INSIDE THE RED ZONE

Jeff Renner remembers the eruption of Mount St. Helens

ALSO INSIDE:
The Tragedy of the Clallam ■ Tahoma and Its People

A quarterly publication of the Washington State Historical Society
The 60th anniversary of the eruption of Mount St. Helens is upon us, and we’re grateful to have retired KING TV meteorologist Jeff Renner share his memories of that event in this issue. Anyone who was living in Washington in 1980 remembers that time, since it was unlike pretty much anything else experienced before or after. Along with the old pickle jars of volcanic ash out in the garage, many of us have personal stories to share of that uniquely Northwest event.

I was a sixth-grader at Mark Twain Elementary on Rose Hill in Kirkland, absorbing all I could about the volcano and its history, especially once the peak came smoking back to life in late March 1980. That day, I had my transistor radio with me at school, and when we somehow learned that an eruption was in progress, I switched it on. It warmed my nerdy little heart when our teacher, Mrs. Erik, allowed the whole class to listen to the latest news through live radio reports. The station we tuned to was Seattle’s KIRO Radio, where I would go on to work a decade later, where I currently report each week on local history, and where I’ve shared my nerdy sixth-grade memory on-air countless times over the years.

These long connections to the past and deep interest in the events and people of the Evergreen State are common traits among the contributors who share their research and writing with COLUMBIA readers. This is something we love, and that we promise to never take for granted.

Jeff Antonelis-Lapp, whose book excerpt from Tacoma and Its People: A Natural History of Mount Rainier National Park (WSU Press, 2020) is featured in this issue, settled in Enumclaw with his family nearly 40 years ago so they could be closer to the mountain they love. The wreak of the steamer Clallam, which Erik Kosick writes about, is something he’s spent years researching and exploring. He tracked down facts that shed new light on details and he presents an alternative to the narrative that has appeared in many well-known shipwreck books.

If you love Washington or Old Oregon Country history and have a story you’d like to tell, sixth-grade nerdy memories notwithstanding, we hope you’ll consider COLUMBIA as the place to tell it. Please send your story ideas or questions to editor.columbia@gmail.com.

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

Jeff Antonelis-Lapp  Footsteps of Days Past: An excerpt from Tacoma and Its People
After graduating from college, Jeff Antonelis-Lapp worked two summers at Mount Rainier National Park, igniting a connection to the mountain that endures today. He began Tacoma and Its People (WSU Press, 2020) after searching for Mount Rainier natural history resources for a course he planned to teach at The Evergreen State College. Jeff spent over 250 days conducting fieldwork for the book, many of them in the company of Mount Rainier’s archeologists, biologists, and geologists. Jeff lives near Enumclaw.

Jeff Renner  Inside the Red Zone: Remembering the Eruption of Mount St. Helens
Jeff Renner was chief meteorologist for Seattle’s KING TV for many years and retired from the station in 2016. He’s also an experienced pilot and diver, and is the author of several books about local maritime and mountain weather. Jeff lives outside Seattle.

Steve Scher  Book review of William F. Tomlinson’s book re: Mount St. Helen’s eruption
Steve Scher is a freelance writer and communication instructor at the University of Washington. He interviews authors appearing at Town Hall Seattle for the podcast In This Moment. Steve lives in Seattle.

Erik Kosick  Death in the Skagit: The Tragedy of the Clallam
Erik Kosick graduated from Pacific Lutheran University with a B.A. in History. He has both volunteered and worked for the Washington State Historical Society since 2016. He is currently working on a book about the Clallam disaster. Erik lives in Tacoma.

**COLLECTIONS HIGHLIGHT:** LYNETTE MILLER RETIRES

Washington State Historical Society Head of Collections Lynette Miller retired in February after a 50-year career in museums, serving 22 years at Washington State Historical Society. Among many projects, Miller helped create In The Spirit, the museum’s annual celebration of contemporary Native American art and artists. COLUMBIA editor Feliks Banel sat down with Miller at the WSHS Resource Center in January to record an episode of COLUMBIA Conversations.

Jeff lives outside Seattle.

**HISTORY PODCAST: COLUMBIA CONVERSATIONS**

Voices from COLUMBIA magazine and around the Pacific Northwest are now close as your digital device with the COLUMBIA Conversations podcast. Visit COLUMBIAConversations.org or your favorite podcast platform for the latest episode!
THOSE were the last five words that I or anyone would hear my friend and volcanologist David Johnston speak. It was his radio call alerting his United States Geological Survey colleagues that Mount St. Helens was erupting. Explosively.

At 8:32 a.m. on Sunday, May 18, 1980, a magnitude 5.1 earthquake shattered the north face of the volcano. It had been fractured by seven weeks of previous earthquakes, the result of magma rising from a subterranean chamber several miles below. Approximately 1,300 vertical feet of rock—twice the height of the Space Needle—collapsed in the largest debris avalanche ever recorded. That essentially "popped the cork." The rising magma, now unrestrained, exploded horizontally. The blast leveled and then incinerated 234 square miles of land, or three times the area of the city of Seattle.

The intense heat melted centuries-old glaciers, generating mudflows the consistency of wet cement. Nothing in their path was left standing. Just eighteen minutes after the initial earthquake, the massive plume of ash had risen to 80,000 feet, capped by a mushroom cloud larger than the one marking the Hiroshima atomic blast in 1945. It was my job and that of my KING Television colleagues, photographer Mark Anderson and pilot Bob Wright, to fly beneath the lowest part of that ash cloud, to get as close to the volcano as possible, and to document the eruptions that would continue for hours. The once-serene alpine wilderness, a luminous blend of sparkling white glaciers, iridescent blue waters and intense green of old growth forests, was gone. It seemed as though we were conducting low level surveillance over an alien planet. The monochrome landscape of what came to be called the blast zone offered no evidence of life—no plants, no animals and no humans. It was clear there had to be casualties, and this belief was confirmed later that afternoon when we established a broadcast site to the northwest of the still-erupting volcano.

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Baker was believed to be the Northwest volcano most likely to erupt. The team to which David belonged was conducting scientific fieldwork to assess that likelihood. I was documenting their work as a science reporter for KING Television in Seattle.

I had only recently moved to the Pacific Northwest, and had been assigned to learn the rudiments of mountain climbing to prepare for this very assignment. I would discover that I had spent part of my boyhood just miles from David’s family home in suburban Chicago. It was just one of several parallels that would serve to connect us. But what had become second nature to David, was then decidedly unnatural to me.

The silent snowy beauty of the volcano’s upper slopes gave way on our descent to the deafening roar of steam from vents called fumaroles. Surrounding those vents were gaudy deposits of yellow and orange. “The yellow is sulfur, and the orange is a compound of arsenic,” explained David with enthusiasm. He grinned, “That’s why we’re wearing gas masks when we get close.” What seemed like hell to me was heaven for David. His methodical and enthusiastic approach to the scientific and aesthetic aspects of the volcano was infectious. He patiently explained to me the significance of each test.

Just a year and half later, David and I reconnected at Mount St. Helens in Skamania County. A shallow earthquake there on March 20, 1980 was the first suggestion that 123 years of silence at Mount St. Helens was ending. Seven days later, a steam explosion opened a quarter-mile crater at the summit, blackening the surrounding snowfield with a smudge of ash.

As we prepared to fly to St. Helens that day, I telephoned the University of Washington Seismology Lab, now called the Pacific Northwest Seismic Network, seeking a scientist to accompany us in our helicopter. “How about a real volcanologist?” they responded. Of course! That “real volcanologist” was David Johnston. During our flight south from Seattle, David summarized his latest work, and provided background on Mount St. Helens’ volcanic history and threat.

After surveying the volcano from the air, we landed on a nearby ridge. “We stand next to a keg of dynamite,” David told me. “The fuse is lit, but we don’t know how long it is.” After a brief pause he added, “If it were to explode right now, we would die.”

Up on our return to Seattle the next day, we joined a crowded huddle in the KING 5 newsroom. The objective was to develop a comprehensive plan to cover the volcano’s reawakening and its impact on residents of southwestern Washington. Photographer Mark Anderson, engineer Mike Carter and I were to be sent with a camper to a remote ridge overlooking the volcano. I couldn’t have asked for two better colleagues. Both were skilled, steady and shared the sardonic humor that helps a team navigate a risky assignment under constant deadline pressure. And the camper would be a definite step above our earlier solution of sleeping fort trying to sleep jammed between television gear in the crowded front and back seats of our news car.

We gathered the television gear necessary to report from the ground and from our helicopter and to transmit live broadcasts during our evening news programs. There was food to purchase, and clothing to gather that could protect us in a range of environments, from the soggy old growth forests to the exposed, high-altitude slopes of Mount St. Helens. I made a quick trip to the University of Washington bookstore to pick up texts on geology and volcanology. There was no internet in 1980, and even if there had been, we would not have had Wi-Fi service at our remote campsite. I certainly didn’t expect to become an expert during study breaks in our camper, but I did hope to learn enough to pose appropriate questions to the experts I’d encounter at or near the volcano.

I quickly learned that the time invested in background research was invaluable not just for gaining access to knowledgeable scientists, but also for establishing credibility and trust with them in the field and with our viewers at home. Our team knew we needed to offer pictures, writing and stories that would transport viewers to the volcano and provide them with the context necessary to understand the risks St. Helens did and did not pose.

We would spend stretches of up to ten days at our mountaintop camp. We drove for hours, bouncing over rutted logging roads to capture stories in the nearby communities of Toledo, Toutle, Kid Valley and Cougar. We visited with locals stressed by earthquakes, ash and the prospect of an eruption, and spoke with local business owners experiencing both increased income as well as alarm. We stopped to examine the wares offered by food-wheel traveling merchants who set up shop near roadblocks, hawking everything from hot dogs to Hawaiian barbecued chicken, plastic tchotchkes to T-shirts.

And there was our growing friendship with the crusty local resort owner Harry Truman, who famously refused to leave and who became something of a celebrity that long-ago spring. At his Spirit Lake Lodge, he entertained KING’s viewers (and us) with his earthy opinions, piano music and

Mount St. Helens signaled its new phase of activity with an initial steam blast on March 27, 1980. Courtesy Jeff Renner.
I also felt those same emotions for the excellence of my responsible projections of what might happen. And offer explanations to the public, and, when possible, his sense of mission: to advance scientific understanding of our off-camera conversations, David Johnston offered communicating it all during our multiple broadcasts. In one time, helping us understand their work, explaining the before our eyes. The scientists were generous with their of volcanology, innovating and improvising techniques volcano. It was inspiring to witness and explain to KING’s on or near the mountain itself. I felt simple, unadulterated professional sense of joy and fulfillment came from being and counties. And there was the unsettling recognition that this volcano could remain a threat indefinitely, a threat that this eruption blast wave ricocheting off a layer in the atmosphere called the tropopause, rattling windows as far north as Victoria, British Columbia. But events would soon prove we weren’t the only ones living “on the edge.” The sense of novelty, adventure and even entertainment that prevailed from late March through most of April gave way to fatigue and stress by May. The near-constant presence and pressure of the curious began to fray the nerves of local residents and law enforcement officials, to say nothing of the drain on the budgets of local communities for.tunately, the dangers we faced were not as dire as we had feared. The volcano was not erupting, and we were able to maintain our focus on our primary mission: to report on the ongoing eruption and its impact to the public. The consequences of not being able to cover the eruption could have been far more serious than what we faced. But the reality is that we were fortunate to have been able to witness such an incredible event and document it for future generations to see and learn from. The experience was a humbling one, and it made us appreciate even more the role that we play in covering these types of events. It was a privilege to be a part of such a historic moment, and we will always be grateful for the opportunity to have been there.
Sensing motion at the periphery of my vision, I turned to see a towering Douglas fir, probably close to two-hundred feet in height, swaying under the buffeting force of the mudflow. It briefly hesitated, and then collapsed. There was little conversation in our helicopter because none of us knew what to say. We simply kept flying, shooting video and taking notes. There was just enough separation between the ceiling of ash and the mudflow below to allow continued flight upriver. Rafts of logs swept beneath us. We tracked one group in order to estimate the speed of the mudflow and measured an astounding 45 miles per hour. As the falling ash began to sprinkle our windshield, we recognized that if our helicopter engine ingested much of the glass-like particles, it would fail. A forced landing in these circumstances would almost certainly be fatal.

Returning to the athletic fields at Toutle Lake High School to the west, we saw military tents had already been erected. Emergency crews were carrying stretchers to the tents, some with survivors, others with blanket-covered figures of those who had perished; those were the first of the fatalities, as I would report that evening. Later, I would discover that my friend Dr. David Johnston was one of the dead. Though his body was never found, it is believed that the force of the superheated blast literally blew him off his observation post, now named Johnston Ridge in his memory.

The next day, I would get a sense of how close we came to death. Helicoptering back to the volcano shortly after sunrise, we flew through a landscape that seemed totally alien, with the once symmetric volcano now blunt, ugly, and prehistoric. The trees that once carpeted the mountain ridges lay toppled in rows, like a field of mature wheat after a thunderstorm downdraft. No sign of life was to be seen anywhere. We set course for our campsite on Spud Mountain. A Datsun B-210 was parked not 50 yards from where we’d pitched our tent. The compact car’s paint had been scoured off by the blast, the plastic and aluminum trim melted into now-congealed strands. Glimpsing a body inside, I requested that we land. I exited our helicopter and walked to the car and saw a victim of the eruption, which is a sight I still carry with me today. That driver could have been me or any of my colleagues. Later that night, I struggled to find brief rest from the sensory and emotional overload. During one period of sleeplessness, I realized that had the eruption occurred just two hours later, as cars were assembling for the next scheduled tour, the death toll would have been in triple rather than double-digits, that those ridiculing the advice and concerns of scientists would have quickly been engulfed by the mudflows.

Now 40 years later, with the perspective of decades of experience as a science journalist and meteorologist, I’m struck by the parallels between the debates over the proper response to Mount St. Helens, and more recently, to ongoing environmental degradation and climate change. We hear the same words now that we heard in 1980: “I don’t believe it!” “It’s junk science!” Or, “It’s just a theory!”

Had the warnings of David Johnston and his colleagues been taken more seriously by some political leaders and more members of the general public, the final toll of 57 people killed by the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens would have been much lower, with possibly as few as just one person perishing in the blast and its aftermath. Ironically, it would have been David Johnston, who saw it as his duty to remain at his post next to a volcano he had characterized two months earlier as “a keg of dynamite,” who might have been the only victim.

I believe Mount St. Helens offers lessons today as we confront new environmental hazards such as climate change and extinction of species. Moving forward, I believe it’s science that should inform our political, public and personal decisions as we face critical decisions which will echo into the future much more than a volcanic eruption. Will Washingtonians attend to what science is telling us today?
The vine maples demand my attention this September morning, ablaze in a fiery display of fall glory. Scattered on the green hillsides, the oranges and rusts, ochres and crimsons signal the turning of the season as I arrive at the park’s most recent archaeological excavation. Prior to the installation of new underground utility lines in the Ohanapecosh Campground in the park’s southeast corner, cultural resources staff tested for archaeological artifacts. The first people who came to Mount Rainier hunted and gathered with stone tools that they used to cut, pierce, and scrape game and other materials. Sharp-edged stone tools work well, but are brittle and fragile, requiring frequent repair and replacement. Wherever people made, used, or repaired these tools, they left behind a shower of chipped, fine-grained stone fragments. These remains became clues for archaeologists about the people who left them.

Park staff recovered stone tool remnants during initial testing at Ohanapecosh, and when sampling the landscape more broadly, they found more chipped tool remains at over a dozen locations, probably small campsites. Dating them was easy because of Mount Rainier’s unique layer cake stratigraphy. Numerous eruptions at the mountain—and from other volcanoes—have deposited ash and other volcanic material in layers on the ground. These layers relate to the known age of volcanic events and thus the approximate age of the toolstone fragments contained within them. The earliest Ohanapecosh sites sit below the Mount Mazama ash layer, left by the eruption that created Oregon’s Crater Lake at about 7,700 years ago, indicating that people occupied the sites at about that time.

Although the Ohanapecosh finds are some of the oldest at Mount Rainier, they matter for another reason. Most archaeological sites at the park occur at 4,000 feet or higher in elevation, but those at Ohanapecosh are among the first precontact sites found below 2,000 feet. Precontact refers to the period prior to Native American encounters with European and Russian explorers in the late eighteenth century.

Park archaeologist Greg Burtchard greeted me when I arrived at the Ohanapecosh Campground. This would be my third time assisting on excavations, and Burtchard had spent considerable time helping me understand the park’s archaeological record—all of the physical evidence of peoples’ presence at Mount Rainier. This record includes camping and butchering sites, fire hearths, stone tool artifacts, and other clues of human presence. After introductions and a quick tour of the project, Burtchard put me to work. From one of the original sample holes, the crew had excavated a unit that measured over nine feet square and over three feet deep. Standing chest deep in the unit, one of the researchers carefully skimmed and scraped away small bits of dirt, hoping to locate artifacts in situ. She brushed the loose material into buckets and handed them up and out of the unit for screening. I helped the others shake and sift the dirt through fine wire-mesh screens, looking for any pieces of chip stone tools.
The Myth: Indians Were Very Superstitious and Afraid of It

When European Americans began settling the Puget Sound region in the 1800s, they encountered Native American villages at strategic locations along the major waterways. Long-standing Indian settlements were numerous at present-day Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia, and hundreds of other locations. There was little knowledge, however, of Indian travel into the mountains.

Native stories tell of people in the mountains in general and at Tahoma specifically, but accounts differ regarding the heights to which they ascended. Nisqually tribal member, historian, and writer Cecelia Svinth Carpenter told of a boundary “where trees stop growing and eternal snowfields lie deep…the sacred demarcation line that encircles the entire mountain.” Nisqually people did not pass beyond this line. It was a combination, Carpenter wrote, of respect for and fear of Tahoma, the Nisqually name for the great white mountain, which kept people from trespassing its upper peaks.

Other stories present differing views of the Indian relationship to Tahoma. Arthur C. Ballard grew up in Auburn, Washington, not far from Muckleshoot villages on the Green and White Rivers that had stood for generations. His lifelong passion for language compelled him to translate stories he heard from Indian elders. He recorded and translated two versions of “Young Man’s Ascent of Mount Rainier.” The first version begins with the words, “This story is not a myth. The man in this story was a real man.” The second version begins, “The grandfather of my grandmother went up to the summit of Mount Rainier.” In the stories, the young man finds a lake at the summit while searching for magic powers. A lake does, in fact, exist in an underground cave on the mountaintop.

In 1856, a young European American named Alfred Brown accompanied a group of about 30 Yakama Indians on a hunting expedition up Cowlitz Divide on the mountain’s southeast flank. Failing to find any game, they continued upward until seven or eight of the group—with Brown in tow—decided to climb toward the summit. Brown later said, “We did not try to reach the highest pinnacle,” but on their descent spent the night at the base of Gibralter Rock.

These accounts, supplemented with extensive archaeological remains and the well-known Indian trails system, clearly show that for ages people were drawn to the place “where the waters begin.” Ignorant of such evidence, the newcomers assumed that Indian people avoided mountainous areas, and believed that primitive superstitions restrained Indian people from venturing into the mountains. Historians and anthropologists now believe that travel by native groups was sufficient to create and maintain routes that linked lowland areas to the high country. There is evidence of frequent and longhanded travel between the eastern and western sides of the Cascades and that some of today’s trails, roads, and highways follow these earliest pathways. In addition, Native Americans contributed substantially to the successes achieved by early European American explorations of Mount Rainier. A rich historical record details Indian involvement in a variety of adventures.

Take the example of Dr. William Fraser Tolmie. Freshly graduated at age 20 as a medical doctor and surgeon from Scotland’s Glasgow University, Tolmie arrived at Fort Nisqually in the spring of 1833 to serve as doctor and trader to the local people. Just three months after arriving at the fort between present-day Olympia and Tacoma, Tolmie received permission for a botanizing trip to Mount Rainier. He wrote in his journal, “I am going to Mount Rainier to gather herbs of which to make medicine, part of which is to be sent to Britain and part retained in case intermittent fever should visit us—when I will prescribe for the Indians.” The familiarity with the route and the prospects of good hunting entered the Nisqually Indians Quiniallah, Lashima, and Lachalu, a Puylup Indian named Nuckaluk, and a fifth unidentified individual to serve as guides. Their 10-day trek up the park’s northwest corner marked the first time that a non-native approached the mountain.

Like others before him and multitudes ever after, Mount Rainier mesmerized Second Lieutenant August V. Kautz. Of the mountain 60 miles east of Fort Steilacoom, the quartermaster and commissary officer wrote in his journal in 1857, “On a clear day [the mountain] does not look more than ten miles off...a grand and inspiring view.” The strongwilled Kautz made plans for a summit attempt that summer. With scant information about a route and under the prejudicial influence of the times, he wrote, “Information relating to the mountain was exceedingly meager; no white man had ever been near it, and Indians were very superstitious and afraid of it.”

Kautz befriended the brilliant Nisqually Indian war strategist Leschi, who suggested that he take a route up the Nisqually River drainage. Leschi probably also recommended that Wah-poo-scy, who lived in the same village, guide his group. Kautz outfitted each man with an alpenstock and shoes with four-penny nails driven through the inside for traction on the steep, icy slopes. No one made it to the top, but Kautz ascended solo to within 400 feet of the summit.

The Stevens and Van Trump 1857 expedition, regarded by most historians as the first successful climb of Mount Rainier, featured Hazard Stevens, son of Governor Isaac I. Stevens. His account of the climb, like Kautz’s before
In the summer of 1963, there was little reason for Native people in the Mount Rainier area to cooperate with Allan H. Smith. An anthropologist at Washington State University, he had few connections with local tribes, whose people were understandably suspicious of outsiders. With his colleague Richard H. Daugherty, he held a contract with Mount Rainier National Park to determine the extent and use of the mountain by Indian people. Smith planned to gather ethnographic information about their use of the mountain, which Daugherty would then use to guide an archaeological survey.

From his interviews on the Yakama, Nisqually, and Muckleshoot reservations, Smith learned that Yakama, Taidnapam (present-day Cowtul), Nisqually, Puypulp, and Muckleshoot people seasonally frequented and laid loose claim to particular areas on the mountain. While boundary lines proved arbitrary with some overlap, ridge crests generally served as approximate dividers. Smith’s informants told stories of trips to the mountain in late summer to early fall where they picked huckleberries, gathered plants, and hunted elk, deer, bear, mountain goat, and other animals.

In the project’s second phase, Daugherty conducted field surveys in hopes of identifying potential archaeological sites. His team located chipped stone tools in a roadcut near Bench Lake on the mountain’s southern slope. They also followed up on park naturalist Terry Patton’s report of a rock shelter near Sommice. From September 1964, the first study of the park. The shelter was about the size of a modern backcountry campsite, with a back wall arcing upward to form a protective roof about 16 feet overhead. There Rice and Nelson recovered chipped stone fragments indicating tool maintenance and repair, nearly one-half of which were smaller than a fingernail. There also found 13 formed tools that included knives, scrapers, and projectile points that they believed indicated connections with native people in eastern Washington. Key finds included bits of bone and tooth enamel from goat or sheep, which indicated that people had hunted nearby and had dressed and roasted their kills there over 1,000 years ago.

The upper valley of Fryingpan Creek, at an elevation of 2,800 feet, remains under snow from October through June, so the ancient hunters probably used the site during snow-free times between July and September. Rice suggested that their home villages may have been in the Yakama lands east of the Cascades, or the lowlands west and north like the White or Green Rivers. Horse travel did not become commonplace until the 1700s, so people walked—sometimes for up to several days—from their villages to the camp.

The combined challenges of weather, terrain, and distance suggest that people had strong reasons to venture onto Tahoma’s uplands. They often passed through the area as they traveled across the Cascades to visit family, trade, or for other purposes. It’s possible they came for religious or spiritual practices. Most importantly, anthropologists and archaeologists believe that people came to specific locations on the mountain for the express purpose of extracting resources—plants and animals—in short supply or unavailable in the lowlands.

Near their lowland villages, people enjoyed regular access to salmon and elk and were abundant, and camas was common in lowland prairies. But the dense, lower elevation forests up to about 3,500 feet in elevation held fewer valuable items than those found in the meadows or in open subalpine settings a thousand feet further up the mountainside. The forest’s edge, subalpine parks, and meadows held the greatest variety and quantity of plants and animals that people sought, available during the snow-free summer season. People hunted deer, elk, and bear wherever they found them, but they especially prized those animals not available in the lowlands. Hoary marmots were valuable for their pelts that people sewed into blankets or robes. Mountain goat hides were treasured for their wool.

Many plants grew at mid-elevation (between about 3,000 and 5,500 feet) that benefited native people. The long, narrow leaves of bear grass were used as part of a decorative pattern in basket making, imparting a light color to the design. Medicinal plants such as Gray’s lovage were harvested to treat colds, coughs, and croup.

The subalpine meadows provided Native Americans with important food plants, too. They dug the roots of some plants and the corms of avalanche and glacier lilies. Nuts of upland plants like whitebark pine were also harvested. There is little doubt, though, that the several varieties of huckleberry, Vaccinium membranaceum, were the most valuable of all. Mountain goat hides, sheep, which indicated that people had hunted nearby and gathered plants there. The absence of place name information prevented people from connecting features like the Nisqually or Puypulp Rivers, Wapowety Cleaver (as spelled on park maps), or Sluiskin Falls to the area’s original inhabitants, early guides, and travelers.

The rock shelter along Fryingpan Creek and the Bench Lake location remained the park’s only documented archaeological sites until the late 1980s. In 1990, archaeologist Richard J. McClure Jr. identified four additional sites. His work to organize the growing collection of precontact archaeological evidence and an unlikely partnership to dispel the mistaken idea. University professors and graduate students, tribal elders, Mount Rainier National Park staff, and other experts would eventually work together to set the record straight.

Emerging Truth, Stubborn Bias

In the 1960s and 1970s, Mount Rainier National Park archaeologist (retired) Greg Burtchard, Mount Rainier National Park archaeologist (retired) modified at mid-elevation, resource-rich locations. Image courtesy of Greg Burtchard, Mount Rainier National Park archaeologist (retired) modified by Kirsten Wahlquist.

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In the 1960s and 1970s, Mount Rainier National Park archaeologist (retired) Greg Burtchard, Mount Rainier National Park archaeologist (retired) modified at mid-elevation, resource-rich locations. Image courtesy of Greg Burtchard, Mount Rainier National Park archaeologist (retired) modified by Kirsten Wahlquist.

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In the 1960s and 1970s, Mount Rainier National Park archaeologist (retired) Greg Burtchard, Mount Rainier National Park archaeologist (retired) modified at mid-elevation, resource-rich locations. Image courtesy of Greg Burtchard, Mount Rainier National Park archaeologist (retired) modified by Kirsten Wahlquist.
Burtchard proposed distinct site types that had been, or first people who came to Mount Rainier.

Among these are the mountain, what they did, and how often they returned. Archaeological excavations added from the ground played a primary role. Isolated finds like tell about Native Americans at Mount Rainier. Stories had gotten the story right about the precontact presence of the mountain, forming partnerships on a variety of projects.

Mount Rainier continues to guide the park's archaeological models to predict where and when people frequented and how it changed over time. Testing and refining the data were the focus of a new project. Burtchard reasoned that seasonally productive subalpine ecosystems stretching around the mountain answered the question of "where" and "why" people came to Tahoma. He reasoned that seasonally productive subalpine ecosystems stretching around the mountain answered the question of "where" and "why" people came to Tahoma.

One of Mount Rainier's most extraordinary residential base camps lies in the park's northeasternmost corner, where Burtchard and colleagues conducted excavations over several field seasons. The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe lent logistical support and field assistance that enabled the team to recover nearly 20,000 stone tool artifacts. Projectile points representing both bow and arrow and the earlier atlatl technologies, scrapers, other tools, and a high density of chipped tool-stone debris comprise the bulk of the finds. Site features included a flat rock “griddle” used for cooking and multiple fire hearths with firecracked rock that date to about 4,200 years ago. Also found were over 300 pebble-like objects called gastroliths, the gastrointestinal stones of a grouse, a common chicken-sized game bird. Finding these stones tells the story of people roasting and eating the birds there. Similar, deeper-rooted artifacts allowed Burtchard to estimate that use of the area began at least between 8,000 and 9,000 years ago.

One way to appreciate the value of Mount Rainier's growing archaeological record is to compare it to the precontact currency system of Native Americans in the region—the dentalium shell bead necklace. As shells were added, the value of the necklace increased.

A little more than 50 years ago, Mount Rainier's precontact record consisted of a small collection of isolated finds enveloped in a cloud of misunderstanding about the presence of Native Americans on the mountain. The sustained cooperation of local Indian tribes, park staff, and other experts finally prevailed in dispelling the mistaken idea that indigenous people avoided mountainous terrain.

For over 9,000 years at more than 100 locations, native people have hunted marmots, mountain goats, and other game. They have gathered huckleberries, bear grass, and other plants. Tahoma's dense forests provide people on all sides of the mountain, encircling it like shell beads on a necklace, becoming ever more valuable as new finds are added with each passing year.
on the evening of April 15, 1903, a large crowd gathered along the banks of the Puyallup River in Tacoma. The crowd, with 160 dignitaries from the City of Destiny, as well as from Victoria, Seattle and Port Angeles, was the largest for any steamship launch in Tacoma history. All eyes focused on the Edward Heath Shipyard where a nearly finished wooden steamer was about to be launched.

As the first steamer built for the Puget Sound Navigation Company (PSN), Clallam’s launch was a cause for celebration. Along with scheduling the event in the evening, PSN decided to launch the new vessel into the river sideways. This was an unusual method and was considered unlucky by some. Part of the launch involved flying the United States ensign at Clallam’s bow; as the flag was raised, it became clear it was upside down, which is considered a universal distress signal.

When the Clallam was released into the river, the ship slid much faster than anticipated. It moved so quickly that Hazel Beahan, the young girl chosen to swing the traditional bottle of champagne at the hull, missed her target.

With these bad omens, experienced and superstitious seafarers muttered that the steamer would not survive a year of service. Afterwards, Tacoma newspapers suppressed details of the botched launch, but Seattle journalists in attendance cheerily described every misstep, though they emphasized a bright future for both Tacoma and for the steamship. But nine months later, the omens seemed to have proved true. As the story of Clallam’s untimely demise emerged, superstition and prophecy gave way to corruption and incompetence.

Built at a cost of $80,000, Clallam was 168 feet of heavy Douglas fir with a total displacement of 657 tons. While modeled on an older PSN ship called Majestic, Clallam surpassed her predecessor with nicely appointed public rooms, wider promenades, and 44 staterooms. Licensed for a capacity of 250 overnight passengers or 500 for day excursions, the steamer carried 530 lifejackets; six lifeboats – with space for 187 occupants; 25 fire buckets; six axes; six lanterns; and four life buoys.

In the weeks and months following her troubled launch, Clallam became a popular ship on the Sound. Captain George E. Roberts, a PSN founder, had 32 years of experience on Puget Sound and in Alaskan waters. He was well-respected, and oversaw well-known local steamers such as Rosalie and Olympian. Roberts had wrecked two vessels in Alaskan waters, but this was not considered an unusual number for a professional mariner in those years. Northern
A daily advertisement for Clallam's regular service as it appeared in the Seattle Daily Times on October 25, 1903.

LEFT: Captain George Roberts was Clallam's second captain, but he guided the ship most of her brief career. Photo from Lewis & Gregory's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest, 1895.

FROM LEFT: Scott DeLaunay, Clallam's chief engineer, had survived two previous shipwrecks in Alaska. He transferred to Puget Sound to ease his wife's worries. Seattle Post-Intelligencer, January 10, 1904. Frank Freer was the purser aboard Clallam, and was placed in charge of evacuating the steamer. Seattle Sunday Times, January 10, 1904. Hazel Beahan was the 14-year-old daughter of the weather station master at Tatoosh Island. She won Puget Sound Navigation Company's contest to have the honor of launching the Clallam. Tacoma Daily Ledger, April 16, 1903.

a reputation among mariners as an unsightly vessel. Captain Roberts' expertise kept the ship's difficulties hidden from passengers and other casual observers.

The design flaws and maintenance troubles with Clallam's port holes were harder to hide.

The lowest deck's port holes lay only 18 inches above the waterline in calm weather. Wave-driven debris or collisions against dock pilings frequently resulted in broken glass, and repairs were often subject to delay. In December 1903, the port hole in the Mail Room shattered, and postal authorities complained to PSN that the mail arrived damp. By January 1904, the glass in at least three port holes on Clallam had been broken and remained unrepair. To keep out water, the "deadlight" for each port hole - a protective cover made of iron - would be closed over the broken glass. These lapses in maintenance would soon have deadly consequences.

The morning of Friday, January 8, 1904, opened with lightly overcast skies, and a slight breeze heading southwest, typical for the time of year. Clallam was moored at Seattle's Pier Number 1 at the foot of Yesler Way, loading passengers and freight. The passenger list was small, typical of the post-holiday lull. Louise Harris, a 21-year-old heiress to a $200,000 mining and real estate fortune in Spokane, nearly missed the ship, on the way to visit friends in Victoria. Homer Swany, owner of Pacific Steel Foundry in the Jefferson County community of Irondale, bought a last-minute ticket for a business trip. Jeannie Galletly and her daughter Jessie, members of the family of Victoria banker Archibald Galletly, were returning from a recuperative visit to the Green River Hot Springs. Midwestern vaudeville musicians Albert K. Prince and Guy Daniels were bound to Victoria for a charity concert.

Clallam was scheduled to depart Seattle at 8:30 a.m., but nearly two hours later, the vessel was still tied up at the pier. The delay allowed for a rush of last-minute ticket buyers, most of whom the purser neglected to add to the passenger manifest. Around 10:30 a.m., Clallam finally set off, her listed and unlisted passengers expecting a short and uneventful crossing. Neither adjective would apply.

Under darkening skies, Clallam stopped briefly at Port Townsend around 11:40 a.m. to exchange sheep for more passengers, mail, and freight bound for Victoria. Passengers hunkered down in their cabins or the saloons. At 12:15 p.m., Clallam departed Port Townsend, turning north into the Strait of Juan de Fuca for the crossing to Victoria. Records later showed that the vessel had left Fort Townsend with 96 men, women and children aboard.

Rounding Point Wilson, Clallam ran headlong into a January gale, with stiff winds and choppy seas. Passengers steadied themselves and held on to railings as the vessel was tossed up and down and back and forth in the unrelenting wind and waves. Just 45 minutes out of Port Townsend, around 1:00 p.m., one of the starboard deadlights amidships, in place over a broken port hole, failed. Water began pouring in, unnoticed by crew and passengers alike. Clallam continued struggling against the gale, making painfully slow progress toward Victoria...

It was around 2:00 p.m. when Chief Engineer Scott A. DeLaunay heard an odd whistling sound and discovered the broken port hole and failed deadlight, and seawater rushing in. He quickly ordered the bilge pumps into operation, and crewmembers worked to patch the hole. DeLaunay then reported the damage to Captain Roberts. Faced with the choice of turning back to Washington—or at this point, Clallam was just four miles offshore—Roberts instead continued steaming towards Victoria.

This meant exposure on open water for another 35 miles, with Clallam fighting 60 mile-per-hour winds and 30- to 40-foot swells in the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Despite the efforts of the crew, fierce waves quickly tore apart the makeshift repair of the deadlight and port hole. Steadily rising water swept coal and leftover debris from the ship's construction into the bilge pumps, dragging them beyond reach. Hand pumps, intended as backup for the bilge pumps, were useless since Clallam's maiden voyage, and were found to be rusted stuck.

As the water continued rising, the engine room boilers were extinguished, stalling Clallam four miles short of the safety of Victoria's inner harbor. The ship was now powerless in one of the most dangerous parts of the Strait, where currents strained Clallam's structural integrity. Captain Roberts ordered Purser Frank Freer to prepare passengers to abandon ship.

Powerless against the waves, Clallam began heaving violently. Passengers mustering on deck found that Purser Freer was the sole officer
tasked with evacuation. The plan called for loading passengers into the three port-side boats and rowing to Victoria with the women, especially the passengers, being pressured to act as breakwaters. Many doubted the wisdom of Clallam into the three port-side boats and rowing to Victoria with the plan calling for loading passengers into the lifeboat, reassuring them and handing

The first lifeboat had barely moved away from Clallam when another large wave hit. The lifeboat capsized and all the occupants went into the water, where currents instantly dragged many of the victims down. Despite increasing objections from the remaining passengers, loading of the second lifeboat proceeded. Unfortunately, the second lifeboat didn’t fare much better than the first. Waves swept several passengers overboard, and just 500 yards from Clallam, the second lifeboat disappeared between towering swells. Still, the evacuation proceeded. The third lifeboat began lowering with the few remaining passengers assisted by some male passengers as oarsmen, among them Albert Prince and Guy Daniels, the vaudeville musicians. As Clallam backed into the wind and swells, the falls and tackle - the hardware used to lower a lifeboat to the water - became entangled in the wooden davit, the small crane that lowered the lifeboats. The davit shattered and the lifeboat was unmoored, spilling several passengers into the sea before crashing down on top of them.

Meanwhile, in Victoria, rumors swirled about Clallam being adrift. Traveling to Victoria’s Beacon Hill, PSN agent Edward Blackwood spotted Clallam drifting four miles off shore, the jib sail set and distress flags flying from the masts. Blackwood attempted to find a ship in Victoria to conduct a rescue but none were available while the gale still howled. Telephoning every regional agency, Blackwood finally convinced the Canadian Pacific office in the nearby port of Sidney to send the steamer Iroquois to find Clallam. But as darkness fell and the storm intensified, the Iroquois returned empty-handed.

At 5:30 p.m., Captain John Libby, general manager of Puget Sound Tugboat Company in Seattle, received a wireless message concerning Clallam’s distress. Libby dispatched the seagoing tugboat Richard Holsby, captained by Robert Hall, to head out from Port Townsend, and the tug Sea Lion from Seattle.

Back aboard Clallam, the remaining crewmembers and passengers struggled to bail. Contrary to Roberts’ fears of imminent foundering, the Clallam still held fast, but now the ship drifted towards the San Juan Islands. When the tug Holsby arrived to help at 10:35 p.m., Clallam was settling by its low stern, which was lined with large windows for the dining saloon. Around 11:30 p.m., these windows shattered and seawater poured in unabated. Midnight came, and Holsby’s attempted rescue of Clallam continued as the vessels moved slowly toward Port Townsend. By around 1:30 a.m. on January 9, Clallam had begun slowly rolling onto her port side. Arriving just in time, Captain Charles Manter of the tug Sau Lion immediately lowered his lifeboats.

Captain Roberts called to both tugs that to save the Holsby, the tow line needed to be cut. The Holsby’s tow cable was broken by the rough conditions, and the tow line was cut.

At 7:30 a.m., Captain Manter threw lines overboard and hauled up as many survivors as he could. It was continuing work in the darkness, with screams for help coming from the debris-littered whitecaps, and rescue often coming too late. “People were floundering about in the water all about us...we could go to one person,” recalled Manter, “only to find that the poor fellow had gone down, and then make for another... so it went.” Eight men were rescued from atop the pilothouse, and Captain Roberts was hauled aboard from a makeshift raft. After an hour of intense efforts, the tugboats had rescued a total of 38 survivors between them, including 22 crewmen and 16 male passengers. Many drowned in the final plunge of Clallam is unknown.

Telegraph wires carried news of the horror across Canada and the United States. Victoria and Port Townsend became towns in mourning overnight, chartering steamships to recover the dead. Five bodies were retrieved later on Saturday, January 9, not far from the floating remains of Clallam’s pilothouse. No. 1 lifeboat, the second launched, was discovered on Sunday, January 10. Ultimately, a total of 22 bodies were recovered, out of 56 people listed as dead or missing. The steamer claimed the rest.

Upon reaching Seattle, Captain Roberts did little to impress the Canadians or Americans. His first remarks ashore were complaints that Clallam was only insured for loss through fire or collision, not for sinking. An inquiry conducted by American authorities began on Monday, January 11. It was led by Captain Bion Whitney and Captain Robert Turner of the Marine Inspection Service. For days, Captain Roberts and Chief Engineer DeLaunay traded blows on the witness stand, each accusing the other of incompetence and contradicting each other’s testimonies. Upon suggestion by Whitney and Turner that the pumps had been left open by the Chief Engineer, DeLaunay suspected the American inspectors were scapegoating him. Accusing Captain Roberts of incompetence, DeLaunay said Clallam should never have gone into a gale. However, other
through drowning and exposure. Scott DeLaunay escaped feloniously and unlawfully killed his passengers and crew it “wholesale murder.”

Be charged with manslaughter. Canadian publications called been to sea more than once, and calling for both officers to the inquiry as a farce, pointedly noting neither inspector had

Engineer Scott DeLaunay, and revoking his Marine Engineer’s concluded, placing almost all blame for Clallam’s loss on Chief Clallam.

ment to launch the lifeboats, the two men claimed seawater and was not available for review.

by the U.S. Marine Inspection Bion Whitney and Robert Turner, afloat. The flaws in the pumps have helped keep the vessel pumping system, which should

Society, 1943.42.4287. Washington State Historical

Turner (center); Captain George Roberts at left are Inspectors Bion Whitney and Robert Turner, head inspectors of vessels for Puget Sound, were ordered to Seattle from San Francisco by the U.S. Marine Inspection Service to conduct the American inquiry. Seattle Daily Times, February 14, 1904.

On Wednesday, February 3, 1904 the American inquiry concluded, placing almost all blame for Clallam’s loss on Chief Engineer Scott DeLaunay, and revoking his Marine Engineer’s license. For his part in the tragedy, Captain Roberts’ pilot license was suspended for a year. The press openly condemned the inquiry as a farce, pointedly noting neither inspector had been to sea more than once, and calling for both officers to be charged with manslaughter. Canadian publications called it “wholesale murder.”

The Canadian inquiry concluded that Captain Roberts feloniously and unlawfully killed his passengers and crew through drowning and exposure. Scott DeLaunay escaped

crewmembers defended Captain Roberts. Parser Freer highlighted Roberts’ coolness in the tragedy. Justifying their decision to launch the lifeboats, the two men claimed seawater had snupped the sacon, requiring immediate evacuation. Passengers contradicted Roberts’ and Freer’s testimony on this and other points.

Notes on sources: This article is based largely on a thorough review of contemporary newspaper accounts from the Victoria Daily Colonist, Seattle Post-Intelligencer and Seattle Daily Times, and some points differ from popular books published in the 1950 and 1960s. The transcript for the American inquiry was lost decades ago and was not available for review.

The Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture (MAC) in Spokane is present ing two volcanos exhibs this year, one focused on the 40th anniversary of the eruption of Mount St. Helens, the other on the drama and the ruins of the ancient cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, lost for almost 1,500 years after being buried by a catastrophic eruption in 79 AD.

A robust series of lectures will accompany the Pompeii exhibs: Roman Gladiators: Killing Machines? Fact and Fiction Dr. Andrew Goldman, Gonzaga University

Saturday, April 11 at 10:30 a.m. at E.A. Johnson Auditorium

Kitchens, Dining Rooms, and Latrines: Daily Routines in a Roman House

Dr. Mira Green, University of Washington Saturday, April 11 at 11:30 a.m. at E.A. Johnson Auditorium

Street Theater: A Pompeian Neighborhood in Five Acts

Dr. Jeremy Hartnett, Washb College

Thursday, April 16 at 6:30 p.m. at E.A. Johnson Auditorium

For more information, visit www.northwestmuseum.org.
WILLIAM F. TOLMIE AT FORT NISQUALLY

EDITED BY STEVE A. ANDERSON, INTRODUCTION BY JERRY V. RAMSEY, PH.D.

WSU PRESS

REVIEWED BY STEVE SCHER

On April 17, 1850, Dr. William F. Tolmie, based at Fort Nisqually near present-day DuPont, Washington, wrote a letter to Captain Bennett H. Hill of the American forces stationed at Steilacoom Barracks, now site of Western State Hospital. Dr. Tolmie was Chief Trader for the Hudson’s Bay Company and manager of its farming operations, known as the Puget Sound Agricultural Company. Tolmie wrote to officially protest the U.S. Army’s seizure of the company schussor Cadboro.

The signing of the Oregon Treaty of 1846, establishing the 49th parallel as the boundary between Canada and the United States, granted the influential British company the right to continue its “trade in the United States Territory of Oregon,” as Tolmie writes in his letter to Hill. But many arriving Americans wanted the British gone. Tolmie tries to hold the line, concluding, “I hereby hold the said Parties liable and responsible for all loss to the said Companies from the detention of said Vessel, the Capture of such goods and the stoppage and seizure and desert. Ships laden with furs, timber and vegetables sail off. Money is sent. Pots and ploughs and sheep arrive. Men fight, die and desert. Ships laden with furs, timber and vegetables sail off.”

As the Hudson’s Bay agent in charge of Fort Nisqually by the scholar and author Steve A. Anderson, who has written extensively on the structure and operations of Fort Nisqually, and managed the Fort Nisqually Living History Museum for a decade. In 2012, he discovered Tolmie’s never-before-transcribed Fort Nisqually letterbooks in the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg. “Here were weighty business decisions he faced, the prattle-prattle gossip of the day, eyewitness accounts, political intrigue, patterns of commerce and critical assessments of the fort’s business,” Anderson writes in the preface.

What happens at Nisqually as seen through Tolmie’s lens? Money is sent. Pots and ploughs and sheep arrive. Men fight, die and desert. Ships laden with furs, timber and vegetables sail off. Here also, caught in glimpses, are the lives of Native people as they are shaped by this British invasion. In a June 13, 1850 letter to his supervisor James Douglas in Vancouver, Tolmie writes, “There being a fair wind today, the Squadr's [Skagit Indians] assisting you here are anxious to leave, so I must defer writing you more at length till the Cadboro sails.”

The Natives, almost always unnamed, appear in these letters as laborers, neighbors, sailors and, very often, carriers of cargo and mail. In the early years of Oregon Territory when sailing ships were few, it was the Native canoes that linked these Europeans to the wider world.

Anderson’s careful transcriptions and annotations of Tolmie’s letters bring to life the smallest of daily details, deepening the record of Northwest history and feeling hopes that more such previously undiscovered correspondence will come to light.

THE MOVEMENT IS RIPENING FOR FRUITION

SUFFRAGE EPHEMERA FROM MOHAI IN SEATTLE

In commemoration of the centennial of the ratification of the 19th amendment in the United States in 1920, COLUMBIA magazine will in each issue this year present stories, artifacts and ephemera of women’s suffrage from the collections of heritage organizations around the Evergreen State. For this installment of Washington Gallery, Seattle’s Museum of History & Industry (MOHAI) shares a photo and a letter between suffrage leaders.

Sidewalk of Seattle Suffragists

According to written records, this image from 1915 features “a large group of people posing together on a city sidewalk,” which is believed to be in Seattle. “Most of the individuals are women, and several are proudly displaying copies of The Suffragette, a weekly newspaper published by the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage.” It’s not known why the group gathered for this photo in this particular spot, a full five years after women in Washington gained the right to vote. According to information on the back of the original print, the image is the work Donaldson Photo News Service.

Letter from Abigail Scott Dunway to Missouri Hanna, November 8, 1910

This handwritten letter is from Oregon-based women’s suffrage activist Abigail Scott Dunway to Seattle area publisher and suffrage activist Missouri T. B. Hanna. The date—November 8, 1910—is significant, as this was the day that men of Washington voted in favor of amending the state constitution, for once and for all, to allow Washington women to register to vote. It was the same day a similar ballot measure failed in Oregon.

Mrs. Dunway’s handwriting is difficult to discern, but the letter appears to be an Election Day vote of confidence, with a little bit of a “backup plan” and encouragement to Mrs. Hanna to keep publishing her Votes for Women newspaper, thrown in for good measure.

My Dear Mrs. Hanna,

Your campaign plan is masterly. I have tried to get time to write this acknowledgement ever since it reached me, but today being my very first leisure moment. Time will tell which state has led the better way. It was unfortunate that two states so near together should have had a campaign on in such a way that neither could help the other. But it is all right anyway. The movement is ripening for fruition. If one state wins the others will emulate its methods. If both win we’ll join in a jubilee. If neither wins we’ll make a district federation and pool our issues. Do you propose to go on with Votes for Women? If so I will do all I can to help.

Cordially, Yours for Liberty

Abigail Scott Dunway
Superior Press was a Pacific Northwest publisher that issued dozens of popular pictorial history books from the 1940s to the 1970s. Topics ranged from ghost towns to steamships, and from railroads to bush pilots. Books produced by Superior, headquartered just south of Denny Way in downtown Seattle, were packed with historic and contemporary photos accompanied by rich captions, and often included well-researched introductory essays.

The company’s origins, according to notes on file at the Manuscripts, Archives and Special Collections (MASC) at Washington State University, can be traced to 1919 and the Artcraft Engraving and Electrotype Company, which was founded in Seattle by Arthur Bernhard.

Wisconsin native Albert Pierce Salisbury was born in Madison in 1904, but moved with his family as a child to an apple ranch in the Bitter Root Valley of Montana. He came to Washington as a young man in 1923 and, according to his biography, “worked as a farm hand, railroad bridge carpenter, sawmill hand, logger and steeplejack.” Salisbury attended the University of Washington from 1923 to 1929, and worked on Columns magazine there. This might be how Salisbury found work after college as a printing and engraving salesman. He bought Artcraft in 1945 and ran it until he retired in the 1970s.

Early in his tenure leading Artcraft, Salisbury created Superior Press to direct the company’s photo print production work – known as “engraving” or lithography – away from what was an ebbing business line producing high school yearbooks and college annuals and toward the production of original pictorial books.

“Several local authors such as Ralph Andrews, Gordon Newell, the Spring brothers [Bob and Ir], Byron Fish and others uncovered buried treasures in photographs to cooperate with us,” Salisbury said in Superior Press promotional materials from 1961. “Today this affiliate is successfully marketing in historical picture books nationally and internationally, drawing material and writers from as far as the East Coast, covering such subjects as logging, Indians, railroading and air travel.”

Salisbury was not only the publisher; he was an author, too. Salisbury and wife Jane together wrote two books that Superior published: an Oregon Trail pictorial called Here Rolled the Covered Wagon in 1949 and Two Captains West in 1950. Salisbury said, “Today this affiliate is successfully marketing in historical picture books nationally and internationally, drawing material and writers from as far as the East Coast, covering such subjects as logging, Indians, railroading and air travel.”

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After more than three decades as a local publisher, according to The Seattle Times, “Superior fell on hard times, and it sold out to a California publisher in 1972.”

Though Albert F. Salisbury died on June 12, 1994 at age 90 and wife and coauthor Jane Salisbury passed away a decade before that, the titles Superior published live on. The thousands of historic images preserved on the books’ shiny pages grow only more priceless with each passing year.
Is there a geographic name you’d like to know more about? Or a great story about a unique Northwest place that you’d like to share with COLUMBIA readers? Please send email to editor.columbia@gmail.com.

Exploring places and place names around Washington and the Old Oregon Country.

**VILLAGE, BARON, VOLCANO: THE ORIGINS OF ST. HELENS**

A 1902 Bulletin of the United States Geological Survey says that Washington’s Mount St. Helens was “named for Lord St. Helens, British ambassador to Madrid.” But the title of this now obscure diplomat comes from a tiny village on the Isle of Wight in the United Kingdom.

According to many scholars, settlement at St. Helens, which was famous for the ruins of a church washed away by a wave in the 18th century and for the remnants of a very old golf course, may date to as early as 1080. The village was most likely named for Helena, an empress of the Roman Empire, and mother of Constantine the Great.

The mountain was named in 1792 by Captain George Vancouver, who famously explored the Northwest Coast and who bestowed many geographic names that remain to this day. Prior to Vancouver, indigenous names for the peak were, according to Place Names of Washington author Robert Hitchman, “‘Low-We-No-Tah’ or ‘Low-We-Lat-Klah,’ meaning ‘Throwing Up Smoke’ or ‘The Smoking Mountain.’”

Lord St. Helens, or the “1st Baron St. Helens,” was born Alleyne FitzHerbert in 1753. When a miniature painting of FitzHerbert was offered for sale by an art gallery in London a few years ago, the auction materials included a fairly detailed biography provided by the Baron’s family. According to Ellison Fine Art, FitzHerbert was educated at Eton and Cambridge, and then “went on the Grand Tour through France and Italy, building up a fine collection of works of art and manuscripts and honing his connoisseurship in the process.”

Somewhere along the line, the biography continues, “Alleyne became a friend of explorer George Vancouver.” FitzHerbert was named to a diplomatic post in 1777, with an assignment to “try and bring about a peace with France and Spain which had joined with the American colonies in the American Revolutionary War.”

Apparently, FitzHerbert was quite successful. “Not only did he, working entirely behind the scenes, bring about the coup of a lifetime by obtaining exceptionally favorable terms, but in the same negotiations he also successfully laid the foundation of the final peace treaty with the American colonies,“ the Ellison Fine Art biography says. “This was largely thanks to his excellent relations with the British American envoy to Paris, Benjamin Franklin.”

Had Oregon Country promoter Hall J. Kelley had his way in 1834, Mount St. Helens would have been renamed Mount Washington, and the Cascades would have become the President’s Range. Meanwhile, it’s never been explained why Vancouver chose the title “St. Helens” rather than the name “FitzHerbert” to honor his friend.

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![Image](image_url)

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