Fifty years after the Apollo Moon landings, get ready to see the Moon as you’ve never seen it before.

Washington State History Museum
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A New Moon Rises was created by the National Air and Space Museum and the Arizona State University, and is organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. Above image: The South Pole, Summer Mosaic. Image courtesy NASA/GSFC/Arizona State University.
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ONLINE

COLUMBIA magazine is a portal to a growing online presence of archival materials and other content from the Washington State Historical Society. Visit washingtonhistory.org for more features, including a searchable database of photos, ephemera, artifacts and a link to the podcast COLUMBIA Conversations.

ON THE COVER

Crewmembers of the Canadian rum-running “mother ship” Malahat grace the cover of COLUMBIA in honor of Rick James’ book excerpt featured in this issue. In the background is an innocent-until-proven-guilty vessel called Forest Friend. Forest Friend image courtesy Royal British Columbia Museum; Malahat crew courtesy Hugh “Red” Garling collection.
Autumn is here once again, and with that comes the “instant history” that election season can sometimes bring, as initiatives and referenda are approved or rejected, and candidates vie for executive positions, or for seats on commissions, boards and councils. In the spirit of this season of reflection and choice, this issue of COLUMBIA offers historical perspectives in three different yet related areas.

As you cast your ballot, Kate Dugdale’s survey of the on again, off again women’s right to vote in Washington Territory might help you appreciate this civic exercise a bit more, regardless of gender. It’s also a good primer for next year’s national women’s suffrage centennial, which the Washington State Historical Society will be observing with a number of special programs. With summer disappearing in the rear view mirror and autumn road trips in the offing, Lionel Youst’s account of his ancestors’ journey to Centralia by covered wagon in the early 20th century might increase your gratitude for modern travel conditions, even if that means waiting in backups on I-90 over Snoqualmie Pass or on I-5 around Joint Base Lewis-McChord. And, once you reach your destination, that cold beverage might provide a bit more refreshment if you consider the Prohibition years, and the lengths to which rum runners went to move product from Canada to Washington. That’s what Rick James delivers in this issue’s cover story, an excerpt from his recent book Don’t Never Tell Nobody Nothin’ No How: The Real Story of West Coast Rum Running.

In our regular features, we get a bird’s-eye view of the Walla Walla Balloon Stampede through photos from Whitman College; discover the backstory of a popular paperback history imprint from the 1970s; assess the enduring “favor” of Tacoma’s name; and explore the Historical Society’s collection of Apollo artifacts—once considered to be “missing”—in time for the landing of A New Moon Rises, an exhibit of lunar photos at the History Museum.

As always, we’re grateful for your support of the Washington State Historical Society and COLUMBIA, and we welcome your comments and suggestions via email: editor.columbia@gmail.com.

RICK JAMES
Rick James is a writer, maritime historian, photographer and field archaeologist whose work has been published in numerous periodicals including The Beaver: Canada’s History Magazine, The Sea Chest: Journal of the Puget Sound Maritime Historical Society and Western Mariner. He is the author of Ghost Ships of Royston and co-authored Historic Shipwrecks of BC’s Central Coast, Historic Shipwrecks of the Sunshine Coast and The Comox Valley. Many people recognize him from his role in The Sea Hunters documentary Malahat: Queen of the Rum Runners, which aired on Canada’s History channel. Rick lives in Courtenay, British Columbia.

LIONEL YOUST
Independent historian Lionel Youst was born in Woodland, Washington, and lives in the woods near Allegany, Oregon. He is the author of several books, including She’s Tricky Like Coyote, and co-author, with William R. Seaburg, of Coquelle Thompson, Athabaskan Witness, both published by University of Oklahoma Press. “The IWW: An Inherited Memory” appeared in the Winter 2015-2016 issue of COLUMBIA.

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WANT TO VISIT THE MOON?
SEE THE LUNAR SURFACE AS NEVER BEFORE
IN A NEW MOON RISES

Visitors to the History Museum this fall are coming face to face with a collection of astounding photographs of the surface of the Moon in a traveling exhibition from the Smithsonian. Visitors who view A New Moon Rises, on display through Sunday, December 1, are also getting a rare opportunity to see priceless lunar items from the Washington State Historical Society’s (WSHS) permanent collection.

Perhaps the most exciting of the WSHS objects is a commemorative plaque containing Moon rock samples collected by Apollo XI astronauts 50 years ago, when Neil Armstrong and Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin became the first humans to walk on the lunar surface. The rocks, which are very small, are encased in a clear solid material called Lucite. Also attached to the plaque is a small Washington flag which went along for the ride to the Moon and back. Officially, the plaque was a gift from President Richard M. Nixon to the State of Washington.

Another item on display is a similar plaque from the final Apollo mission to the Moon. In December 1972, Apollo XVII astronauts Eugene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt explored the Moon’s surface with help from a Washington-made Boeing lunar rover. This plaque contains a single Moon rock, also encased in Lucite, and another miniature Washington flag that made the round-trip to our planet’s lone natural satellite. Astronaut Alan Bean visited Olympia in January 1974 and presented the plaque and other items to Governor Daniel J. Evans.

NASA made the most of the success and popularity of the Apollo program by creating these plaques and making sure that elected officials at home and abroad received them as gifts.

“Space materials were given to each state . . . specifically to the governor as the state’s representative,” said Lynette Miller, head of collections for WSHS. Since Daniel J. Evans was governor of Washington from 1965 to 1977, an era that encompasses all the Apollo missions, he accepted a number of items from NASA on behalf of Washingtonians.

“The governor’s office then gave the items to the State Capital Museum [in Olympia], which was merged with WSHS in the early 1990s,” Miller said.

It’s this merger that resulted in a “Moon rock mystery” of sorts for NASA. Several years ago, the space agency launched an effort to establish the current whereabouts of space materials, like the plaques in the WSHS collection. For an unknown amount of time, the Moon rocks that had been given to the Evergreen State were considered to be among the lost.

“They regarded ours as missing because the researchers didn’t know where they were, but the plaques had been at the State Capital Museum all along,” Miller said.

And through December 1, they'll be on display at the History Museum in Tacoma.

A NEW MOON RISES

On view at the Washington State History Museum through December 1, 2019

A New Moon Rises is an exhibit from the Smithsonian featuring more than 50 dramatic, large-scale landscape images of the Moon’s surface captured by the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter Camera (LROC) between 2009 and 2015. These breathtaking images feature the Apollo landing sites, majestic mountains rising out of the darkness, the lunar poles and more. Visitors can also see 3-D models of the lunar surface, rocks gathered by Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong, and retro “futuristic” objects from the Historical Society’s collections that show what mid-century Americans thought life would be like in a post-lunar-landing world.
RUM RUNNERS
of the SALISH SEA
by Rick James
At the stroke of one minute past midnight, 17th January 1920, the proposed 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution, the National Prohibition Act, known informally as the Volstead Act, was officially declared in effect. Named for Andrew Volstead, the Republican chair of the House Judiciary Committee who managed the legislation, the Act stated from that day on, “no person shall manufacture, sell, barter, transport, export, deliver, or furnish any intoxicating liquor except as authorized by this act.” The “Noble Experiment” as it soon came to be called, was to last fourteen years before being brought to an end in December 1933.

However, while the American government was closing tavern doors, the citizens of British Columbia chose to take a different direction the very same year. Prohibition had been in effect in Canada’s west coast province since 1917 but it soon proved a failed experiment and after only three years, voters (which for the first time included women) decided they’d had enough and in a plebiscite on October 20, 1920 turned thumbs down on the legislation. It wouldn’t be until June 15, 1921 that it was all officially done and over with and the very unpopular legislation slipped away into the proverbial dustbin of history. All of Canada’s nine provinces and two territories had experimented with prohibition law but nearly all had repealed it by the late 1920s.

Right from the start, the attempt to prohibit the consumption of alcoholic beverages met with limited success.
since the legislation was not only extremely unpopular but also soon found very difficult and expensive to enforce. Still, the doors to the province’s drinking establishments weren’t exactly thrown wide open to thirsty residents looking for relief with an alcoholic beverage. Instead, what voters had approved in the referendum was a system of strict government control of the sale of alcohol with a three-man Liquor Control Board (L.C.B.) to be set up to oversee and regulate the sale through government stores. Also, the new liquor act initially banned all public drinking unless one had a special, temporary permit issued by the L.C.B. It wouldn’t be until 1924 that the sale of beer by the glass was available in hotel beer parlors. These establishments, with their separate Men and Ladies entrances, soon became popular watering holes throughout the province where they were to retain a prominent place in B.C. culture as a place to relax and unwind for another fifty years.

The Volstead Act was not only enacted the year British Columbia turned its back on prohibition but also arrived into the midst of a serious post-war depression. Following the signing of the Armistice in November 1918, a booming wartime economy turned stagnant and ground to a standstill. Much to the distress of soldiers returning from the Western Front, there were no jobs and they found themselves only contributing to a growing unemployment problem. As a result, many displaced workers and their families throughout British Columbia, as well as the rest of the nation, were looking for any means to get by. And some soon proved cleverer than others, especially those who happened to own anything that could float. While Prohibition had actually been in effect in the state of Washington since 1916, it was only when it was declared nationwide in 1920 that many on both sides of the border were quick to take advantage of this curious
juxtaposition of Canadian and American government policies concerning alcohol.

In the opinion of a large section of the public, the consumption of alcohol was not considered a crime as such, much like the recreational smoking of marijuana is viewed today. As a result, in the early years of the 1920s, bootlegging (smuggling and delivering up liquor by land) and rum running (smuggling by water) quickly developed into extremely lucrative enterprises throughout southern British Columbia. Of course, there was the land component to the trade where Canadian vehicles often pulled right up to border crossings to transfer loads over to American cars and trucks (often in sight of the Customs buildings where its officers apparently looked the other way) but it was the sea-based operations that proved the most rewarding. Regardless of how it was carried out, the underground trade proved extremely profitable and by 1924, it was estimated that some five million gallons of booze had been smuggled by land and sea into the United States. Bootleggers and rum runners were simply taking advantage of the basic of economic laws—that of supply and demand.

Once the Volstead Act went into effect in 1920, it didn’t take long before fleets of vessels, from weather-beaten old fishing boats to large ocean-going steamers, began filling their holds with liquor. They would steam south from Canadian ports and sit just outside the US territorial limit to deliver up their much valued cargos to launches running out from shore. British Columbia itself was ideally located for the movement of illegal liquor by sea, since the southern tip of Vancouver Island sticks out like a boot kicking deep into the exposed butt of Washington State. With a maze of islands scattered throughout the deep sheltered waterways of the Strait of Georgia, Haro Strait and the ports of Vancouver and Victoria only a short distance from the San Juan Islands and Puget Sound, the area soon proved a veritable floating liquor marketplace where Canadian boats delivered up orders to their American counterparts in relative safety.

As Victoria’s The Daily Colonist noted in a short article in April 1922, word had it from Bellingham-based officers of the law that, “The islands are bartering grounds for’ liquor runners’ from British Columbia and this country...The San Juan Archipelago offers an ideal field for operations.” It would appear that a few Canadians were indeed bold enough to venture across the line in order to garner a better return. As Washington state Sherriff Al Callahan informed the reporter, “the Sucia Island, (one of the San Juan Islands lying west of Bellingham close to the border) the prettiest of them all, perhaps, is the clearing grounds for cargoes.” This is only of late. "Heretofore," he says, "the American boats had to go into British waters to pick up their orders. Now, he says, the British runners from Victoria and Vancouver deliver the goods on the American side and charge for their risk.” As it was, the newspaper continued, “Tales of crime often trickle in from the exchange grounds. ‘Knock overs’ are said to be frequent. Freebooters range the waters and take possession of the cargoes, not caring whether their victims are Britshers or Yankees. There is a none too friendly spirit between the rum runners.”

As it stood, Canadian rum runners were well within their rights and not breaking any laws, as long as they stayed on the Canadian side of the border where they felt relatively safe from hijacking. Most B.C. boat operators who took up rum running considered themselves just ordinary businessmen who were providing a delivery service by passing over their cargoes to American vessels well within Canadian waters, preferably at any number of the convenient, out of the way bays and coves hidden throughout the small islands in Haro Strait. These included Sidney, D’Arcy and Gooch Islands and East Point on...
Saturna Island. Discovery and Chatham Islands group—right across from Oak Bay’s popular Willows Beach—in particular, proved exceptionally ideal since the islands were only minutes away from US waters with a fast boat. Philip Metcalfe explained it all well in *Whispering Wires: The Tragic Tale of an American Bootlegger*, his biography of Seattle bootleg kingpin, Roy Olmstead. Numerous Canadian boats, some as small as eighteen feet, which he claimed were capable of packing seventy-five to one hundred cases aboard, were working for the big liquor exporters and delivering up their cargo F.O.S. (flat on the sand) to American boats out behind Discovery, Saturna, or D’Arcy Islands. The trip out and back took only a few hours and an enterprising boat owner could easily make five or six trips a month and collect a profit of $1,000 Canadian dollars (around $14,000 in today’s money). In 1922, the Canadian government granted more than four hundred “deep sea” clearances to small boats engaged in the liquor trade. This fleet of fish boats, packers and tugs grew by the week and was soon recognized as the “whiskito” fleet.

In April 1924, *The Daily Colonist* noted that properties on a number of the islands in the busy shipping channel were in hot demand. “Mr. A.E. Craddock, of the County of Limerick, Ireland, has purchased the north end of Prevost Island...and two other islands recently changed hands, one going to a prominent British distiller, and the other to a San Francisco capitalist, who has money invested in Pacific Coast liquor running ventures....Publicity given Smugglers’ Cove, Discovery Island recently, has driven rum runners to other islands in the Gulf. More than twenty of these little dots of land are credited with each being an oasis in a desert of salt water.”

Like any contraband substance, the more risk taken on importing or exporting an illegal product a far better monetary return was able to be reaped. This was especially true for those involved in the trade who operated a custom built high powered launch and who were willing to run the risk of “jumping the line”—making runs across the border out in Haro Strait or the Strait of Juan de Fuca under the cover of darkness to deliver up their payload directly onto Washington state beaches.

Overall, the export of alcohol across the line during US Prohibition soon proved particularly rewarding. While a quart of good Scotch only cost $3.50 in Seattle prior to Prohibition, once the Volstead Act went into effect and bootleggers were still scarce, the price soared as high as $25 a quart and by 1924, it was selling curbside anywhere from $6 to $12. In the early years, American rum runners were paying from $25 to $40 for a 12-bottle case depending on the particular brand of Scotch, bourbon or gin delivered up by Canadian boats, which could be sold for up to $70 in Seattle.

The US government, of course, became particularly annoyed when a flood of booze began pouring across the line—whether by land or sea—and put pressure on their Canadian counterparts to impose tougher laws on rum running. But the way the Dominion government saw it, it wasn’t Canada’s responsibility to enforce America’s liquor laws since the nation’s big export houses were private concerns that were licenced to ship liquor anywhere in the world. Still, on the surface, the federal government in Ottawa appeared to be somewhat willing to preserve good relations with its neighbor to the south, although it was most reluctant to forego the tax revenue generated by this particularly lucrative export trade. As far as Canadian government officials were concerned, everything was perfectly legal as long as all the customs and clearance paperwork was filled out properly. Thus, in order to pacify their counterparts in Washington, D.C., and at the same time boost tax revenues, in the first year of the trade’s operation, Ottawa raised the fee for a liquor export license from $3,000 to $10,000 dollars.

In response to the federal government placing this steep tax on all liquor export agents, and with Prohibition...
firmly entrenched south of the border, many of British Columbia’s brewery, distillery and hotel liquor buying agents then decided that it might be better if they all joined together. This way the group only had to pay the $10,000 license fee for the whole lot of them. As a result, Consolidated Exporters Corporation Ltd. came into being on August 25, 1922, with its head office at 1050 Hamilton Street in downtown Vancouver. The stated object of the new company was to serve “as wholesale, import and export merchants, dealing with all classes of goods, merchandise, and wares and to buy, sell, prepare, market, handle, import, export, and deal in wines and alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages of all kinds of whatsoever insofar as the law allows the same to be done.”

Stephen Schneider, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Criminology, Saint’s Mary’s University, Halifax, noted in *Iced: The Story of Organized Crime in Canada*, that the underground liquor trade was driven by the most basic of economic laws: that of supply and demand. And that “the Canadian conglomerates that grew fat off Prohibition were some of the first corporations to be vertically integrated, handling all aspects of their trade including production, distribution, sales, export, financing and marketing. They were also the most corrupt, unethical, and duplicitous corporations to ever to operate in this country...and did not shy away from selling to dangerous criminal syndicates...They forged export documents, fraudulently listed the consigned destination of exported liquor as anywhere but the United States, used counterfeit landing certificates from foreign ports, set up shell front companies, misrepresented the contents of their products, forged liquor labels, and bribed customs officials.”

As Philip Metcalfe so aptly points out in *Whispering Wires*, it wasn’t long before, “like a fabulous sea monster, its head stuffed with American greenbacks, Consolidated had tentacles reaching down the coast to Mexico and Columbia, across the Isthmus of Panama to Belize and eastward all the way to Cuba. In the final years of rumrunning, the company established depots in Tahiti...and China.”

Johnny Schnaar, a Canadian who excelled at “jumpin’ the line,” explained how this sophisticated liquor export operation was run out of his hometown of Victoria. He said that local boats would load from the wharf in front of Consolidated Exporters’ Victoria headquarters and office right on Wharf Street at the foot of Fort Street, where the Leiser & Pither building still stands. He remembered how back in the early days of Prohibition there was no problem exporting liquor to the United States as far as the Canadian government was concerned. While there was a $19-a-case duty on it, he said that never bothered anybody and that he personally still received $11 a case for the hauling.

Later, when Canadian Customs restricted boats from loading directly from the Consolidated’s dock, Schnaar started going in behind Discovery Island to pick up his liquor orders brought around from Victoria’s Inner...
Harbour via the three fish boats assigned by Consolidated to the task. The Discovery and Chatham Islands group, with their quiet coves and narrow channels and close proximity to the US-Canada boundary, were an ideal rendezvous point for rum runners. Here a fellow and his wife even anchored their boat in behind Discovery Island and sold beer to the Americans running across the line to pick up their orders. But after the sale of this beverage proved particularly popular, they realized there was even better money to be made selling hard liquor. The couple then built a small lodge on the island where they offered good home-cooked meals to all those who were there waiting to pick up or deliver a load and built floats out into deep water so there was room to tie up right in front of the lodge.

While these islands remained a popular, and generally peaceful, exchange point throughout the rum running years, there was the odd incident. With the rewards being so high, Canadian operators soon learned that they had to be prepared to defend themselves since they were, in essence, sitting ducks to the criminal element that wasn’t going to let any border get in their way. The most feared of the American hijackers were the Egger brothers, Theodore “Ted,” Ariel “Happy,” and Milo “Mickey,” famous for their black-hulled
speedster, Alice or M197, powered by a 200-horsepower Van Blerck gasoline engine. But it wasn’t just their fast boat that made their reputation in the early 1920s.

Hugh “Red” Garling, who joined the rum running fraternity after he signed on the mother ship Malahat as a crewman in January 1931, described the Egger brothers as the most unscrupulous, hardened criminals known throughout the Pacific Northwest during their brief career. He noted that for eighteen months between 1922 and 1924 the Egger boys brought to the Gulf Islands and American San Juan Islands and Puget Sound waters “an interval of terror.” As it was, the returns for American rum runners were particularly rewarding since they were able to buy whiskey from Canadian carriers for around $25 a case and then sell it in Seattle for up to $225 a case. But the Eggers decided this was not quite good enough so turned to piracy in order to obtain it gratis.

One day while tied up at the float at Discovery Island, Johnny Schnaar and his partner noticed a boat, painted completely black, pulling into the bay. Schnaar described two men aboard the boat as rough-looking characters, both hawk-faced and raw-boned; he didn’t like the looks of either of them. When they began asking all sorts of questions about the price of liquor but came across as not all that interested in buying any, Schnaar and his buddy got suspicious. Alice shadowed them for a while after Schnaar and his partner picked up their liquor and set off for Anacortes, but the evil looking boat finally turned away and headed off in another direction looking for easier pickings. Schnaar figures his demonstration of skill with his Luger shooting bottles out of the water while waiting at the Discovery Island float probably discouraged the desperate looking characters from bothering with them. It was only when they were back on Discovery Island a week later that they learned that they’d met up with a couple of the notorious Egger boys: Mickey, Happy or Ted.

The Eggers did pull off a couple of successful stickups in Canadian waters in the early years of the trade. In August 1923, they made off with sixty-three cases of liquor from the Canadian owned boat Lilliums near Hope Bay on North Pender Island. Then in March 1924, they captured the Hadsel with a cargo of 293 cases aboard, at Peter Cove at the south end of North Pender Island after riddling her wheelhouse with seventeen shots. San Francisco police finally arrested both Happy and Mickey in the United States on a charge of highway robbery in November 1924 and the Eggers’ reign of terror throughout Puget Sound and B.C. waters came to an end.

Still, it was the “mother ships” which were at the top of the hierarchy of Consolidated Exporters’ rum fleet. They sat off the Oregon and California coasts and provided the bulk of their liquor to American neighbors to the south. These were the large deep sea vessels like steamships Federalship, Quadra, and Mogul, motor ships Lillehorn and Principio the auxiliary schooner Coal Harbour, and big five-masted lumber schooner Malahat. In the early years, the bulk of the liquor market lay out in international
waters on “Rum Row” off the Columbia River Bar and the Farallon Islands just outside San Francisco’s Golden Gate. Here, mother ships served as large floating liquor emporiums where the small, fast American “fireboats” (for the “firewater” they carried) would run out from shore, make contact with a Canadian freighter and identify themselves by passing over a half dollar bill to match the other half held aboard the mother ship. Sometimes, Canadian fast launches took a big risk to run a load of liquor into American waters as far up river as Sacramento. After loading some two or three hundred cases, the

Red Garling explained the other means used to deliver up orders. “The \textit{Lillehorn} would be the mother ship until it was time for her to return home. The \textit{Malahat} would relieve her and the \textit{Lillehorn} would transfer the balance of her cargo to the \textit{Malahat} which would arrive with a cargo of liquor. She would stay there for four months to a year or more. These were the larger ships that could stay at sea for long periods of time and would supply the next in the hierarchy, the distributor boats or fast freighters, with liquor, provisions, diesel oil and even food supplies. The fast freighters were vessels with a carrying capacity of anywhere from 1,000 to 3,000 cases of liquor. Their primary function was to take their load of liquor up to various positions off the coast where buyers’ boats would come out to pick up their pre-ordered and prepaid liquor. The buyer’s boats came last in the hierarchy and were small, fast boats, usually American, which would make contact, identify themselves and take their prepaid load, landing it on the beach, sometimes running it right in a harbor, through the Coast Guard blockade.”

Overall, as Captain Charles H. Hudson, Marine Superintendent of Consolidated Exporters Corporation noted, regardless of Rum Row’s location, the whole operation, whether in and around local B.C. waters or out on the open Pacific on Rum Row, remained generally above board involving nothing criminal or untoward for Canadians working in the export industry.

As he stressed throughout his taping for CBC Radio back in the 1960s, “Vancouver was in the midst of a real depression, with logging, fishing, mining, etc. in the doldrums. It took rum running to keep industry going, especially on the waterfront. The tremendous moneys paid out to industry in Vancouver were never known to the average citizen. We spent a fabulous amount of money building boats; purchasing and overhauling engines; buying food and supplies for our ships; using the shipyards for overhaul and in wages for the crew and fuel. We had a Japanese yard down by the [Rogers] sugar refinery and then we had them over in Vancouver...We operated perfectly legally and brought prosperity back to the harbor of Vancouver (and Victoria).”

Caption Hudson summarized, “Many people thought of rum running as a piratical trade...It wasn’t anything dangerous. Simple, clean business operation from start to finish, no firing or hijacking, nobody lost or drowned or killed, good wages, paid well, a bonanza in Vancouver because Vancouver was in the dumps!...We considered ourselves philanthropists! We supplied good liquor to poor thirsty Americans who were poisoning themselves with rotten moonshine!”

\begin{quote}
\textbf{“}We considered ourselves philanthropists! We supplied good liquor to poor thirsty Americans who were poisoning themselves with rotten moonshine!”
\end{quote}
Salmon Eaters to Sagebrushers
Washington's Lost Literary Legacy
Peter Donahue
A hybrid of literary criticism, history, and biography, Salmon Eaters to Sagebrushers examines Washington State novels, memoirs, and poetry gems from the late 1800s to the mid-1960s, pairing reappraisals of more than forty works with short excerpts and author profiles. Available in November 2019.
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ON A COLD DAY IN NOVEMBER 1883, just four women were present when the Washington Territorial Legislature counted the votes on a measure supporting women’s suffrage. Across the United States, only Wyoming Territory had granted women the right to vote. Washington Territory stood at the forefront of a growing movement to officially include women in the practice of democracy.

Suffragists had fought for this moment in Washington for 30 years. Finally, it seemed as if victory might be at hand. Abigail Scott Duniway was one of those four women. Her hands were shaking nervously as she kept track of the vote counts for, and against, women’s suffrage. Although she lived and worked in Oregon, Duniway was influential throughout the region and had led the charge for women’s suffrage in Washington Territory.

The count took only a few minutes. The final tally was 14 to 7 in the House Legislature, and 7 to 5 in the Territorial Council. Women had been granted the right to vote in Washington Territory. And, though their numbers were small, this suffrage bill notably gave the vote to all women in Washington Territory, including women of color.

Duniway ran from the Territorial Legislature’s chamber in the old Capitol Building and out onto the muddy streets of Olympia to get to the telegraph office and send word to newspapers around the Territory, including to her own publication, the New Northwest.

According to the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, dozens of people descended upon Olympia to celebrate the passing of women’s suffrage, as bells rang and cannons were fired to signal what had been accomplished.

Seven days after the measure passed, Territorial Governor William A. Newell signed the bill, the P-I wrote, “with a gold pen, presented to him for the purpose by women whom he had thus made free.” However, the joy felt by many women in Washington that day was to be short-lived.

National suffrage came for most women in the United States in 1920. So how was it that the Territorial Legislature in Washington was 37 years ahead of the United States Congress? To say that women’s suffrage in what is now the Evergreen State is a complex story is an understatement. Between 1883 and 1888, Washington’s women won—and then lost—the right to vote—twice. As the decade of the 1880s came to a close, women wouldn’t be able to legally vote in Washington again until 1910.

The drive to secure women the right to vote in Washington Territory began in 1854, when Seattle settler Arthur Denny proposed a bill to enact women’s suffrage at the very first meeting of the legislature. That bill narrowly lost by a vote of 8 to 9, and the issue was not raised seriously for another 15 years.

In 1871, Susan B. Anthony visited Washington Territory as a suffrage activist, speaking directly to the women and encouraging all citizens to join the suffrage movement. Anthony provided the Pacific Northwest suffragists with legal arguments for the cause, stating that women, as citizens, already had the right to vote, thanks to the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution.
Throughout her visit, Anthony was accompanied by Abigail Scott Duniway. Together, Anthony and Duniway formed the Washington Woman’s Suffrage Association in Olympia that same year. For the next decade, members of the Territorial Legislature introduced three bills to give women the vote—in 1873, 1875, and 1881. All three bills failed.

However, by 1883, suffrage had gained enough traction to pass, thanks in part to the tireless efforts of Abigail Scott Duniway.

Though no one celebrating that day knew it at the time, women’s right to vote in Washington Territory was only to be a temporary phenomenon. Washington politics changed drastically after 1883, and before the 1880s were over, women were ultimately no longer trusted to exercise their vote.

Men’s Concerns About Women’s Votes

In 1883, there were many men in Washington Territory who supported women’s suffrage. Clearly, a majority of men in the legislature supported suffrage for women, as it was exclusively those men who could give women the legal right to vote. For the next two years, they watched, impressed, as women turned out to the polls in large numbers. The Seattle Post-Intelligencer noted in June 1884 that more than 300 women had registered to vote in Seattle, just six months after women got the right to vote. Included in this number were African American women; Washington Territory was one of the first places in the United States that African American women could and did register to vote, although historians are unsure if any actually exercised their right to vote at this time.

In retrospect, it appears that the more that women participated in elections, the more the male opinion of suffrage changed. When women first got the vote, male-run newspapers applauded their efforts to clean up urban areas and crack down on crime. Starting in 1884, women in Seattle lobbied aggressively against gambling, liquor sales, and prostitution by serving on grand juries and pushing for increased fines and for imprisonment for wayward saloon operators and proprietors.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer triumphantly claimed that these results were “a warning to that undesirable class of the community . . . that open disregard of law and the decencies of civilization will not be tolerated.” These sentiments, however, would not last.

Suffrage Movement Leadership Conflicts

Despite living in Oregon, Abigail Scott Duniway had strong influence in Washington Territory, was well known in Territorial politics and was the de facto leader of the suffrage movement throughout the Pacific Northwest. Duniway herself stated that between 1871 and 1883 she gave 140 speeches a year to promote the suffrage movement, half in Oregon and half in Washington Territory.

Though she was originally inspired by Susan B. Anthony, Duniway operated very differently than Anthony and other more well-known counterparts on the East Coast. For one thing, Duniway worked alone, without the support of a political partner, unlike the strong partnership of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. By working together, Anthony and Stanton provided each other complementary skills and emotional support throughout the battle for women’s votes. While Duniway was more than capable, her unique and solitary leadership style created problems for the women’s suffrage movement in Washington Territory.

Historians often describe Duniway’s leadership style as “autocratic.” Stocky, 5’6” tall, and forceful, she was not popular in Olympia, where male lawmakers reportedly felt that she made fun of them for not being progressive enough. In 1881, a suffrage bill had failed to pass, and many blamed Duniway’s aggressive behavior for the loss. An Olympia newspaper, The Transcript, reported that suffragists believed that if Duniway “would not claim it as her victory, the bill would (have) passed.”

And after the 1883 victory, the suffrage movement broke into two camps that disagreed on how women should use their votes. On one side was the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). They were staunch prohibitionists and aimed to use women’s newfound voting privileges to halt the sale and production of alcohol in Washington. Some of these women became suffragists solely so that they could control the use of alcohol, as many people saw prohibition as the only way to protect women involved in abusive marriages;
that is, marriages to men whose alcohol problems led to emotional and/or physical violence.

On the other side was Abigail Scott Duniway. Duniway thought that women’s voting rights would naturally give them more control over their own lives, including freeing them from abusive marriages without having to outlaw alcohol. While Duniway supported prohibition, she knew that the business community in Washington Territory opposed it, and she feared that if men could no longer drink or profit from alcohol, women voters would be blamed. As early as 1881, she claimed that if women attempted “to close the rum shops, they would have a thousand forces against them.” Duniway’s stance would be her downfall within the local suffrage movement.

In 1886, Washington Territory put the issue of prohibition to a special vote. In a ‘local option,’ towns and cities could enforce prohibition without making it a Territory-wide issue. At this time, Washington, and the Seattle area in particular, was in the middle of a crisis. The issue was anti-Chinese sentiment amongst the white working-class citizens of the Puget Sound area. This contributed to the creation of a pro-labor, anti-Chinese “People’s Party”—supported by the national labor organization, the Knights of Labor. The so-called People’s Party was pitted against the more conservative and pro-business Loyal League, which was supported by local business leaders including Thomas Burke and Henry Yesler. The 1886 municipal elections in Seattle brought these two sides into direct confrontation at the same time that the local option was up for a vote.

The Territorial WCTU decided to ignore the larger political crisis in favor of a single-issue vote. Winnie Thomas, the WCTU’s Territorial Organizer, declared that “politics are simply nothing” and stated that she intended to only vote for candidates who supported prohibition, regardless of political affiliation. Under Thomas’s guidance, many Seattle women voted for municipal candidates based solely on the candidate’s stance on prohibition.

By voting based on a single issue, women in Seattle showed their independence from political partisanship. But they did so at a cost.

In an editorial published by the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, a former proponent of suffrage and a member of the Loyal League, Orange Jacobs, practically begged women in Seattle to “show by your votes today that you are able to grasp and intelligently decide the question of the hour...do not...show the world that you have but one idea.” Despite this plea, many women voted for pro-temperance candidates. The Loyal League candidates were defeated.

Through editorials in the New Northwest, Abigail Scott Duniway warned that Washington women’s voting rights could be threatened if they gave most male voters a reason to turn against suffrage. Specifically regarding the local option vote, she cautioned that “wise women know better than to make their fire too hot, lest they cook their own as well as other women’s ballot yeast.” These statements would lead Duniway into trouble. The WCTU accused her of selling out to the liquor industry. A women’s group in Massachusetts even wanted to publicly censure Duniway for her actions. The break between Duniway and the prohibition suffragists split the local leadership of the suffrage movement. Without a strong and united front, women’s suffrage was vulnerable.

Washington Territorial Governor Eugene Semple signed a bill in 1888 giving women the right to vote. WSHS 1943.42.12849.

Suffrage is Repealed for the First Time

When women temporarily lost the right to vote in Washington Territory, it was because of what could be described as a technicality.

The loss of voting rights came about as a result of a bill passed in 1883 called “An Act to Amend Section 3050, Chapter 238 of the Code of Washington.” In spite of its bland name, this important act was the bill that removed the word ‘male’ from the Territorial Constitution and gave women the right to vote. In 1887, a judge ruled that the original bill was invalid because its title did not adequately describe the contents of the bill. If legislators wanted to give women the vote again, they would need to pass a bill that clearly stated the bill’s purpose. Later in 1887, the Territorial Legislature, which was elected in part by women voters, scrambled to pass a bill, this time titled “An Act to Enfranchise Women,” reauthorizing women’s suffrage. Territorial Governor Semple now had to decide if he would sign that bill into law.

In January 1888, several businessmen wrote to Governor Semple concerning the recently repealed women’s suffrage
law. They argued that women should not be allowed again to vote. In their opinion, women’s votes contributed to an economic depression in the Territory in 1884, and they argued that the business community across the Territory was against giving women the right to vote.

Regardless of what Semple heard from businessmen around the territory, he signed the 1887 bill on January 18, 1888, and women’s right to vote in Washington Territory was restored. It was to be only another temporary victory.

In May 1888, suffrage was threatened once again, this time by an elaborate plot hatched by a Spokane saloon owner named Edward Bloomer and his wife Nevada Bloomer who sought to eliminate the threat of women voting in favor of prohibition. Mrs. Bloomer and her husband arranged to have her vote rejected in a local election in order to bring the issue before the Territorial Supreme Court. Women had been granted the right to vote in Washington Territory in 1883 based, in part, by interpreting the word “citizen” in the Organic Act of 1853, the federal legislation that created Washington Territory, to mean men and women over the age of 21. In Bloomer v. Todd, the Territorial Supreme Court ruled on August 14, 1888 that “citizen” in the Organic Act only meant “male.” Just like that, women lost the right to vote a second time.

Suffrage and Statehood

At this crucial moment in Washington’s history, the Territory was also petitioning for statehood for the second time. In late 1888, the United States Congress introduced an act to enable Washington, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota to become states, which required that each territory draft and ratify a state constitution. Right at the moment when women were losing their vote on a technicality, men in Washington Territory were putting together the delegation that would frame the future state’s constitution.

A delegate to the 1889 Constitutional Convention, the Honorable T.J. Humes, highlighted the connection between statehood and suffrage in an editorial in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. Humes reminded readers that because Congress was not in favor of women’s suffrage, it would be that much harder for Washington to gain statehood. Humes claimed to know many members of Congress personally, and he stated that the congressmen he knew would vote against Washington statehood if women had the right to vote.

Most convention delegates apparently agreed with Humes. Edward Eldridge, a delegate from Whatcom County and a devoted suffragist, moved to strike the word “male” from the voting rights section of the state constitution, but his motion was defeated 50 to 8. The convention did allow male electors from around the brand new state to vote on enacting suffrage, but this, too, was soundly defeated, by 35,527 to 16,613, with only four counties supporting suffrage—Asotin, Clallam, San Juan and Whitman.

Clearly, women’s suffrage was a risk that both delegates and voters were unwilling to take, and in the newly minted state, only men would be allowed to vote. This time, loss of voting rights was due to more than just a mere technicality.

In addition to the identifiable societal and business concerns, it appears as if some men simply had a change of heart about suffrage that was not tied to anything specific. In 1889, the Washington Standard published an interview with Territorial Representative Joe Kuhn of Port Townsend. Kuhn was considered one of the ‘fathers’ of the 1883 suffrage bill, but by 1889 he had changed his mind. His explanation was that women’s suffrage had been given a fair trial in the Territory, but that it “should not exist any longer.”

The In-Between Years for Women’s Suffrage in Washington State

The initial excitement Abigail Scott Duniway and dozens of other women across the Territory felt in 1883 about winning the right to vote dissipated over the subsequent five years. The breakup of the suffrage leadership and the growing fear of women using their vote to upend the status quo convinced many Washington men that the suffrage ‘experiment’ in their Territory had failed. In their view, suffrage was not worth ushering into their new state. What had been a shining victory for the national suffrage struggle was, by 1889, a disappointing failure.

While women only had the right to vote for a brief amount of time, the issue of suffrage remained constant throughout the whole Territorial period, and continued to be so in the early statehood years until women won suffrage again in 1910. By that time, the factors that led to the loss of suffrage in the Territory had weakened or disappeared entirely.

The 1910 Washington suffrage victory was the first for the national movement in the 20th century. Just two years later, neighboring Oregon women also won the right to vote.

In 1912, Abigail Scott Duniway was finally able to cast her very first vote at the age of 78.
COLUMBIA CONVERSATIONS: 308 DAYS

Hear vintage recordings of Lionel Youst’s father describing highlights of his family’s 1903 journey in the COLUMBIA Conversations podcast, episode 3.
The following story is taken from an oral account of one family's experience in a covered wagon at the turn of the twentieth century, working at jobs along a circuitous route through the Southwest and on to Washington. Frank and Alice (Bingham) Youst were the author's grandparents. The couple and their three young children left Woods County, Oklahoma Territory, in a covered wagon on August 22, 1903, arriving at Centralia, Washington, 308 days later on June 26, 1904. In the late 1960s, there was a surge of interest in oral history, which inspired the author to purchase a tape recorder and, in 1967, record several hours of memories from his dad, George Youst, who was a young child during the journey and in his late 60s at the time of the recording.

Before 1870, somewhere between a quarter and a half-million overland immigrants arrived on the West Coast by wagon. They invariably traveled in trains of up to 100 or more wagons, and there are about 2,500 diaries, journals and letters that document these experiences first-hand. After 1870, travel by wagon changed significantly when the first transcontinental railroads were completed. The flow of wagons continued, but there were no more large wagon trains. Smaller groups, and individual wagons with families traveling alone or in pairs, continued into the 1920s, but very few of those late-arriving immigrants left accounts of their experiences. No one knows much about them or even how many there actually were.

In those years, there were always reasons to move west. Water and work and wood were essential items that were abundant in Washington but in short supply at a homestead on the 99th meridian in the old “Cherokee Outlet” of Oklahoma Territory. The shortage of wood was probably the toughest of the three hardships to cope with, and the prospect of a land where wood was plentiful was a powerful attraction.

Frank and Alice also received glowing reports of the opportunities in Washington from Alice’s sister, who had moved to Chehalis.

Alice’s parents were southerners, having moved to Kansas from Missouri where wood was plentiful. Wood was also plentiful where Frank was from in West Virginia, a border state in the Civil War much like Missouri. Their families moved to the little prairie town of St. John in south-central Kansas. It was in St. John where something of a small token of reconciliation between North and South occurred when Frank and Alice were...
married on September 25, 1892. It was just in time to get ready for the big Oklahoma Land Rush a year later.

The Industrial Revolution manifested itself at St. John, first with the railroad in 1886, and then when the local fire department acquired a steam pumper. Frank learned about steam engines from working with the pumper as a volunteer firefighter, and during harvests in Oklahoma he worked as the separator tender on the big steam-powered threshing machines. This experience with steam turned out to be a perfect fit in the Washington logging camps later on. Meanwhile, 80 miles south of St. John, the largest land rush in world history occurred.

The Cherokee Outlet was opened for settlement at noon on September 16, 1893. The Cherokee Outlet was a piece of land twice the size of Massachusetts that ran 225 miles along the Kansas-Oklahoma border, and extended south 58 miles. The Cherokee Nation held title to it under an 1835 treaty, and the land served as an “outlet” or direct route from their reservation to the Rocky Mountains for hunting. It was little used for that purpose, and following the Civil War, a consortium of cattle companies leased it from the Cherokee Nation for grazing. In 1890, upon receipt of about $8.5 million, the Cherokee relinquished title and in 1893 it was opened to settlement, first-come, first-served. A total of 115,000 people registered for a chance to acquire 42,000 homesteads of 160 acres each.

In Youst family lore, it was assumed that Frank and Alice were in the race and that they had been part of the great land rush, but this was not accurate. The land entry files from the National Archives help set the record straight. The couple did not enter the race. Alice was only 19 years old, which was too young to enter, and she was pregnant with her first son, John. According to his affidavit, Frank “first entered the Cherokee Outlet Jan. 14, 1894.” The next day, at Alva, Oklahoma, he filed for a homestead someone had already given up on.

In that part of the country back in the days of the bison, the Comanche Nation and the Kiowa Tribe had followed the herds through the area. By the 1890s, the buffalo were gone. The Native Americans that had followed them had been moved to reservations south of the Cherokee Outlet and only occasionally would a band of them be seen passing through. George Youst witnessed one such “cultural encounter” that may have been typical.

“One time a tribe of Indians came through there. They had wagons and riding horses, quite a bunch of ’em. Of course, I was a little bit scared.”

Frank and Alice did not linger at the homestead. On May 20, 1897, Frank relinquished his claim, trading it “for a team of horses and a wagon.” Four months later, Alice gave birth to Dorothy in the sod house of her grandparents; George was born there March 29, 1899. The last of the kids born in the sod house was Orpha, on December 19, 1901. The other four children would arrive later in
Centralia, which had the advantage of plenty of wood and no rattlesnakes.

After Frank relinquished his claim, “he rented a place and finally he bought another place that a guy had starved out on.” The new place, according to the 1900 Census, was in Cleo Township, South Cimarron River. It was about 50 miles south of Kiowa, home of the post office where they got their mail. George said of the house, “The roof, I remember it very well because it was shingled with sides of boxes and they didn’t fit very good. When it rained the water came right in the house. Mother had an oil cloth for the table, which was quite a luxury. When it was raining and leaking bad in there, she’d put me and John underneath the table so we wouldn’t get wet.” There was a sod shed at the side of the house for a bedroom. For a roof on the sod shed, Grandad cut a bunch of poles from a blackjack grove, enough to reach across the width of the structure. “Then he took straw and put over the poles and then he took these sods, just like he did the sides of the wall, and laid over the top of that. Well, you can imagine how leak-proof that was!”

Today, animal dung and twigs still fuel the cooking fires of a large part of the world’s population. The burden of collecting and using those fuels falls most heavily on women, and that’s the way it was when George was a little boy. He said, “most of the cooking that mother did, as I remember mostly, is with cow chips. We’d take sacks out—John would take the sacks and I’d help pick ‘em up. If you picked up one that was a little green underneath you’d turn it over till the sun shined on it and that’d dry it out and then the next round you made, it’d be dry, too. In fall we had plenty to burn because we had cornstalks. I can remember mother breaking them cornstalks over her knee till she would have her knee black and blue. And sometimes they’d get down to have to burn straw to cook with. And I’m telling you, you got to be putting that straw in pretty regular, to regulate your fire!”

George and his older sister Dorothy were near enough to each other in age that they played together a lot. One time in September 1902, they were at their grandparents’ place, playing on an empty rain barrel at the corner of the house. George said, “Dorothy and I were tipping the barrel back and forth and there was a rattlesnake under it. And this rattlesnake came out and bit Dorothy twice on the leg. So they took her in the house. Grandma had a doll for her to play with. Of course, I wanted the doll, too. I remember Grandma told me, ‘You let Dorothy have it now because she won’t need it very long, because she won’t be here.’ Well, she died. So they had a funeral and I noticed everybody was crying and I wondered if I was supposed to cry, too.”

Ten years in that inhospitable country was enough. In 1903 a railroad spur reached Cleo from Kiowa, which brought up the price of real estate. George remembered his parents talking in the night: “Dad hollered out and he said, “George! How would you like to go out west?’ Oh, fine. Fine! He says, ‘I’ll get you a burro!’” They sold their place and for the trip west ordered a Studebaker covered wagon from the factory in Indiana. The wagons came standard with inch and five-eighths steel tires, but Frank ordered “extra wide wheels.” Studebaker built thousands of wagons for the U.S. Army during the Civil War, and they were considered among the best.

To pull the wagon westward, they had four good horses, May and Min and Jim and Dewey. Dewey was Min’s colt. George described the departure: “We had a bulldog there. Everybody said it was the smartest thing we had because the dog followed us out over the sand hill, and when we got to the top of the sand hill coming out of Grandad’s, the old dog sat down and watched us till we got out of sight. He went back to Grandad’s.” They would be on the road ten months, a family of five living out of a wagon just 3½ feet wide and 10 feet long.

Their first long stop was at Pueblo, Colorado, where they stayed a week. George said that his dad “wasn’t in any hurry.” Assuming they went through St. John, this first leg of the journey was about 450 miles. At 20 miles per day, it would take about 23 days. That was the normal speed through all of horse-powered human history until the railroads came along.
It was another five or six days to Denver with the Rocky Mountains so near, but day after day, they didn’t seem to get any closer. At Denver they went past the U.S. Mint and his mother explained to George, “That’s where they make money.” They saw their first streetcar while going through Denver and George said, “The horses was scared to death of that streetcar and of course that scared me, too. I wasn’t much for machinery for quite a while after that.”

The wagon road over the Rockies from Denver probably followed the route of the railroad. “Going over the top of the mountain, there was a rock rolled down in the road. Dad thought he could get by there and he ran up over it with one wheel and it tipped the wagon over. There was trees on the lower side of the hill. There was other wagons coming along at the same time so a bunch of ’em came up and got our wagon righted up. It tore a hole in the sheet, in the canvas that went over the top, and we had that all the rest of the way on out. Mom tried to sew it up a little, but it was pretty hard sewing.”

One incident was fairly common in the diaries of covered wagon emigrants. “There was some people following us, and they kept getting further behind all the time. This girl came riding up to our wagon and said their horse was down and they was stuck back there. They wanted Dad to unhook his team and take ’em back and pull ’em out. So Dad took the team back and I went back with them. Dad jumped into the wagon and there was stuff in there that wasn’t absolutely necessary. So he starts throwing that stuff out. And that woman she starts to crying and going on. So when they got it fixed up, they just drove off and left it.”

The cooking was “mostly on the campfire, you know. Just a skillet and a campfire.” They also had a big iron kettle for cooking and heating water and it hung on the back of the wagon “so as not to get stuff inside the wagon all black and dirty.” Through the desert there was usually sagebrush to burn. “That was pretty good goings. But sometimes there wasn’t any sagebrush and you would think them big joshuas and them big cactus would be something to burn? Now you’d be surprised how wet them things are. They didn’t want to burn at all. Finally, before we got all the way out, they got a little kerosene oil stove and when we didn’t have wood she could cook on that. Mother had a brown gallon earthen jar and we’d get to a town and she’d buy dried apples or dried peaches or dried apricots and she’d stew them up and we’d have that to put on our bread. And she’d mix up a light bread dough and then she’d fry it; mighty good eatin’. And of course we had beans and salt pork and the likes of that.”

When they got to an area settled by Mormons they were given “all kinds of vegetables, fresh fruit, and that kind of stuff.” They stopped for a week at Gunnison, Colorado, and Alice told of how much she liked it, amazed by the aspen trees showing their stunningly beautiful red, orange and gold fall colors. But a big railroad construction camp was emerging at Caliente, Nevada, 550 miles west of Gunnison, for completion of the projected Salt Lake Line to Los Angeles. By the time they got there in early November, there were already 1,000 men in camp. Tensions between crews of various nationalities were the source of a series of violent confrontations. People with wagons slept under them and one night Frank and Alice were awake, looking under the other wagons scattered about. They saw the figure of a man who stopped over a sleeping person, fired a shot, and walked on. The next day there was quite a stir about the shooting, but they were careful not mention that they had witnessed it.

George said of the work going on to build the railroad, “Must have had a lot of grading to do because I remember we was there a quite awhile.” The grading was through a dry riverbed called the Meadow Valley Wash and the crews were using equipment called Fresno scrapers. Each operator drove a team of horses hitched four abreast. That’s what Frank did, while Alice worked in the company cookhouse, which was a large tent. “The Chinese cook would sometimes hand John a pie and say, ‘Here’s a pie. Take home quick, ’fore the boss see you!’” It was no doubt a profitable interlude on the trip west.

George described his favorite toy at that time, at 4½ years old. He said, “I’ll tell you the plaything that I thought more of than anything I ever had was a sardine can with the end of it rolled up and a white pint beer bottle and a brown one. I had them harnessed up and that was my team. I thought more of them than if they’d been alive.” George’s brother John had acquired a shot whip someplace. The handle was filled with shot and as he snapped the whip, the shot would fly out the end, with much the effect of an air gun. George was playing with his beer bottle team and John said, “I’ll make ’em step up.” He broke one of the beer bottles with the shot and George said, “I bawled like a baby about that.” John said he’d get another beer bottle. Of course, that wasn’t it. “They was just bottles from then on, and that was just a tin can they was pulling.”

Sometime in early 1904, they left the construction job at Caliente. There was word of the need for teams and teamsters at the big silver discovery at Tonopah, about 360 miles away. They went first through Las Vegas. Alice said, “It was just a dusty cowtown.” The population in 1900 was a total of 25 inhabitants. It was to become a division point on the railroad, and by 1904 it had probably grown to a couple hundred. The region around Las Vegas was subject to flash floods and one time the water cask attached to the side of the wagon floated off and was lost.
The route from Las Vegas to Tonopah, a little over 200 miles along the east side of Death Valley, was the most grueling part of the entire trip. The road they followed was sometimes obscure and easy to lose. In fact, they did get lost once, following what might have been a dry creek bed. “There was boulders and the wheels would go over them and jerk the tongue this way and that way on the horses. By the time we got out and onto a road they had their necks so sore Dad had to lay over three or four days to let the horses necks heal up a little bit before we could go on any further.”

One night they stayed by a shack that “this fellow had built up out of rocks. He must have been a Mormon because the next morning when we got ready to go the old guy lined up all six of his wives out there in front of us. They had their braids down in front and there was tall ones and short ones and fat ones and skinny ones, all six of ’em. And he lined ’em up there and he told me that he wanted to trade one of ’em for mom. ‘No. No!’ I run over and got mom around the leg. No. I wasn’t willing to trade!”

When they arrived at Tonopah in the spring of 1904, the town was almost three years into its great silver boom. The population was around 3,000, up from zero in 1901. It was serviced by 32 saloons, six faro games, and two churches. It also had two weekly newspapers, two dance halls, and several mercantile stores. A narrow-gauge railroad came to within 62 miles, at Sodaville. A freight route had developed between there and Tonopah using 20-mule teams with wagons hauling as much as 20 tons each. There were 2,000 horses and mules on the route in early 1904, but they were unable to keep up with the demand, and silver ore accumulated at the mines. Frank immediately began hauling silver ore while Alice got a job cooking in a company cookhouse, which was a tent with a dirt floor.

Next to the cookhouse was a tent saloon where George and his brother John would buy candy. George recalled hearing about a one-armed man who worked there and had quit, cashed his check, was offered drinks, and then invited into a card game where “they got the rest of his money... He come over to the cookhouse and got a hatchet and he went back over there and one of them gamblers setting there against the back of the tent, he just come down with that hatchet and cut his back wide open. And then he run and the rest of the guys took after him.” George didn’t hear what happened next, but supposed the guys probably killed the man. Tonopah didn’t have as much lawlessness of other frontier boom towns, but it had some.

There was a large fenced corral near the cookhouse where hay and grain were kept. Wild burros would break in "and
just take a front hoof and hit one of those sacks and bust it open and eat all they wanted and leave. Guys would get out there with shotguns and shoot the burros but they’d be back the next night for more eats.” It was here that George got the burro he was promised before they left Oklahoma. He said, “It was a pretty good-sized one. There was lots of them that would fit me better than the one he got.”

By mid April they pulled up stakes at Tonopah and headed toward British Columbia, where it was reported that a lot of railroad construction was underway.

Frank put a halter on the burro and tied him on behind the wagon but “that burro wasn’t just about to follow that wagon. He just fought till he broke the rope, but he had the halter. So there was another fellow following us that had a saddle horse—Charlie Doggett. So he took after this burro. He had quite a run on his horse to get close enough to him. But he shot and killed the burro and he got the halter. And do you know what he did? He cut the tongue out of the burro and we had the tongue for supper that night.”

Their first major stop was at Carson City, about 220 miles northwest of Tonopah. Min had a colt there and so they sold both May and Min (they were a team). He took one horse in trade and kept Dewey and Jim, continuing the trip with three horses.

About 80 miles northeast of Carson City is Winnemucca, on a road that had been well traveled since the days of the California Gold Rush in 1849. Somewhere along the way the family was surprised by an automobile carrying two men. The unusual contraption came up from behind and passed them and went on out of sight. It was the first auto any of the family had ever seen. “It had a round tank on the back, just a one-seat rig and no top. It made lots of noise. But they’d get stuck and we’d catch up with them and pull out around ’em and go on. They’d get going and pass us again.”

Winnemucca was a cattle shipping center on the Central Pacific Railroad and terminus of the big 200-mile cattle drives from Oregon. The route north followed the cattle trails into Oregon, past Frenchglen and on through the high desert country of eastern Oregon. The most traveled route went through Paulina and Prineville to Madras and on to the Columbia River. George said merely, “Most of the time we was alone. You’d meet up with somebody but it depended on how good your team was and the other guy’s was. You just went however fast your outfit would make it.”

They arrived at The Dalles on the Columbia about June 20 and bought steamboat passage for the family, the three horses, and the wagon, likely on the steamboat Charles R. Spencer. They went through the locks at the Columbia River Gorge and arrived at Vancouver, Washington after a seven-hour voyage from The Dalles. At Vancouver, the horses struggled to pull the wagon from the main deck of the steamboat up to the road above. “They had an awful time,” but they eventually made it without having to unload anything from the wagon.

The road from Vancouver to Centralia, about 80 miles, was mostly plank. Frank would shake his head and say, “There’s gonna be a wood famine around here one of these days.” George said his dad wanted to get to British Columbia, “But mom wanted to stop off at Centralia to see her folks, so we got stopped there and never got started again.” They arrived at Centralia June 26, 1904, 308 days after pulling out from the place in Oklahoma Territory.
The population of Centralia in those days was about 1,600, and George's grandparents' house was at 1014 North Tower Street. Frank parked the wagon there behind the barn. George was surprised that his grandparents, last seen in Oklahoma 10 months before, had arrived in Centralia first. He hadn't seen them on the road anywhere, but his granddad had wasted no time. Coming by train from the wood-starved Great Plains, George's granddad immediately recognized that waste wood from the sawmills could be turned into a business. He was already delivering firewood to customers. His son—and brother to George's mom—Bill Bingham, turned it into the Bingham Fuel Company, a successful concern.

Centralia had shingle mills and sawmills, and there were several logging outfits within walking distance of town. One of them was still logging with bull teams, but in the other camps bulls had been replaced by steam. Frank’s experience with steam easily got him a job as engineer on a Dolbeer spool donkey, basically a capstan which pulled logs from the woods into the landing. A “spool tender” coiled the line as it came in and watched the coil as a horse pulled the rigging back into the woods for the next turn. A fireman split the wood, keeping the fire going and the steam up. Frank said, “Easiest job I ever had. All I had to do is open the throttle!”

In 1910, Frank worked at Coats-Fordney Lumber Company’s logging camp on the Wishkah River. George said that his dad stayed in camp six months that time. While his father was gone, George’s mother only got one letter from him and some money. He “had somebody write the letter, as he couldn’t write very good.” Frank was a tough product of the frontier; he drank his whiskey straight from the bottle and played the fiddle at Saturday dances. He fit perfectly among the loggers in the camps of Washington at the time.

With steam now the prime mode of power in Northwest logging, Frank became a steam donkey engineer, running a yarder or duplex loading donkey. Frank also learned the highly specialized and much sought after craft of building the massive log sleds that steam donkeys were mounted on. Around 1916, he had a contract to build two steam donkey sleds at McCormick Lumber Company. He finished the job and returned home to Centralia and had “just put away his tools,” when he got a call to build five more sleds at Wallville. In 1923, Long Bell Lumber Company contracted with him to build the donkey sleds and loading booms when they started operation at Ryderwood. In 1928, Weyerhaeuser contracted with him to build sleds at their new camp at Vail.

In 1929 he was at Morton, which was booming with almost 60 small sawmills in the vicinity. Then came the economic crash, and by 1930 there were only 20 sawmills. Soon, there were none. Alice said, “When poverty comes in the window, love goes out.” Men who had been totally self-reliant for a lifetime were suddenly without any means of support, with their experience and abilities no longer needed. Whatever the circumstances, the situation became untenable and after all that Alice had gone through, the marriage ended in divorce. Her brother Bill Bingham was fairly well off. He bought her a house at 509 Yew Street where she lived until she died in 1966 at the age of 92. Six of her eight children were still alive and well.

Frank Youst died in 1942 at the age of 71. The occupation shown on his death certificate was “Donkey Engineer,” meaning of course, steam donkey engineer. This was just before steam was completely replaced in the woods by diesel, so you could say his time had passed. But what a time it was.
In Memory of Marvin Oliver
By Shaun Peterson

Qualskills Shaun Peterson, a Puyallup/Tulalip carver and printmaker, wrote this tribute to artist Marvin Oliver for the Burke Museum. Mr. Oliver, who passed away in July 2019 at age 73, was an esteemed Elder, Emeritus Curator at the Burke, and dear friend of the Burke, University of Washington and Washington State Historical Society communities.

I first met Marvin Oliver when I was an apprentice to Steve Brown in 1997. Marvin was making his Teton Pole and previewing it at his home studio. At first I didn’t see what the big deal was, in fact I was at that time very reluctant to use technology like vector formatting then. It was a few years later I went with Haida artist Bruce Cook III, who had introduced me to Steve, to help teach Marvin’s sculpture class, which we did and I got to know him much better.

Over the years, Marvin openly shared his sources of what he’d learned and from whom without any hesitation. Although it was Steve and Bill Holm who led me through the Burke collection over the years, it was Marvin’s push that encouraged me to digitize and preserve a lot of vital information that would otherwise be lost, and for that I am forever grateful.

Paddle patterns created by Marvin are taken from examples of western Washington tribes and are prime examples of how diverse shapes are in this region. It is important to note these are mere outlines but they are a starting point for those who want to create paddles for Canoe Journey or their own personal use.

Examples like these are few but are very valuable, showing how art exists in daily life as utilitarian because it’s not just a matter of painting on top of or relief carving an object. Spoons and ladles, feast bowls are just equally important as paddles into understanding forms that developed and distinguished tribes from one another and there is great value in that. It reminds me of how valuable the bowl Marvin carved that is in the Burke collection is and always was.

MUSEUM ROUNDUP

Museum of Arts & Culture in Spokane
Memory and Meaning: Textiles from the Permanent Collection
Selected pieces from the museum’s collection illustrate how textiles convey social status, personal identity, history, and much more. This exhibition showcases a rare 17th century quilt that may be one of the oldest surviving examples in the United States. Also on display are 19th and 20th century quilts, hand-woven coverlets, and pieces from the MAC’s extensive American Indian collection.
For more information, visit www.northwestmuseum.org.

Yakima Valley Museum in Yakima
Bill Brennen: A Year in the Valley
The Yakima Valley Museum & Historical Society presents an exhibition of new work by iconic landscape artist Bill Brennen.
For more information, visit www.yvmuseum.org.

New Burke Museum in Seattle
Grand Opening October 12–14
After a multi-year capital campaign and closure to the public for many months, the Burke Museum will open in a new building on the University of Washington campus in Seattle. Advance materials say the new facility is “a dramatic departure from the typical natural history museum model” with galleries “side-by-side with visible collections, labs and hands-on learning spaces.”
For more information, visit www.burkemuseum.org.
State Funding for Historic Barns and Cemeteries

The Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) is offering grants in support of barns and cemeteries. The Heritage Barn Initiative assists with barn stabilization and rehabilitation projects, while the Historic Cemetery Preservation Program is intended to honor veterans and support the ongoing preservation of historic cemeteries through funding for capital projects. A total of nearly $1 million is available to be granted through both programs, which are administered by the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation. Deadline to submit applications for either grant is Wednesday, October 23, 2019.

For more information, visit www.dahp.wa.gov.

WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL HISTORY AWARDS

Presented September 21 at the History Museum

The History Awards will be presented at the WSHS Annual Meeting on Saturday, September 21. History Awards celebrate the women and men whose accomplishments have promoted Washington history, and this year’s honorees include:

Robert Gray Medal: Tom Ikeda
The Robert Gray Medal recognizes distinguished and longterm contributions to Pacific Northwest history. The award goes to Tom Ikeda, Founding Executive Director of Densho, in recognition of his efforts to preserve and share the history of Japanese American WWII incarceration in Washington State and beyond.

Charles Gates Memorial Award: Andrea Geiger and Christopher Foss
This longstanding award recognizes the most significant achievement among all articles published in Pacific Northwest Quarterly during the previous year. The award goes to Andrea Geiger for “Haida Gwaii as North Pacific Borderland, Ikeda Mine as Alternative West: 1906-1910,” and Christopher Foss for “Bringing Home the (Irradiated) Bacon: The Politics of Senator Henry M. Jackson’s support for Nuclear Weapons and Energy during the Cold War.”

John McClelland, Jr. Award: Bruce A. Ramsey
This award is presented for an article or book excerpt that most exhibits the readability and interest sought after by COLUMBIA magazine. Bruce A. Ramsey receives the award for his book excerpt, “The Panic of 1893.”

Peace and Friendship Award: Phillip H. Red Eagle and Tessa Campbell & Fred Poyner IV
These awards are presented for work in advancing public understanding of cultural diversity.

Phillip H. Red Eagle receives this award for his roles with Carvers Camp and Tribal Canoe Journeys. Also winning the award for their efforts on the history project Interwoven are Tessa Campbell and Fred Poyner IV of the National Nordic Museum.

Governor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching History
Dwight Morgan of The Heritage Network in Colville, Washington, is the worthy recipient of this award. During his career at Kettle Falls Elementary School, Dwight provided hands-on experiences for his 4th graders to help them understand the historical significance of the local falls on the Columbia River as a vital salmon fishing site for Native peoples. Now retired, Dwight continues to educate visitors at the Kettle Falls Historical Center.

David Douglas Award: Washington State Archives and Washington State Library
This award recognizes the significant contribution of an individual or an organization that informs or expands appreciation of Washington State history.

The Washington State Archives and Washington State Library, housed within the Secretary of State’s office, are presented with this award for their relentless work to rescue and preserve artifacts, ephemera, historical documents and more, on behalf of the Aberdeen History Museum, when the museum’s building was destroyed by fire.

R. Lorraine Wojahn Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service for the Washington State Historical Society
Michael Martin is the recipient of this award for his diligent and valuable volunteer work in the marketing and education departments.

If you wish to submit a nomination for 2019, please contact Allison Campbell via Allison.Campbell@wshs.wa.gov. For ticket information, visit WashingtonHistory.org/events.
THE RED COAST: RADICALISM AND ANTI-RADICALISM IN SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

By Brian Barnes, Aaron Goings and Roger Snider; Published by OSU Press
Reviewed by Steve Scher

The West Coast of the United States, from California to Washington, has often been referred to as the “Left Coast.” Liberal and progressive politics, on the west side of the mountains anyway, hold sway. For now.

Back a hundred years and more, socialist and anarchist ideologies infused radical union action in the Northwest. By the time of the 1905 founding of the Industrial Workers of the World—the “Wobblies”—and this group’s call for “one big union,” Southwest Washington had become a battleground.

The Red Coast: Radicalism and Anti-Radicalism in Southwest Washington recounts the strikes, violence and even murders that swept through the region from Ilwaco to Aberdeen, from Hoquiam to Chehalis.

The authors—Aaron Goings, a senior researcher at the University of Tampere in Finland, Brian Barnes, chair of the Department of History and Political Science at Saint Martin’s University in Lacey, Washington, and Roger Snider, professor emeritus at Saint Martin’s—plowed through historical and state archives, trial proceedings and scores of newspaper accounts to tell the history of the radical unionists and those who opposed them.

The book is shaped by and written within the framework of class warfare. They have not attempted to write an “objective history,” as the authors explain. “We reject the argument that those who advocate for workers’ rights and those who advocate for workers’ oppression deserve equal consideration,” they write.

In 1887, some 300 gill-netters, men who often fished two-to-a-skiff in the treacherous Columbia River, went on strike. According to the authors, this early action helped forge a pan-ethnic and working class movement along what much later came to be called, as a derisive reference to Soviet communists, the “Red Coast”—from which the book draws its title.

This movement was pan-ethnic, that is, if you were a white person. The Natives, after all, were the first fishers along the Columbia, but they don’t figure prominently. Nor do the almost invisible African Americans who might’ve benefited from some worker solidarity.

The authors provide an apologetic accounting of labor’s complicity in chasing thousands of Chinese out of Seattle, Tacoma and other Northwest communities, when many workers stood shoulder to shoulder with property owners and politicians.

The Red Coast describes the “Aberdeen Outrage,” where prominent citizens led the 1890 expulsions.

“Without exculpating the Workingmen’s Party or Knights of Labor for their infamous roles in their campaigns to drive out the Chinese residents of the West Coast, the Aberdeen Outrage does demonstrate the need to reexamine the roles of elites, especially employers, in these atrocities,” the authors write.

This “blaming of the bosses” is, perhaps, small comfort to the forty Chinese people in Aberdeen alone who lost their homes and livelihoods.

The labor activists did find both fertile ground and a growing Southwest Washington infrastructure to support their politics. Between 1905 and 1939, large halls, often built by Finnish community members, emerged as strike headquarters. From there, the organized loggers, fishermen, shingle weavers, men—and oftentimes women, too—from many ethnic groups, fought for higher wages and safer working conditions.

Employers responded, organizing themselves into Citizen Committees and bringing in Pinkerton detectives as well as the state and local police to harass, arrest and prosecute the radicals.

Another ally for the employers was the virulently anti-union, anti-immigrant Ku Klux Klan, which emerged in the 1920s and were a force in many Southwest Washington communities. Racist Klan members terrorized radical labor activists, and they found allies in Congress. United States House of Representatives member from Hoquiam, Albert Johnson, sponsored the 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act, excluding African and Asian immigration and restricting Greeks, Finns and Italians who were suspected of being too sympathetic to the radical labor politics.

The Red Coast highlights the politics that still separate working people. The authors note that the 2016 election marked the first time in many decades that Grays Harbor and Pacific County voters went for a Republican presidential candidate. “The employing-class’s old bag of tricks—dividing workers by race and ethnicity, through control of right-wing media propaganda and pseudo-patriotic nationalistic flag waving—has not outlived its usefulness,” they write.

Indeed. Perhaps one lesson to be drawn from The Red Coast is that people from all walks of life are all too often more than willing to see “the other” as the enemy, no matter the coins in their purse or the cut of their clothes.
“Balloon fever” began for Ginger Kelly in September 1972 when she and some friends saw a flight demonstration on the Whitman College campus as part of homecoming festivities. They met and spent time with pilot Chauncey Dunn and his all-female crew. From that point, Kelly and friends were hooked.

Kelly and a few other local Walla Wallans took ballooning lessons, and by February 1974, Kelly attended the third annual Balloon Fiesta Race in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she completed requirements to earn her balloon pilot’s license.

Not long after, Kelly and her then-husband Nat Vale bought their first balloon—a Raven Aerostar Balloon named *Demeter*—and began flying it at events around the country. They were one of ten balloons invited to fly at the opening ceremony of Expo ’74, the Spokane World’s Fair. That same year, Kelly began attending the National Balloon Championships in Iowa, and later told a reporter for the *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin* that the event in Iowa was “sort of like the Pendleton Round-Up without the horses. They’ve got balloons instead.”

In 1976, Kelly and Nat brought their passion back to the Walla Walla Valley and, with Bill Lloyd, organized the first Walla Walla Balloon Stampede. The event was a success from the start and has remained a local favorite for nearly 50 years. Walla Walla will host the 43rd Annual Stampede from October 16 through October 20, 2019.

Ginger Kelly helped run the Stampede until 1985, when the Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce was invited to take the reins. Kelly was named Honorary Balloonmeister in 1999, and in 2004 the Balloon Federation of America gave her an award for outstanding service to the history of ballooning.

Kelly took pride in her role as a historian for local ballooning. She compiled 55 scrapbooks of material including news clippings, photographs, programs, newsletters and other ephemera documenting her travels, and especially the Stampede. She donated these materials, including those seen here, to the Whitman College and Northwest Archives in December 2018.

Even with all these experiences and all that history, the feel of ballooning is difficult for an experienced pilot to describe. In a 1995 profile in the *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin*, Kelly put it simply.

“You’ve got to go for a ride to understand,” she said.
COMSTOCK EDITIONS: 1970s REVIVAL OF ICONIC TITLES IN PAPERBACK

Before the web changed the way information is accessed and shared, one frustration for anyone looking to read seminal texts of Pacific Northwest history was scarcity. Many of the key non-fiction and fiction titles from the 19th and early 20th century had been published in small numbers to begin with, and some history books, novels and early official documents were difficult for all but the most dedicated scholar to track down.

In Washington, booksellers such as Shorey’s in Seattle began producing simple “chapbook” style reprints of hard-to-find titles in the 1950s, while what eventually became Ye Galleon Press in Fairfield began around 1940 to create limited run, gorgeously typeset editions of out-of-print materials stretching back to the early 19th century.

But it wasn’t until 1970 that a major East Coast publisher saw potential in a similar market. It was then that Ballantine Books of New York partnered with a married couple in Sausalito, California to launch Comstock Editions, a regional press dedicated to producing low-cost paperbacks of out-of-print titles as well as newly commissioned titles of historical and cultural significance to the American West. Origins of the name “Comstock” aren’t spelled out anywhere, but perhaps relate to the riches of silver discovered in the 1850s in the “Comstock Lode” in what’s now Nevada.

Comstock Editions are certifiable literary riches, and the books were published at a dizzying pace throughout most of the 1970s. In a December 1972 newspaper profile in San Rafael, California of Comstock publisher Richard Gould and editor Dori Gould, the married couple whose friendship with publishers Ian and Betty Ballantine was at the core of the project, they described prowling used bookstores and gathering word-of-mouth recommendations to produce four new titles a month. A little over two years into its history, the Comstock catalog already comprised close to 90 books, each of which had a minimum print run of 25,000 copies.

In that same profile, the Goulds said that the most popular Comstock Edition, by far, was Murray Morgan’s classic Skid Road. Morgan had updated the 1959 edition of his early Seattle history for the new paperback, and had done so from a hospital bed where he was recovering from pneumonia. A total of 65,000 copies of Skid Road had sold by late 1972, and it was “still selling briskly” according to the Goulds. Cover prices for the books ranged from $1.25 to $1.95, and most were sold through newsstands rather than bookstores.

Ian Ballantine and Comstock Editions were presented with the Ken Boyle Award by the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association (PNBA) in 1972. In accepting the award, named for one of the PNBA’s late founders who was a champion of Northwest titles and authors at the old Frederick & Nelson department store, Ballantine said the inspiration for Comstock Editions came from Hazel Heckman’s book about Anderson Island called Island in the Sound. Ballantine published Heckman’s book in 1967.
RUM RUNNERS OF THE SALISH SEA


SUFFRAGE: WASHINGTON’S COMPLICATED JOURNEY


308 DAYS TO CENTRALIA


NOTE: There are very few narratives of cross-country wagon trips after 1870, and almost none after 1900. Two exceptions are available online:


The Last Covered Wagon Immigration up to South Hill by Carl Vest tells the story of Ole Gabrisen and family, Pocatello, Idaho to Pierce County, Washington by covered wagon, 850 miles in about 50 days in 1921. South Hill Historical Society (Pierce County, Washington) www.southhillhistory.com.

MAPS & LEGENDS: THE FAVOR WHICH TACOMA HAS FOUND


“This was the book that inspired us to start the Comstock Editions, with special attention to regional interest,” Ballantine told Seattle Times book editor Larry Rumley. “It still is one of our best.”

Comstock Editions were produced until sometime around 1980, though details of exactly when and why their publishing efforts ceased are hard to come by.

These now nearly 50-year old paperback Comstock Editions are still easy to find at used bookstores, garage sales, and, of course, via the web. They’re perfect for stowing in the glovebox for ferry-line reading or stuffing in a knapsack to take a reading break on a hike.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Spokane Saga, a novel by Zola Ross about the Spokane Fire of 1889.

ABOVE LEFT: Tales Out of Oregon is one of several Ralph Friedman titles published by Comstock Editions.

ABOVE, RIGHT: Totem Tales of Old Seattle is a lighthearted, perhaps now politically incorrect, mid-century take on Seattle history.

All Comstock Edition cover images courtesy Feliks Banel.
"THE FAVOR WHICH TACOMA HAS FOUND"

When the nascent Washington Territory settlement of Commencement City was rebranded as “Tacoma,” that word “rebranded,” if it existed at all, was likely only muttered in cattle ranching circles.

In the essential volume Washington State Place Names, James Phillips says that city promoter General Morton M. McCarver had chosen “Commencement City” around 1868 as a riff on the name of the adjoining bay (given by the Wilkes Expedition, whose work to chart Puget Sound “commenced” there). But, Phillips writes, “At the suggestion of others, the name is changed to Tacoma, the Indian name for Mount Rainier mentioned in Theodore Winthrop’s famous book on the Pacific Northwest The Canoe and the Saddle.”

Fast-forward to 1906, and enough time had passed for journalist and historian Thomas W. Prosch to include in his history book McCarver and Tacoma, a final reflection on just where the name ‘Tacoma,’ if not the community itself, stood in relation to the rest of the world:

In conclusion, a few words may well be offered as to the name Tacoma. In the beginning it was yours, all yours. It belonged here, and here alone. It is not so now. It now belongs to the world, it is found in many ports, lands, and places. So popular has the name become that it is officially adopted in eight different States of the Union…there are Tacomas in Florida, Kentucky, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Texas, Virginia and Washington.

The favor which Tacoma has found is not confined to post office or town names by any means, but is even more common in Tacoma avenues and Tacoma buildings in the towns and cities of the country at large. Nor is this fame limited to the United States. In the ports of Australia, Asia, Africa, Europe, and the islands may be found numerous ships bearing this popular designation.

It is not strange, under the circumstances, that you are attached to the name. A good name is a priceless possession. No other town has a better one than Tacoma.

Modern day Tacoma historian Michael Sullivan says that “Prosch’s observations hold up pretty well, [though] he missed mentioning Japan as a place where the name ‘Tacoma’ was widely known and admired. The big O.S.K. Steamship Line ran between Yokohama and Tacoma, and the Japanese embassy was located in the city just about the time Prosch was writing.”

Also, Sullivan adds, the southern of the two competing cities on Puget Sound had a linguistic advantage when it came to Japan.

“Phonetically, ‘Tacoma’ was easily handled in Japanese, unlike ‘Seattle,’” he said, “and our mountain [Mt. Rainier, which city boosters long tried to rebrand ‘Mt. Tacoma’] was an obvious close relative of the spiritual Mt. Fujiyama.”

“No wonder Toyota named a truck after the city,” Sullivan said.
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Historic Fort Steilacoom
Kitsap County Historical
Society Museum
Lakewood Historical Society
Legacy Washington
Lolasoka Foundation
& Cultural Center
Moses Lake Museum
and Arts Center
National Nordic Museum
Olympia Historical
Society and Bigelow
House Museum
Pacific County
Historical Society
Quilcene Historical Museum
Renton History Museum
Sterilacoom Historical
Museum Association
Yakima Valley Museum

“When women’s true history shall have been written, her part in the
upbuilding of this nation will astonish the world.”
—Abigail Scott Duniway, Washington pioneer, suffragist, and writer.
WASHINGTON STATE HISTORY MUSEUM

MODEL TRAIN FESTIVAL

www.ModelTrainFestival.org

DECEMBER 20 – JANUARY 1

FREE SANTA PHOTOS Dec. 21-23, 11:00AM–3:00PM

SPECIAL MEMBER APPRECIATION NIGHT Dec. 21, 5:00PM–7:30PM

DRIVE THE TRAIN SIMULATOR!

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