passion – for preserving and shining a light on the priceless artifacts and narratives of our past.

In this issue, we didn’t set out to curate everything around a theme. But, we were struck by the economic parallels in Scott Tanner’s story about the Cascade Tunnel, completed in 1929 – the year of the stock market crash that preceded the Great Depression – and the excerpt from Bruce Ramsey’s book about the earlier Panic of 1893. Add to this the fact that our book review for this issue of Paul Dorpat and Jean Sherrard’s Seattle Now & Then includes a haunting image of the Hooverville on Elliott Bay in the 1930s.

On a lighter note, the playful winter recreation images for this edition’s Washington Gallery were provided by the Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center and are not to be missed. Also, we’d love to hear from you if there’s a particular museum, library or other institution in your part of the Evergreen State whose images we should feature in an upcoming Washington Gallery.

Lastly, if you haven’t yet subscribed to the COLUMBIA Conversations podcast, please do so at ColumbiaConversations.org. Our most recent episodes include author and Robert Gray Medal recipient Jack Nisbet, and Hiking Washington’s Fire Lookouts author Amber Casali.

As always, please keep sending your comments and story ideas to editor.columbia@gmail.com.

Happy Holidays from all of us at COLUMBIA.

FELIKS BANEL
COLUMBIA Editor

CONTRIBUTORS
The talented writers, historians and archivists from around the Northwest whose work appears in this issue.

SCOTT TANNER
Scott Tanner is a native Washingtonian and a life-long enthusiast of railroads of the Northwest, particularly the Great Northern Railway. Tanner joined the Great Northern Railway Historical Society in 1983 and is currently serving his second term on the group’s Board of Directors.

BRYGIDA MCDERMOTT
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Collecting Washington
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Laborers pause near the Mill Creek Shaft of the Cascade Tunnel, circa 1927. Great Northern Railway Historical Society Collection.
In Washington, a natural barrier seems to split the state socially, politically, commercially, and, most noticeably, geologically. That barrier is, of course, the Cascade Mountain range.

In pioneer days, travel across the Cascades was a daunting task. By the time the era of statehood had begun in 1889, the Northern Pacific Railway was the only transcontinental railroad to have reached Puget Sound, with tracks over Stampede Pass and its terminus at Tacoma. Then, by 1893, the Great Northern Railway also crossed the Cascades via Stevens Pass. In a territory hungry for growth, these two railroads provided a desperately needed transportation link with Eastern markets.

The driving force behind the Great Northern Railway was a formidable man named James J. Hill. His influence on the development of the entire Pacific Northwest earned him the nickname "Empire Builder." Hill was determined to stretch his railroad west from the Twin Cities of Minnesota, to reach the coast, and to expand trade with Asia.

Of all the major transcontinental railroads to build across the country, only the Great Northern did so without federal land grants. For a strategic man like Hill, this meant he found success by building the line rapidly and efficiently. The routes his railroad took had to be by the shortest distance, with the straightest alignment, and with the least elevation changes. Under Hill's leadership, the Great Northern maximized freight revenue by keeping the train cars full with raw materials or merchandise in both directions between Minnesota and the coast, and by favoring long, heavy trains over short, light trains. Hill symbiotically grew settlement and commerce along with the railroad, simultaneously providing vital transportation to the region and revenue for his company.

To implement these strategies, the Great Northern Railway had to find adequate passes over the Rockies and the Cascades. It was the latter that proved the most challenging. But it wasn’t impossible, and the Great Northern first conquered the mountain barrier in 1892, through a pass named for one of the company's surveying engineers, John F. Stevens.

Although the newly located Stevens Pass offered the best remaining option to build a railroad over the Cascades, the only way to beat the steep rise of the western face was to utilize a series of switchbacks. But even before the railroad’s last spike was driven in January 1893, it was clear the switchbacks would eventually have to be mitigated by tunneling.

In the tunnel-free meantime, the Great Northern’s Cascade switchbacks proved to be a laborious, time-consuming stopgap. Extreme winter weather in the Cascades meant some of the most challenging mountain railroading anywhere in the country. Trains crawled up a total of eight seesawing spurs, covering roughly 12 miles. In good weather, this exercise took anywhere from 90 minutes to two hours; in the harsh weather of winter, heavy snowfall and the struggle to clear the tracks could stretch that time to an excruciating 36 hours or more. As a remedy, the Great Northern in 1897 began work on a 2.6 mile tunnel to eliminate the switchbacks.

This original Cascade Tunnel was opened for rail traffic in 1900. Elimination of the dreaded switchbacks lowered by 3,400 feet the elevation over which the trains were hauled, shortened
the distance by more than eight miles, and dramatically reduced the typical time to cover the route. And further improvement was made in 1909 when the route through the tunnel was electrified. The use of electric-powered locomotives eliminated potentially deadly buildups of smoke and gasses in the tunnel from coal-fired steam locomotives.

Even with the new tunnel, summer wildfires on the hillsides above the tracks often led to significant winter snowslides. One of these, the Wellington avalanche of 1910, wiped two whole trains off the mountainside and took 96 lives. Miles of concrete and timber snowsheds were constructed to mitigate the slide danger, but it was clear that a new, longer tunnel was needed to comprehensively address the problems.

America’s entry into World War I delayed the railroad’s goal for building a new tunnel, but after the war ended, the company got busy with planning and surveying. By 1925, a suitable plan was in place, and the Great Northern’s board of directors approved a $25 million construction package...
that included a roughly eight-mile tunnel and a significant route change on the east slope of the mountains. Work on the new Cascade Tunnel began almost immediately.

In its day, the Cascade Tunnel represented an engineering marvel, and, remarkably, this is still the case nearly a century later.

The first step of the project was to construct an eight-by-nine-foot “pioneer tunnel,” dug parallel to and about seven feet above the main tunnel’s subgrade. Then, a total of 21 crosscut shafts were excavated, spaced about every 1,500 feet, angling to tie in with the line of the main bore, which measured 18 feet high by 26 feet wide. A vertical shaft was also dug down from Mill Creek, about five miles from the west end. With this approach, tunneling proceeded from both directions simultaneously, with crews planning to meet in the middle.

To get the new Cascade Tunnel built on schedule, hundreds of men worked in shifts around the clock, every day of the year for three years, digging, blasting and removing hundreds of tons of material to make way for the underground route. At the height of tunneling activity, nearly 1,800 laborers were on site. Construction-camp villages housed and fed the men near both the east and west portals of the new tunnel.

It was on May 1, 1928 when President Calvin Coolidge used a telegraph to trigger the final “holing through” dynamite blast. So accurate were the initial measurements that the resulting alignment of the tunnel sections was off by only eight inches, and the actual length of the bore was just one foot more than estimated.

Even with this long-distance nudge from the White House, there remained a great deal of work to finish before the tunnel was ready for train traffic.

To prevent rocks from sloughing off the ceiling and walls, the entire length was lined with thick concrete, with the work stretching through the summer, fall and into the early winter of 1928. Finally, the tunnel...
was declared completed on December 24, 1928 – Christmas Eve – and rails were laid and ballasted over the next two weeks.

It was on January 12, 1929 when the new Cascade Tunnel was officially opened and dedicated.

The railroad arranged for a one-hour special program over the newly-completed coast-to-coast radio network of the National Broadcasting Company. The show was emceed by two of the most renowned radio commentators of the day: Graham McNamee and Phillips Carlin, and President-elect Herbert Hoover was a featured speaker. Others commenting on the significance of the new tunnel were General William W. Atterbury of the Pennsylvania Railroad and Ralph Budd, president of the Great Northern.

During the radio broadcast, Budd shared something told to him by the Empire Builder himself, James J. Hill. Budd explained that he had been with Hill and other officers of the company in 1914, on the old railroad magnate’s last journey over the line. Speaking of his future hopes for the railroad, and, specifically, to see a longer tunnel built through the Cascades, Hill said to Budd and the others, “some of you will live to see this mountain grade eliminated.”

Budd told the radio audience that it gave him great personal satisfaction to see the project through to completion, and to achieve this goal that had been so important to the Great Northern’s founder.

Had the railroad begun this enormous project even a few years later than 1925, it might have run into serious trouble following the stock market crash of October 1929, and the project’s completion might have been stymied by the Great Depression. But it was finished, on time and on budget.

All told, the new Cascade Tunnel eliminated 1,940 degrees of curvature and about eight miles of costly snowsheds. The financial gains afforded by the tunnel were a benefit to the Great Northern for decades.

Even so, the economics of the railroad industry changed, and the eventual consolidation of associated companies became inevitable. In 1970, the Great Northern Railway merged with other railroads, notably the Northern Pacific and the Burlington Route, to form Burlington Northern, which later became BNSF Railway.

Regardless of what corporate logos might be painted on the locomotives nowadays, January 12, 2019, will mark 90 years of nearly uninterrupted daily use of the tunnel by Great Northern, Burlington Northern, and BNSF freight trains, as well as Amtrak’s “Empire Builder” passenger service between Seattle and Chicago – a train introduced by the Great Northern in 1929 to honor James J. Hill.

Graham McNamee
LIVE from Stevens Pass

Famed NBC radio announcer Graham McNamee was on hand when the Cascade Tunnel was dedicated on January 12, 1929. NBC carried a live national broadcast of the festivities, with McNamee speaking at the East Portal before boarding the train called The Oriental Limited, and then speaking again once he had emerged from the West Portal (though the trip took longer than anticipated owing to some technical difficulties). A recording of the program is available widely on the web, and is thought to be the earliest known recording of any radio broadcast originating in the Evergreen State. Courtesy Great Northern Railway Historical Society Collection.
Washington State Historical Society
Annual Awards

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Washington State Historical Society invites nominations for its annual awards recognizing excellence in advancing the field of history in the state of Washington through writing, teaching, historic projects, and understanding cultural diversity in 2018. Awards include:

David Douglas Award: Recognizes the significant contribution of an individual or organization through projects, exhibits, digital presentations, or programs such as documentaries, apps, websites or blogs, educational products, or any other vehicle that informs or expands our appreciation of any field of Washington history during the previous year. No book nominations permitted.

Robert Gray Medal: The highest award bestowed by the Washington State Historical Society, the Robert Gray Medal recognizes distinguished and long-term contributions to Pacific Northwest history.

Governor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching History: Presented to an outstanding certified teacher of Pacific Northwest history in an accredited K–12 school in Washington or to a nonprofit organization.

Peace and Friendship Awards: Presented to a Native American and a second individual, each of whom has advanced public understanding of the cultural diversity of the peoples of Washington.

The awards are presented at the Society’s annual meeting in September. Nomination letters and supporting documentation are due May 1, 2019, to Mary Mikel Stump at marymikel.stump@wshs.wa.gov.

For details and the online nomination form, visit www.washingtonhistory.org/about/awards/.

WHO WAS THE GEORGE BUSH PAINTED BY JACOB LAWRENCE?

George Bush was raised in Virginia and descended from a Jamaican seafarer and an Irish maid. He was also a member of the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers. He first made the attempt to settle in Missouri with his wife (who was of German descent) but due to the condition of slavery and social concerns he decided to make the journey west to Oregon Country.

When the party arrived, jointly led by George Bush and Michael Simmons, they learned that African Americans were not allowed to settle in Oregon Territory because of exclusion laws. The first law, passed in 1844, authorized a whipping of “not less than twenty nor more than thirty-nine stripes” to any black settler for every six months they remained in the territory.

Hoping to avoid the prejudice that they had fled, the Bush-Simmons party traveled north to Tumwater, forming what became Washington Territory’s first permanent settlement. Bush quickly became known among other members of the community for his generosity, sharing his harvest with the less fortunate and opening his home to travelers.

By 1853, it was claimed that the Bush farm was the best farm north of the Columbia River and was particularly known for its wheat crop. That same year, after Congress passed a settlement law excluding African Americans, Bush’s friends and neighbors petitioned the government to grant Bush the land upon which he lived and farmed. In 1855, Congress passed this law but Bush, as an African American, was not granted American citizenship. Bush died in 1863 without ever realizing that dream.
JACOB LAWRENCE PAINTS THE SIMMONS-BUSH PARTY
SUE ROHRER, HERITAGE OUTREACH DIRECTOR, AND GWEN WHITING, LEAD CURATOR

Internationally known artist Jacob Lawrence was invited by the State of Washington in 1972 to paint a historical narrative about George Bush, a black settler who co-founded the state’s first permanent settlement in Tumwater. Lawrence, one of the first black visual artists to focus on African American history as the subject matter of his art, was a professor at the University of Washington at the time, as well as a member of the Washington State Arts Commission.

The five paintings in the series are a personal interpretation of the journey of George Bush and the Simmons-Bush Party from Missouri to what is now Washington. In making the paintings, Lawrence conducted extensive research, consulting the archives of the Washington State Historical Society, the Oregon Pioneer Association, and several historic newspapers from Oregon and Washington.

Lawrence approached the series methodically and with a prescribed process, completing pencil drawings in sequence. Rather than painting each panel separately, the artist mixed a color, then applied that color to each of the five works to create visual consistency throughout the series. Originally, Lawrence proposed that only the center panel would be painted, with the other four parts of the sequence drawn. He was persuaded to paint all five drawings in his recognizable style of bright hues mixed with browns and deeper tones.

Lawrence completed the series in 1973. The paintings now stand as a testament to the significance and power of Lawrence’s art, as well as the contributions that George Bush made to Washington in its early years as a territory and state. George Bush died in 1863; Jacob Lawrence passed away in 2000 at age 82.
On a cold, damp January evening in 1942, as their train left the mountains and started the long, gradual descent toward their final destination, Gideon Kramer and his wife, Ruth, noticed that Seattle was strangely dark for a large metropolitan area. As they neared the city they realized that all the windows were covered with blackout shades and smoke from smudge pots darkened the air. In the sky they could see cables hung from anti-barrage balloons meant to make it difficult for the Japanese to bomb the city. World War II had come to America.

Newly graduated from the Art Institute of Chicago’s School of Design, Kramer arrived in Seattle to begin work at the Boeing Aircraft Company. It was the beginning of a long and successful career, which culminated in his being acknowledged as one of the greatest industrial designers of our time.

Who was Gideon Kramer? What was his background, what impact did he have on the Pacific Northwest and what is the nature of his legacy today?

Kramer had a diverse and wide-ranging career. He was an artist, sculptor, philosopher, writer, inventor, candlemaker and devoted family man. He designed homes, offices, award-winning schools, a hydro drive hydrofoil ferry, and the first single unit, lap-dissolve slide projector.

Gideon Kramer was born March 28, 1917, in Hartford, Wisconsin. His parents were immigrants and his childhood was full of upheaval and change. His father was a fine furniture maker from Dolny Kubin, Slovakia, and his mother was a governess from Makow Podhalanski, Poland.

At the age of four, his mother took him and his older sister, Hildegard, back to Europe while his father stayed in Hartford and continued to work in the Kissel Car Factory as a pattern maker. It would be eight years before the three of them returned to the United States.

For those eight years, the young Kramer lived in a state of continuous turmoil. It was a time of insurrection and violence in Europe. The Great War had ended three years before their arrival in Darmstead, Germany. French soldiers were still in the streets. Germany was an occupied country. Because of the unrest and violence, the Kramer family moved four times during their stay in Europe, from Germany to Poland to what’s now the Czech Republic, and finally to Slovakia.

For Kramer, each change meant a new school, new home and friends plus a new language and culture. He was raised in a multilingual family where the main language was German, but they also spoke Polish, Hungarian, Czech, and Slovak. In school Kramer learned write in both Latin and Arabic script.

In spite of the upheaval, Kramer’s memories, especially those of the small mountain town of Dolny Kubin, Slovakia, where he spent his summers with his grandparents, made a huge impression on him.

“I can still smell the mushrooms, juniper, ground poppy seed, taste the raspberry juice my grandmother made, and the cheese smoked by the shepherds,” Kramer wrote. “I remember hiking in the Tatra Mountains and the evening promenade around the plum tree-lined square, where roaming musicians left their mark on my becoming. [It was] the place of my happiest childhood memories, and one of the reasons I chose to come to the Pacific Northwest, an area which reminded me so much of my childhood in Slovakia.”

In 1929, when Kramer was 12 years old, his family boarded the ocean liner SS Ile de France and returned to America. They arrived just before the stock market crash and the start of the Great Depression. Kramer’s father lost his job in Hartford, and to support the family his mother opened a grocery store in Milwaukee where they had resettled.

“For me, returning to America was like once again arriving in a strange county,” Kramer said. “The kids made fun of me, my clothes, my accent, and for not speaking English.”

At age 14, Kramer joined the Milwaukee YMCA German Culture Club, in search of social connections and recreation. Unfortunately, after Hitler took power in Germany, this group morphed into the German American Bund. Kramer had been drawn into what became known as the fifth column, an infiltration technique used by Nazi Germany in preparation
for conquering a country. Unaware of its meaning, Kramer mouthed their anti-Jewish propaganda. These were words he would later come to realize were hateful and untrue.

“To this day I . . . have difficulty forgiving the German people for their arrogance and inhumanity,” Kramer said.

Prior to entering college, Kramer worked in his mother’s store and butcher shop. During the winter before enrolling at the Art Institute of Chicago, he would hitchhike to the outskirts of town to paint pictures of farms.

Kramer met his future wife on the first day of classes at the Art Institute in September 1937. “The most significant and influential event of my life, the one that changed the direction of my life and shaped my future,” Kramer later said, was “meeting Ruth McLellan.”

Clockwise from top-left: The simple elegant beauty and comfort of the ION chair makes it easy to understand why it garnered so much recognition and why it has become a coveted collector’s item. The chair was available in many beautiful colors and could also be ordered with a variety of upholstery.

In the early 1950s the Gregory Heights community in Burien, Washington, saw a need for a kindergarten in their neighborhood. Kramer donated the design shown here which utilized stressed-skin plywood panels for the walls and roof. The Kramers and their neighbors raised money for materials and organized work parties to build the classroom on the grounds of the Gregory Heights Elementary School.

A drawing of Kramer’s cab-over-engine (COE) design showing the inside of the cab with an overhead sleeping compartment for the driver.

One of Kramer’s more unusual and interesting bus shelter designs, created for the City of Seattle, incorporating natural materials and sculptural components.
He proposed to Ruth a few months later in 1938 and they were married in 1940 in her hometown of Dalton, Georgia. During the following year, after finishing his course work, Kramer forged a path different from that of many of his classmates.

“Instead of serving my apprenticeship in a design office like most of the students, I decided to work in factories where I could develop an intimate knowledge of the ways and means of producing products,” he said.

After winning a competition for the design of a blowtorch sponsored by Turner Brass Works, in Sycamore, Illinois, the company agreed to let him serve a three-month apprenticeship in their foundry. He then went to work for in the Tivoli Furniture factory for several months, and then for Manikins Rubber Composition Company where he learned to make intricate plastic molds.

After working in wood and plastics, it was metal fabrication that ultimately brought Gideon Kramer to the Pacific Northwest.

“To complete my education, I decided I needed to work in a light metal factory,” he said. “Since my wife Ruth and I were longing to move to the Pacific Northwest, I applied to Boeing.
in Seattle, Washington. I was hired in October of 1941, right before Pearl Harbor.”

After two years with Boeing, he felt ready to strike out on his own. By then, Edward, the first of their seven children had been born. When a friend showed them a place for rent on the beach south of Seattle, they decided it was too beautiful not to move there. Soon the Kramers settled into the primitive little cabin overlooking Puget Sound near Three Tree Point, which their landlord affectionately referred to as “The Camp.”

“On misty mornings we were awakened by the sound of the foghorn and marveled at the sight of orca whales cavorting out front” he said, describing their home as something of a retreat from the nearby city. “At The Camp, in front of the fireplace, we felt free to concentrate on creating our family.”

The Kramers turned the garage at The Camp into a shop where they started a candle-making business using a system Kramer designed and patented. The candles they produced were sold in Seattle at the Fredrick & Nelson department store and Crissey flower and gift shop, as well as at Neiman Marcus in New York.

In 1946, Kramer assisted architect Ralph Burkard in designing Southgate Elementary School in the community of Lakewood, Washington. The project received the 1951 Seattle American Institute of Architects (AIA) honor award.

While working with Burkard on the design of Foster High School, in Tukwila, Kramer developed what he referred to as the “inside-out” classroom concept. Among the design’s many innovations was the wall that separated the classroom from the outside corridor. It was made of floor to ceiling glass with shelves to showcase student projects. The classroom walls could also be quickly and easily reconfigured to serve the evolving needs of the students.

Where did the inspiration for these radical design innovations come from?

In order to better understand the needs of the students and better inform the design of the new school, Kramer taught a high school shop class for a semester.

Kramer’s approach paid off. In 1953, Foster High School received the American Institute of Architects (AIA) National Honor award for innovative design, and was designated one of the three best school designs in the United States by Progressive Architecture magazine.

It was around this same time that Kramer decided to pursue a lifelong dream of designing trucks. Getting a foot in the door at the company now known as Paccar took some effort.

“When I saw that the door opening, which forms the primary structure of the truck cab, had failed at the square corners. Corners that were fabricated from several parts. Utilizing the engineering knowledge I’d gained at Boeing I concluded that for the cab to absorb impact without causing the door opening to fail, required a continuous, round cornered door opening structure with a door made to fit.”

The Kramer approach paid off again.

“In five days of starting at Kenworth, I recommended that they build an entirely new door and door opening frame, which they did. This new truck door was the first major modification to a truck door in 25 years and became a standard in the trucking industry,” Kramer said.

Instead of serving my apprenticeship in a design office, I decided to work in factories where I could develop an intimate knowledge of the ways and means of producing products.

Kramer went on to create several more innovative new truck designs for Kenworth. Among those was a radically new “Cab-Beside-Engine” truck whose lighter weight allowed it to carry a half-ton more cargo while providing the driver with greater visibility. He also designed an all-plastic hood unit that combined the fenders, hood, and mudguards into one piece which lifted for easy access to the engine. This hood design was a first in the industry and was adopted by many other truck manufacturers.

Meanwhile, Kramer was busy during his evening and weekend hours, too. In addition to serving as the family home, The Camp at Three Tree Point was also the birthplace of Gideon Kramer’s best known achievement: the ION chair.

In 1946, while working with Ralph Burkard on Southgate Elementary School, Kramer was asked to specify classroom seating. When he saw what was available, he knew he could do better.

“Seeking a greater standing, I designed a chair, which like other great designers, Mies Van der Rohe, Marcel Breuer and Charles Eames, became my identity,” Kramer said.

It was at The Camp where Kramer designed and then constructed, in the garage, a prototype of a child-sized
When an order came in to furnish the most iconic structure in the Northwest - The Space Needle - with ION chairs, the entire Kramer family pitched in to get the job done.

By 1962, when an order came in to furnish the most iconic structure in the Northwest - The Space Needle - with ION chairs, the entire Kramer family pitched in to get the job done.

The night before the installation of the chairs in the Space Needle, after enjoying Kramer's special Hungarian goulash, the whole family sat around the dining room table doing the final sanding of the wooden arms for the chairs.

The next morning, Gideon Kramer's three oldest sons and a few neighbor boys hauled the completed chairs to the fairgrounds to begin the cumbersome process of getting them up to the restaurant. First, they loaded as many chairs as they could into the elevator, pushed the button, and sent the chairs up to the restaurant. Then they ran as fast as they could up the 848 stairs where they unloaded the elevator and rode it back down. This was repeated several times until the job was completed.

In later years, the rest of the Kramer children, Brygida, Lydia, Rebecca and cousin Erika, helped with installations at the University of Washington's Haggert Hall, and Western Washington University in Bellingham. Ruth Kramer’s job was to handle the accounting and round up extra workers in order to meet the frequent deadlines, which usually necessitated an “all nighter.”

In 1966 Kramer was awarded the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Industrial Arts Medal for the design and development of his famed ION chair, which was considered one of the first truly ergonomically correct chairs in the industry. In 1968, Kramer sold ION Corporation to American Desk Corporation in Temple, Texas. Both Gideon Kramer and Edward Kramer continued working with American Desk on the ION chair for several years.

The ION chair is now a part of the permanent collection at the Brooklyn Museum of Modern Art and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and a child’s version of the ION chair is in the permanent collection of New York’s Museum of Modern Art. Even the World Trade Center, destroyed in the tragedy of 9/11, had been outfitted with hundreds of ION chairs.

As Kramer’s career evolved and his work expanded, it became clear to his family and friends that he was a freedom-loving rebel who refused to be labeled. He was a relentlessly forward-thinking, exceptionally creative and complex man. He read broadly and deeply and always looked for, and found, greater meaning in everything around him.

The same year he sold ION Corporation, Kramer became a co-owner of the historic First and Cherry Building in Seattle’s Pioneer Square and moved his design office there.

Kramer and the building’s other co-owners soon realized that many of Pioneer Square’s other historic structures were threatened by possible demolition, and that the city’s 19th century core would likely be replaced with anachronistic mix of modern architecture and parking garages.

In order to prevent what they considered a desecration, they founded the Pioneer Square Historic Preservation District in 1970. It became Seattle’s first preservation district and now encompasses approximately 88 acres. With one of the nation’s best surviving collections of Romanesque Revival style urban architecture, Pioneer Square still has a unique charm that draws people from all over the world.

In 1970, Kramer made a proposal for cultural economic development to the non-profit Allied Arts of Seattle encouraging the establishment of a continuous Northwest development program. Allied Arts agreed to sponsor such a study and hired Kramer to head it. The study concluded that pursuing excellence would not only assure Seattle’s competitiveness, but would also give the community a shared purpose and identity.

Kramer was hired in 1972 by the City of Seattle’s Design Commission to head the Street Beautification Effort. Kramer suggested that it be renamed Project 27+ because Seattle’s streets are part of the public domain representing 27+% of the city’s total area. Project 27+’s mandate encompassed everything concerning the improvement and beautification of Seattle’s streets and sidewalks.
Working closely with Mayor Wes Uhlman, Kramer was involved in many facets of Seattle’s governance. As head of Project 27+ he was involved in the redevelopment/revitalization program of Seattle’s Central Business District, or CBD, which included many iconic areas of Seattle including Westlake Mall, the Pike Place Public Market, north-south avenues, Pike Street, Pine Street, Waterfront Park and Freeway Plaza Park and parking garage. Project 27+ also focused on Pioneer Square and the International District.

Among the numerous tasks that Project 27+ addressed during its three years in existence were human needs, microclimate, intersection design, contour view zoning, and neighborhood design. More specific projects included garbage receptacles, news vending, information centers, bus shelters,

Clockwise from top-left: Kramer standing next to the radically new cab-beside-engine, CBE, he designed for Kenworth which was released in 1955. The truck’s lighter weight allowed it to carry half a ton more cargo while providing the driver with greater visibility. The CBE was featured in the December 28, 1953 issue of Newsweek magazine.

Kramer and his son Edward doing some finishing work on one of the second and final versions of the adult ION chair. It was tested for a 100-year life span and had a thinner, more flexible body with a sleek, elegant silhouette. It was released by American Desk Company in 1970.

The United States Plywood Corporation’s office building, in Seattle, was designed by Kramer in 1961 to showcase the many uses of US Plywood’s products in modern architecture. The design utilizes stressed-skin plywood panels for the walls and concave plywood roof shells forming what is called a barrel vault. The building was featured in the October 1962 issue of Architecture\West magazine.
covered walkways, signing systems, traffic signals, and lighting for both the CBD and residential areas. Unfortunately, due to lack of funding and support from the City Council, many of these ideas and designs were never implemented.

Kramer was ultimately frustrated by the bureaucracy. “The Seattle Design Commission selected me because they liked my way of addressing problems at their roots. In the end, my in-depth approach was not a good match for the City’s bureaucracy. After three years, because of the City Council’s unwillingness to sponsor a minimum of effort, and their failure to take the action required to further the project, I decided to leave,” Kramer said. “So, in spite of recognition by the Seattle Design Commission, the Allied Arts, and the mayor, the project was never completed and ended when I left in 1974.”

In 1970, Kramer bought the original Norton Building at Third Avenue and Washington Street and moved his design office into the third floor. From there, he and Ruth Kramer...
managed the rentals and maintenance of the building. Harborview’s Pioneer Square Health Clinic took over the ground floor, while the rest of the spaces were rented to local artists and designers, including Seattle artist Billy King.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Kramer designed exhibits for the Seattle Aquarium and Alaska’s Portage Glacier Visitor’s Center, and the exhibit concept for Seattle’s Museum of Flight. He also wrote articles for the AIA Journal, Argus magazine, and the World Institute Journal of the United Nations, as well as for several other industrial and design publications.

As a guest professor, Kramer taught a one-year course in design at the University of Washington’s School of Architecture, and conducted workshops there, as well as at the University of Oregon and Montana State University. “I [was] the arsonist, the students the volatile tinder,” Kramer later wrote, describing his approach to teaching. In the classroom or workshop, his goal was to “create a space where venturing is nurtured and relating the seemingly unrelated is encouraged.”

One of Kramer’s students from this era was Mas’ud Towfight, now a noted architect in his native Iran. In a letter to Kramer 40 years later, Towfight wrote, “Attending two design classes [you taught] at the University of Oregon and the inspiration I got from your style of thinking and your approach to the universe, had the biggest influence on my way of living.”

In 1991, the Kramers sold the Norton Building to Harborview Medical Center. They donated a portion of the profits from the sale to the health clinic so that it could continue to serve the needs of the community.

In a letter to Harborview after the sale was completed, Kramer wrote an elegy of sorts for the building, the neighborhood and for the people who made their community:

This was a special place even before there was a building. This spot has been sanctified by all who have passed and paused here, to serve or be served, a place of sorrow, of joy, of pleasure and of memories. Under this building there still flows the water that quenched the first animals, the first inhabitants, and supplied drinking water for the ship that brought the early settlers. This was the heart of Seattle’s first Chinatown and the labor offices that supplied the manpower to build the railroads.

It was clear to those who knew him that Kramer felt a deep kinship with Seattle and the greater Northwest, with its history, the wild beauty of its setting, with the forests, the animals, the mountains, Puget Sound, and the spirit of the Native Americans who revered this spot. This sense of connection, along with the relaxed, open, freedom-loving atmosphere of the Pacific Northwest, supported and nurtured his prolific creativity which gave rise to all his varied accomplishments.

Up to the day he died, just short of his 95th birthday, Kramer continued his lifelong quest for knowledge. He never stopped searching for solutions to problems, from the world situation to a better way to design a chair or a mousetrap. Most importantly, during his last years, he tried to understand the greater meaning of life through his writings, which he referred to as “One Becoming.”

In the introduction to his book A Life Becoming, he wrote:

This is about the questions of identity, becoming, knowing, and the freedom to find answers. Why has it been my obsession to have the unrestricted freedom to be and to know? And finally, the question, who am I, and how did I become who I am? In time I concluded, I am what I do. I am an episode in the eternal becoming of the Universe. An episode, which became a love story.

Kramer’s innovations changed the trucking industry, the chair industry and the world of industrial design. He introduced a new approach to education and city planning. He changed how we view our living spaces, our communities and our cities. He was an influential, involved, and dedicated member of the greater Northwest community as well as a contributor to the development and shaping of Seattle’s identity. It was a place he cared deeply about; it was his home.

And it was Seattle where Gideon Kramer passed away in 2012. At his memorial, Northwest architect Fred Bassetti eulogized his contemporary and longtime friend:

I was awestruck with both his ingenuity and his artistic sense. Talent at the highest level was apparent in whatever project Gideon undertook. He was artist, engineer and entrepreneur all rolled into one, so it was inevitable that he was often referred to as Seattle’s Buckminster Fuller. But, he was much more than that. He was himself, a genuine original . . . Seattle’s Gideon Kramer, not to be compared with anyone else.

Like a pebble thrown into a pool of water which creates concentric waves that continue to move outward, Kramer’s thought-provoking, progressive, and always innovative philosophy and approach to life continues to affect everyone and everything he touched. His most powerful and meaningful legacy is the impact he had on the people who passed through his life, former students, artists, friends, contemporaries and even strangers who have expressed how much he inspired them, influenced their thinking and most profoundly, changed their lives.

Gideon Kramer was a true Northwest icon.
The Panic of 1893 struck when the State of Washington was not quite four years old. Veteran local journalist Bruce Ramsey explores the economic, social and cultural impacts of this long ago financial crisis in his new book, from which this excerpt is drawn, The Panic of 1893: The Untold Story of Washington State’s First Depression, from Caxton Press.

It is July 4, 1893. Independence Day festivities in Seattle begin with a roar from the USS Monterey’s 12-inch guns. The Monterey is a larger version of the Monitor, the Civil War ironclad. The Monterey’s deck is supposed to be only 2.3 feet above the water line, but it is riding a foot higher this day because the armor on the barbettes and its two turrets is made of wood, standing in for the steel armor not yet installed.

Viewed materially, Seattle’s grand Fourth of July celebration is a false front, like the Monterey’s wooden armor. In the summer of 1893, America’s commercial life is in agony. Ventures are failing and men are losing work. In the midst of a business crisis a prudent people would not drain away their capital on fireworks and flags—but the people of Seattle are not entirely prudent. The profit is spiritual.

It is a time of demonstrative patriotism. The Civil War veterans are growing old and sentimental. Immigrants, many of them from Southern Europe and even Asia, are moving in, and a feeling rises that the American identity needs new steel.

To the crowd, a Protestant reverend offers a benediction, a judge intones the Declaration of Independence, and a senator expounds on the meaning of America. A band plays patriotic marches. Sailors dressed in white and blue take on longshoremen in a tug of war. Soldiers parade, followed by a troop of cavalry and men on bicycles. Teams of horses pull commercial floats. Seattle’s proud business houses are hung with red-white-and-blue bunting, streamers, and flags.

At Pioneer Square, men have erected a pavilion of wood and brick decorated with woven cedar baskets. Called the Industrial Palace, it exhibits local coal, lumber, shingles, iron ore, hops, preserved fish, live oysters, and even tobacco. On its side, strings of incandescent bulbs form an image of a locomotive that glows as night falls. One man’s name is spelled in red lights: “J.J. Hill.”

James Jerome Hill has just brought the Great Northern Railway over Stevens Pass. It is a new kind of American transcontinental: a business road, built with private capital, much of it from London, with no cash subsidy or land grants from the U.S. government. Hill’s engineers have calculated grades and curves with the aim of keeping the cost per mile below that of their subsidized competitors, the Union Pacific and the Northern Pacific. Hill also hasn’t overloaded his road with debt.

Hill’s road has made Seattle its Pacific terminus. Already, three nearby cities are endpoints of transcontinental lines: Vancouver, B.C., of the Canadian Pacific; Portland, of the Union Pacific; and Tacoma, of the Northern Pacific. Tacoma is Seattle’s closest rival. Its salt-water harbor, the Tacoma Ledger boasts, is deep and wide enough for “ships of any
size now made, or ever likely to be made” and has “absolute immunity from storms.” Seattle has a harbor much the same, and with the Great Northern, says the Seattle Telegraph, the Queen City “will have an equal chance in the race for commercial ascendancy.”

Hill intends not just to take some of the region’s commerce, but to expand it. His rate to haul fir lumber east to St. Paul is 40 cents per 100 pounds—less than half the old Northern Pacific rate, which was too high to move common lumber. Historian Clarence Bagley will write that the 40-cent rate is “two-fifths of a cent per ton-mile, the lowest rate ever given in the world under anything like the same conditions.”

The 40-cent rate opens up the Midwest to the sawmills of Washington. Says the Aberdeen Herald, “It makes it possible for every sawmill now built, or that may be built, along the line of any of these roads to run at full capacity all the year round at a profit.”

This statement is no illusion. James Hill and his railroad will be crucial for Washington and particularly for Seattle in the coming hard times and the resurgence that follows. But on July 4, 1893, Hill and his 300 guests are not in Seattle to see his name in lights. There has been a panic on Wall Street. The visions of growth—the true ones and the false ones—have faded. Recalling the period before the hard times, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer will later write, “For six years this enormous inflation went on. In frantic rivalry, courthouses, city halls, streetcar lines, waterworks, electric lighting plants were rushed up; the building and purchase too often being fostered by contractors and engineered by councils whose members had secured their election for the purpose of putting through just such plans. Debts had no terror, bonds scarcely a limit. The future was recklessly drawn upon.”

The growth has been fabulous, with little inkling of the disaster ahead.

Seattle was incorporated in 1865, and by 1880 was still a village barely larger than Walla Walla. By 1890 it was among America’s top 100 cities, having grown in the 1880s third-fastest among them, by more than 1,000 percent. By 1893 the Polk city-directory company estimates Seattle’s population at 62,960, largest in the state and two-thirds the size of Portland, the region’s predominant city. Seattle’s wooden downtown, destroyed by fire in 1889, has been rebuilt in brick and stone. The “Queen City” has room to grow: mudflats to the south to be filled in for railroad yards and a hill to the north to be sluiced into Elliott Bay.

Seattle has the asset of position. It is on the eastern shore of Puget Sound, where the railroads will come. It has a large deep-water bay protected from storms and a deep and unobstructed channel to the ocean. It is also centrally located on the Sound, making it the natural center for a “mosquito fleet” of ferries. It is directly west of Snoqualmie Pass in the Cascades.

Seattle has something else: “the Seattle spirit.” Half a century later, Stewart Holbrook will say: “Seattle is the metropolis of the Northwest. It did not become so simply because of favorable location... Seattle outdistanced all its rivals largely because of the single-mindedness of a large majority of its citizens...”

Incorporated in 1875, a decade after Seattle, Tacoma was the first of the two to have a transcontinental railroad. By 1893 the “City of Destiny” has been the terminus of the Northern Pacific for six years. Like Seattle, Tacoma sits on the shore of an inland
It is the only city on the Sound with regular steamship service to South America, Australia, and Asia, exporting wheat, lumber, coal, refined metals, and canned salmon and importing tea, sugar, and silk.

Tacoma’s population has exploded even faster than Seattle’s, making it the second-fastest growing (after Duluth) among the top 100 American cities. By 1893 Tacoma’s population has swollen to 52,329—63 percent male, half foreign-born, many of them single men who, according to a Tacoma Chamber of Commerce report, are “almost wholly strangers to one another,” and have been “separated from the restraining influences of old and familiar associations.” By 1893 Tacoma has had two years of quieter growth, but it remains a challenger to Seattle for dominance on the Sound.

With an eye to a big future, Tacoma is building a three-story Pierce County courthouse and jail and a five-story city hall, with high ceilings, classic columns and a 190-foot clock tower. An Oregon observer calls Tacoma’s city hall “the most magnificent north of San Francisco.” Investors are putting up commercial buildings. The city is buying out the water works and electric company—a decision that will backfire, but seems right at the time. It is about to lay down fir-block pavement to replace the broken wooden planking on Pacific Avenue.

Two years later the Ledger will admit that Tacoma got ahead of itself: “A city hall and a courthouse were built when we did not really need them, [and] streets were opened and improved far ahead of the demand for them.” The Ledger will regret that Tacoma burned through its credit to buy these things. But when cities bid for supremacy, this is what they do. “We can no longer be ignored,” proclaims the Tacoma News in 1893. “We have become Seattle’s greatest rival, the one city in the Northwest she has to fear.”

This is as close as Tacoma will get to overtaking Seattle. Tacoma’s response to the Panic will not be as strong as Seattle’s.
East of the mountains, the pioneer town of Walla Walla has been eclipsed by another newcomer: Spokane. Incorporated in 1881, Spokane swells in the 1880s in the silver rush to Idaho’s Coeur d’Alene country. Unlike the Puget Sound cities, Spokane is a town that in the territory—"a word much used in the 1890s—has no rival. Spokane is on the main line of the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific and also spurs of the Union Pacific and the Canadian Pacific. Eastern Washington’s principal city is building an “Inland Empire” reaching into northern Idaho and southern British Columbia.

Spokane also has the 130-foot waterfall of the Spokane River. The city’s hydropower has already made it one of the best-lighted towns in the West, and barely 5 percent of the potential is used.

Like Seattle, Spokane’s wooden downtown was destroyed in 1889 by fire. It has also been rebuilt; in 1892, investors pour more than $1 million into new buildings, borrowing heavily to do so. “The array of fine hotels, office buildings, banks, factories, etc., now seen on all the principal streets, astonishes the visitor,” writes an Easterner. “These buildings are of stone, granite or brick, many of them six, seven and more stories high.” Most of this work is in anticipation. “Miles of streets in the suburbs have been graded and sidewalked, that are scarcely ever used,” the Chronicle will admit in the coming hard times. “Double as many bridges have been constructed as needed for public convenience; treble as many officers and employees as were necessary for the conduct of public business.”

Not every town with big dreams is still hopeful.

In the spring of 1889 men from St. Paul lay out a city for more than 10,000 on the northern shore of Grays Harbor, three miles west of Hoquiam. They bill it as an international port, the Pacific terminus of the railroad that will connect to the Northern Pacific at Centralia.

On a map it seems logical that the great port of the Pacific Northwest should be on the ocean, not hidden behind the Olympic Peninsula on Puget Sound. Grays Harbor is, however, not as deep as Puget Sound, and the largest ships of the 1890s have trouble entering it. In addition, the site chosen for Grays Harbor City is separated from the navigable channel by a large mud flat. No problem: In July 1889 the promoters begin selling lots, $500 and up, and with the buyers’ money they build a mile-and-a-quarter-long wharf. Some of the town site promotions during this period are scams from the start. At Grays Harbor City, the promoters believe their own illusions.

The railroad that is supposed to connect Grays Harbor City never comes. Its builder, George Washington Hunt, pushes his
roadbed one-third the way from Centralia and runs out of cash. In February 1891, when he is in New York trying to sell bonds, the Northern Pacific attaches his property over a $140,000 debt and sinks him. Hunt’s bonds don’t sell. His project collapses. The Northern Pacific comes to Grays Harbor but not to Grays Harbor City. The town’s 250 residents move out.

“There are upwards of 100 buildings there, but they are all deserted,” says a report in the Oregonian. “Some of the deserted buildings are handsome structures, one business block having cost upwards of $20,000. The halls and rooms of this block have the appearance of being left while the occupants had just stepped out to lunch, while as a matter of fact the place has been abandoned for upwards of a year.”

Most of the boomtowns are still alive. For the people in them, the first years of statehood have been a time of wonder.

In May 1890, real-estate men entrusted with money from England come to South Bend, a rain-drenched village of 876 souls that will incorporate as a town four months later. The investors pay $80,000 for a 90-acre tongue of low-lying land directly across the Willapa River from the town. Years later, the South Bend Journal will call this “about the biggest deal ever consummated in the history of the South Bend real estate boom.” The Northern Pacific is building a rail line to South Bend, though unfortunately not to the investors’ side of the river. Says a real estate ad in the Tacoma News: “The railroad from South Bend to Chehalis...will soon be extended easterly through the Cowlitz Pass to North Yakima. With this line completed, South Bend has a shorter and more direct route from the seaboard to the East by sixty hours and three hundred miles, than has Tacoma or Seattle.”

South Bend, says the ad, has “the only deep water harbor between San Francisco and the Straits of Fuca,” and “is undoubtedly destined to be the Great Seaport of the Northwest.”

Envisioning South Bend as the “Baltimore of the Pacific,” investors erect a grand inn, the 87-room Willapa Hotel, three stories high with a central tower 85 feet tall, overlooking the Willapa River. It was supposed to cost $25,000, but the investors decide to line the lobby with eastern oak. They bring in German craftsmen to carve an ornate mantel. The hotel costs them more than $100,000.

Actually, South Bend’s natural harbor, Willapa Bay, has just been renamed. Its old name was Shoalwater Bay, for its shallow water and mud flats. It is not a good place for a port.

On Puget Sound, Port Townsend, incorporated in 1851, does have a fine harbor for sailing ships. It is only one day’s sail from the Pacific and its bottom is not too deep for anchors. (Seattle’s and Tacoma’s harbors are deep.) Port Townsend also has the U.S. Customs House, so that all of Puget Sound’s ships in foreign trade must stop there. The Townsend Leader declares its city “the natural and undisputed headquarters of all shipping on Puget Sound.” But if Port Townsend is to “aspire to commercial importance and industrial greatness,” which the Leader says it does, it needs to be connected to the
railroads coming from the East—and for that, Port Townsend has been built on the wrong side of Puget Sound.

In 1890, the Oregon Improvement Co., an offshoot of the Northern Pacific, sets out to build a railroad from Port Townsend to a connection south of Olympia. In anticipation of Port Townsend as a major seaport, landowners sell town lots at high prices and sink the money into brick buildings along Water Street and fine houses on the hill. “Everyone here was making money. Everyone here was happy,” Leader editor J. Will Lyons will recall a few years later. “All felt certain that prosperity had come to stay”—but the railroad will never be completed.

Across Puget Sound on the northern side of Fidalgo Island, the new town of Anacortes is on the right side of Puget Sound. It already has a rail connection, but boosters dream of it having its own crossing of the Cascades, up the Skagit River, and out through the Methow Valley. The town convinces itself it has the best location of all the Sound cities. Anacortes is “destined by nature,” declares the Anacortes Progress, “to be a great and important city.”

From August 1889 to April 1890, Anacortes is transformed from a wilderness into an excitement of 10 hotels, 20 lodging houses, 21 saloons, and 40 land-sales offices. People are living in 72 “dwellings”—a word artfully selected to include shacks—and 83 tents. Anacortes is “a town crystallized,” waxes the editor, “just like that wonder of nature, the mineral from a solution.”

Values of town lots float up, up, up, like cinders above a fire. Then they fall. The speculators flee. The people who stay behind build real houses, and the four-story, brick-and-stone Hotel Anacortes. In 1891 they incorporate their town. They issue municipal debt. Investors build a 13-mile electric streetcar line.

Twenty miles south of the Canadian border on Bellingham Bay, Fairhaven, incorporated in 1890, follows a similar trajectory. Anticipating the arrival of the Great Northern, it attracts 8,000 boomers, many from California and the East—men, recalls one writer half a decade later, “letting their money go with open hands.” Investors put up factories, sawmills and a fine hotel expecting “that in five years more their city would be a metropolis.” The Great Northern comes, but Fairhaven is not its terminus. The boom dies.

Puget Sound’s newest city, Everett, is incorporated in 1893. It begins life with the grandest inheritance. Along with the usual lumber and shingle mills, it is born with a shipyard, a nail mill, a paper mill, and a smelter, built with money from oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller. The intention, says Henry Hewitt Jr., president of the Everett Land Co., is to offer manufacturers a city, unlike Seattle or Tacoma, “free from heavy municipal debt.” Located right where James J. Hill’s railroad is destined to hit tidewater, Everett stakes out a claim as the Great Northern’s Pacific terminus. Visiting there in the summer of 1892, when brick buildings costing $350,000 are being built, lumberman Cyrus Walker writes a business associate (with some exaggeration) that the Everett Land Co. is “laying out a town large enough for a million people.”

In 1892, more railroad tracks are laid in Washington—421 miles of main line—than in any other state. By January 1893, the Great Northern’s roadbed is completed. In the next two years, railroad building in Washington will shrink by 98 percent.
Excesses are everywhere. “There was a wave of immigration, a buoyant, speculative, adventuresome feeling,” recalls New Whatcom’s Reveille. “Everybody was credulous.” Says the Seattle Telegraph, “Everybody’s head was full of all manner of exaggerated notions about everything.” In his 1916 history of Tacoma, Herbert Hunt remembers 1889-90 as a time of “beauteous expectation” and “fatal ecstasy.”

“Bonds were issued recklessly,” recalls the Tacoma News. “Mortgages flowed like a river.”

“During our boom days,” says the Reveille, “we were looking forward to railroads, mills, mines, roads, opened farms, planked streets, electric lights, streetcars, water works, sewers, and the comforts of civilization.” Now, the paper says, “We have all these things.”

But not paid for. The new towns have been built on credit, most of it from the East, some of it from across the Atlantic, lured to the frontier by 10-percent interest rates. Local men have bought bank stocks and land with promissory notes, their I.O.U.s taken as cash. “Everything was done in a rush and without due precaution,” recalls the Spokane Chronicle.

After the Panic, the editors of the Oregonian will explain the disaster this way: during the boom there has been a considerable “absorption of money, or the energy represented by money, in unproductive undertaking.” When these undertakings don’t pan out, “the money spent by the settlers, lent them by Eastern capitalists, their labor and their other debts for supplies will be so much lost capital, as much as if it had been thrown into the sea.” Really it is people’s energy that has been spent, and when they realize that their assets have shrunk but their debts have not, there follows “a season of depression, during which energy is slowly recuperated.”

But this is hindsight, the explanation of a disaster the newspapers did not see coming. New Year’s Day 1893 is still in a time of illusions. “The financial storms which have lowered upon the entire world for the past two years seem to have exhausted their fury,” opines the Spokane Review. “The coming year… will certainly prove one of the most, if not the most, prosperous year that has ever passed over the head of this bright, progressive, hopeful, resourceful young city.”

The Tacoma Ledger hails 1893 as the beginning “of such progress as no state or city has ever before known.” The signal is about to turn from yellow to red.
**ILWACO**

*Graveyard of the Pacific* exhibit at Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum

columbiapacificheritagemuseum.org

Winter weather brings winter storms, and winter storms of the past brought many ships to ground along our coast. The Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum in Ilwaco presents a new exhibit called *Graveyard of the Pacific: Dangerous Currents-Shifting Sands*. The show coincides with shipwreck season, and will be on view through March 9, 2019.

Artifacts, photographs, and first-person accounts of over 20 shipwrecks are featured, along with the important role of the U.S. Life Saving Service, Coast Guard and volunteer life-savers. The late Northwest author and historian Jim Gibbs and local photographer Charles Fitzpatrick will be highlighted for their part in keeping the mystery and attraction to shipwrecks alive.

Shipwrecks litter the beaches of the "Pacific Graveyard" in and around the mouth of the Columbia River in Washington and Oregon. The sailing ship *Potrincipalos* grounded north of Long Beach in December 1896. Photo courtesy Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum.

**NEWPORT**

*Winterizing History in Pend Oreille County*

www.pocmuseum.org

From the Pend Oreille County Museum in Newport, Dale Scott reports that volunteers are readying their historic railroad depot home for the off-season and the cold weather ahead.

“We have to winterize the outdoor cabins, turn off the water to restrooms (outside) and have no electricity at the majority of displays outside,” Scott wrote. He also shared a photo taken by museum treasurer Sam Brooks showing the 1908 Idaho & Washington Northern depot covered with snow a few winters back.

The Pend Oreille County Museum will open again in the spring.

Snow-covered Idaho & Washington Northern depot in Newport from a few winters ago. Sam Brooks photo courtesy of Pend Oreille County Museum.

**BOISE, ID**

*Idaho History Museum renovated and reimagined*

history.idaho.gov

The Idaho State Historical Society in October 2018 opened their “renovated and reimagined” Idaho State Museum in Boise. The redesigned museum is focused on the relationship between Idaho’s people and land, and how the two have shaped each other over time. Exhibits feature stories of Idahoans from many walks of life, and visitors are encouraged to share their personal narratives in an exhibit called *Stories from Idaho*.

The renovation project began in 2014. It was funded with $8.9 million from the state’s Permanent Building Fund, $4 million from the Idaho State Legislature, as well as another $4.2 million in private donations.
STATEWIDE

Humanities Washington New Speakers Bureau Programs

A new season of the popular Humanities Washington Speakers Bureau gets underway in January 2019. Speakers fan out across Washington, giving illustrated presentations at libraries, museums, community centers and other publicly accessible locations. For more information about how you can invite Humanities Washington speakers to your community, visit humanities.org. All photos courtesy Humanities Washington.

Some of the new presentations with a Northwest history focus include the following:

Washington’s Undiscovered Feminists
Mayumi Tsutakawa

In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage, remember some of the remarkable, but often unsung, women of the Pacific Northwest. Writer Mayumi Tsutakawa presents five “woman warriors” in the arts and journalism whose inspiring stories reach back to the early years of our region. Meet the pioneering photographer Imogen Cunningham, African American jazz musician Ruby Bishop, Chinese American artist Priscilla Chong Jue, Leftist journalist Anna Louise Strong, and Native American linguist Vi Hilbert. Drawing on her own experience as an activist and writer, Tsutakawa explores how these women inspired others and changed our state and our society.

Let It Not Happen Again: Lessons of Japanese American Exclusion
Clarence Moriwaki

Writer and community leader Clarence Moriwaki shares the story of Bainbridge Island—the origin point of Japanese American exclusion during World War II—to provide a human, historical account of this national tragedy, and to ask the question: Are there parallels to what’s happening in America now? Moriwaki uses historical images, including historical and current propaganda, to explore the fear, racism, and failure of political leadership that led to these unconstitutional actions during World War II, and why we must not let it happen again.

Washington on Wheels: Odd and Innovative Transportation Ideas from the Pacific Northwest
Harriet Baskas

Though Boeing is the best-known innovator in travel to have emerged from Washington State, there are many others. From canoe journeys to flying cars (that actually worked!), explore the history and culture of travel in Washington State. Author and broadcaster Harriet Baskas takes audiences on a tour of notable highlights of state transportation history, examining not just how we get around, but why we travel and where we might be going next.

HISTORY PODCAST: COLUMBIA CONVERSATIONS

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SEATTLE NOW & THEN
The Historic Hundred
By Paul Dorpat and Jean Sherrard, 2018
Documentary Media

Well-known Seattle writer Paul Dorpat and his contemporary photographer accomplice Jean Sherrard have produced a vibrant look at Seattle’s history, as far back as 1859, contrasted with modern views of the same sites.

With a Seattle Times column launched in 1982, Dorpat took up the challenge to feature old city photos juxtaposed with new, shot from as close to the original spot as possible. Dorpat says of his comparative history of Seattle, “It’s like hide and seek. That’s a really deep motive in all of us, to figure out how things are hidden, where things have changed, what things are revealed.” Leafing through the book makes you ponder how the Seattle we know has evolved. Quaint scenes feel slower than the matching recent scenes. But were they?

A photo from the mid-1930’s shows the shanty town called Hooverville, where homeless squatters lived just a few blocks south of Pioneer Square.

Where were the outhouses? Did they pilfer all this scrap wood? Hooverville was on the former grounds of the Skinner and Eddy Shipyard that closed in 1920. A census taken in 1934 counted 632 men and seven women living in 479 shanties. Their ages ranged from 15 to 73. Included were 292 Caucasians foreign born, 186 Caucasians born in the United States, 120 Filipinos, 29 African Americans, 3 Costa Ricans, 2 Mexicans, 2 Indians, 2 Eskimos, and 1 Chilean.

When you look at this gathering of homeless during the Great Depression, does it portend the tiny house villages seen in Seattle since 2015? Surely we have provided better structures and security and a way out? The recent role of the city in determining whether to continue these villages or go the way of an outcomes-based homeless system speaks to Seattle’s need to care for the homeless since 1893. Hooverville disappeared by 1941 and the area again serves shipping purposes. It houses container yards and trucking lanes. Smith Tower can be seen in the background of both photographs.

The 1908 photograph of Pioneer Square shows people in their holiday best. Seattle and surrounding towns had sold out all bunting supplies for this event. Theodore Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet of 16 battleships had come to Seattle in May and 400,000 people showed up to watch the military “Grand Parade.” Business owners lined the streets with stalls and people stayed in tents and furnished rooms. In the image, citizens dressed in Edwardian fashion are seen leaving after the parade, women in shirtwaist dresses and men in three piece suits. The streets are remarkably clean. The Pioneer Building is visible in the modern photo with bikes, cars, people and motorcycles streaming past. And happily, the streets are clean.

Dorpat and Sherrard’s picture book is fun to hold and fun to peruse. Beautiful old photos of Seattle “then” will only have you questioning more. The modern day scenes show us what we, with pleasure, get to experience in Seattle, “now.”

At least for the foreseeable future.

The “then” photograph, looking east at Yesler Way and First Avenue in Seattle, was likely taken on May 26, 1908 during a visit by the American naval vessels known as the Great White Fleet; Jean Sherrard made the “now” image in February 2018.
WINTER IS HERE!

Once again it’s time to get outside and enjoy cold-weather activities in the snow and ice that are returning to some parts of Washington.

As this edition of Washington Gallery demonstrates, little has changed in the past 90 years or so when it comes to winter recreation choices here in the Northwest. Special thanks to the Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center for sharing these vintage photos from their collection of images of North Central Washington.

Right: Vern Bolin and Vivian Johnson are snow sledding in a somewhat unusual manner while standing atop a sled. This photo was taken near the Pine Grove School in the Pleasant Valley area of Okanogan County, west of the community of Okanogan, circa 1923–1924. Courtesy Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center, Griffith Photograph Collection.

Above: Corey (Kaare) Engen, one of the famous Engen brothers, jumps at the Leavenworth Ski Hill on January 26, 1941. According to the Alf Engen Ski Museum, Corey won more than 500 medals and trophies during his skiing career. He was captain of the 1948 U.S. Olympic ski jumping team and was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1973. He was also elected to the Northwest Hall of Fame of Winter Sports in 1987 and was inducted into InterMountain Ski Hall of Fame in 2002. Engen died in May 2006 at age 90. The Ski Hill, still operated by the Leavenworth Winter Sports Club, dates to 1928. Courtesy Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center, Huntoon Photograph Collection.

Left: Ice skaters glide around the rink at Wenatchee’s Pioneer Park in 1949. Pioneer Park originally dates to 1908, and was expanded in 1919. Today, year-round skaters of a slightly different variety enjoy the smooth concrete of the Pioneer Skate Park. Courtesy Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center.
NARD JONES AND HISTORY ON THE RADIO: NORTHWEST NARRATIVES AND PUGET SOUND PROFILES

Seattle-born and Eastern Oregon-raised Nard Jones (1904-1972) was a prolific writer of Pacific Northwest fiction and non-fiction. His novels, including his critically-acclaimed debut, *Oregon Detour*, have been featured in earlier editions of COLUMBIA, and his books about Northwest history are still readily available in used bookstores and online. Jones’ 1959 account of the tragedy of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Cayuse at Waiilatpu, *Marcus Whitman: The Great Command*, remains one of the best-written and best-selling titles about the missionaries and their ultimate demise.

In addition to writing books and working as an editor at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Nard Jones was also one of the first Northwest historians to take to the airwaves with compelling tales of explorers, Native Americans, settlers, outdoor recreation, small town place-names and other unique aspects of regional history and landscape.

From the late 1950s to the mid 1960s, Jones wrote and hosted a series of short daily broadcasts highlighting well-known stories as well as more esoteric moments from the area’s recent and distant past.

The first radio series was sponsored by Peoples National Bank of Washington and was produced by Seattle advertising agency Frederick E. Baker & Associates. It was called Northwest Narratives, and episodes aired daily at 7:30am on Seattle radio station KXA. Peoples National Bank also offered subscriptions to a printed version of the series, which consisted of copies of scripts stapled between cardstock covers and mailed out once a month.

Beginning in 1961 or early 1962, Nard Jones and Baker & Stimpson Advertising collaborated on a second radio series, this time called Puget Sound Profiles. This new series was sponsored by the private utility known in those days as Puget Sound Power & Light, better known today as Puget Sound Energy. This time, the series was broadcast on multiple radio stations, blanketing the Puget Sound region, from KPUG in Bellingham to KOMO in Seattle, from KBRO in Bremerton to KGY in Olympia. Scripts for this program were compiled into two comb-bound volumes that were also made available to the public.

In the early 1960s, *Puget Sound Profiles* received two “Addys” from the Seattle Advertising Club’s: a Gold Ribbon for being the best radio program of five minutes or longer, and the Golden Addy for being the best overall example of any radio advertising of any length.

*Puget Sound Profiles* also received high praise from educators around the region. One elementary school librarian wrote, “The episodes are well-chosen and simply enough told for children to
enjoy. This material will be of real value in our library.” Meanwhile, a principal wrote, “Excellent supplementary material for 4th grade social studies. Teachers have used it with enthusiasm and the pupils like it.”

Unfortunately, while the printed scripts from both series are available, no audio recordings from either series has ever turned up despite numerous searches over the years.

Northwest Narratives, which was carried only by radio station KXA, may have been delivered live each morning by Mr. Jones, and it could be that no recordings ever existed. Puget Sound Profiles, however, played on multiple stations at different times of day, and so these episodes were likely pre-recorded and then sent by mail on tape or, perhaps, on vinyl discs, to each of the 11 radio stations that broadcast the series.

COLUMBIA magazine would be thrilled to track down audio from either or both of Nard Jones’ history radio series to share via the COLUMBIA Conversations podcast. If you know of copies or have any clues that might help lead us to some, please email editor.columbia@gmail.com.

For nearly 20 years, Nard Jones was an editor at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. Courtesy Debbie Jones Tresselt.
It was not unusual to see Lewis L. “Lew” McArthur walking along Jefferson Street, toward the Oregon Historical Society on Park Avenue in Portland, even in his nineties, and after his eyesight began to fade. His family has been associated with OHS since its founding in 1898. For the last century, he and his father Lewis A. “Tam” McArthur before him, had used the OHS archives to compile the largest, most comprehensive record of Oregon place names in a book called Oregon Geographic Names (OGN).

Within the seven volumes published, beginning in 1928, is a history of Oregon through the eyes of the McArthurs and their friend and colleague Robert Sawyer, who joined Tam McArthur in his search for the origins of Oregon names. Their curiosity, sense of humor, and love for Oregon are apparent throughout the collection, each entry a summary of the compilers’ interviews, correspondence, and research into the people and circumstances that led to place names.

Short histories of Oregon populate the OGN, like points on a map. Lew McArthur had respect for each point, no matter how small or remote. He also revisited locations, to make corrections or additions to the original entries, recognizing that history is not static and that memory is fluid.

Over the years and the multiple editions, Lew McArthur developed a narrative technique. “It’s concise, I avoid redundancy, avoid the use of the word that, use appropriate words, and watch my tenses,” McArthur said “It’s not simply the facts you know; there’s a story and you have to have the story.”

That dedication to detail spilled over into Lew’s work on the Oregon Geographic Names Board. Along with his efforts to correct place names on state maps, he worked with his fellow board members in an attempt to remove the racism inscribed on Oregon’s geography. The number of pejorative place names in the state is high, remnants of the white settlement period and the persecution against Natives. Many of those places have been renamed because of the efforts of tribes who work with the Board. Lew particularly struggled with the replacement of Native names on the Oregon map, because he knew that non-Natives would have trouble with pronunciation. That important discussion continues.

It is easy to forget that all this work by the McArthurs was done in their free time—that is, both Tam and Lew had full careers outside of the place-naming business, with Lew working as an industrial designer for the Ray F. Becker Company for 40 years. The letter-writing, the person-to-person conversations, the archival research were all completed during their off-hours, on weekends, and during vacations. After Lew retired, he dedicated most of his time to the next edition of Oregon Geographic Names—he completed three of them—and to the Oregon Geographic Names Board, and he showed up at his OHS office into his nineties. His mind was a compendium of Oregon history, the stories organized geographically, intimately linked to Oregon’s landscape and built environment.

He was generous, and he wrote everything down. Fortunately, when Lew died in August 2018 at age 101, the work did not stop. The next edition of Oregon Geographic Names, now edited by his daughter Mary, will be full of McArthur wit and wisdom.

“Without names you have nothing,” Lew McArthur said in a 2006 interview. “You can’t . . . really think about your own locality without names . . . And that takes you into the place.”
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“Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists.”

—Franklin D. Roosevelt

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