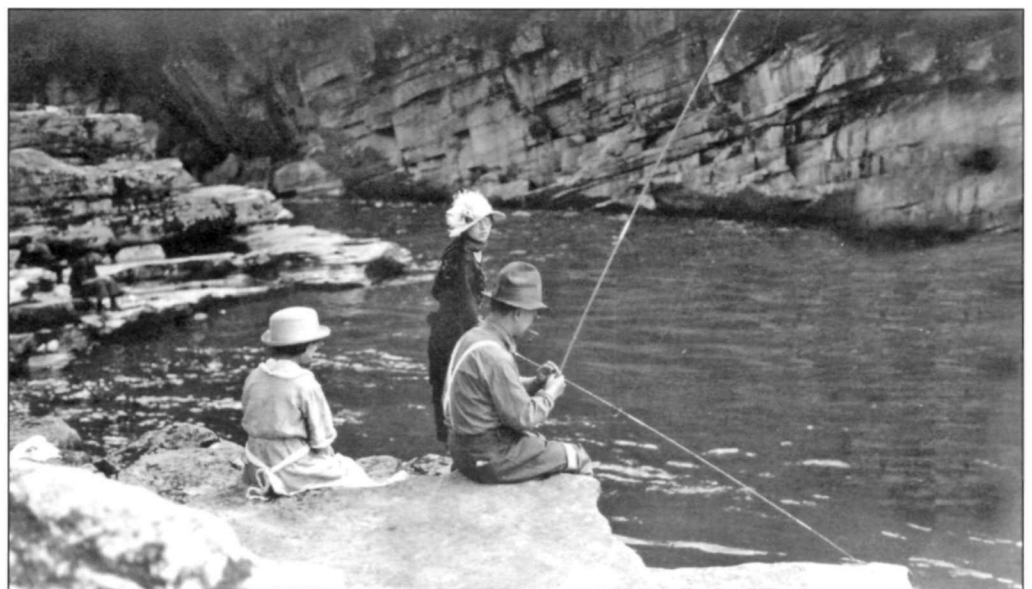




Mount Rainier and PNQ

A National Park
Centennial Album



In the autumn of 1906 the Pacific Northwest gained two new perspectives on Mount Rainier, courtesy of the University of Washington. In October, the first issue of *Washington Historical Quarterly* appeared, edited by the history professor Edmond S. Meany and headquartered on the campus. The journal (which would change its name to *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 30 years later) contained an account of the “First Attempt to Ascend Mount Rainier” in 1833 as well as an explanation of how the peak had been named. Then the next month the landscape architect John C. Olmsted laid out Rainier Vista on the grounds of the university, creat-

ing the axis that became the backbone for the campus plan. The vista provided a view of Mount Rainier (when clouds did not hide it) and incorporated the peak into the appearance of the campus. Olmsted’s decision—made in the context of creating a campus plan, laying out grounds for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909, and designing a municipal system of parks and parkways—signaled the crystallization of the modern layout of the university.

These actions during the autumn of 1906 bespoke a society that, throughout the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th, was looking

at itself in new ways. Although the region still seemed young and barely settled, the appearance of *Washington Historical Quarterly* showed that it was becoming increasingly interested in its past. The years around the turn of the century were a time when inhabitants of the Pacific Northwest formed historical societies, inaugurated college courses in state and regional history, created historical landmarks, and launched historical publications. In a similar way, while the region remained devoted to and dependent upon extractive industry, this was the era during which were created the first national forest reserves, the first state parks, the



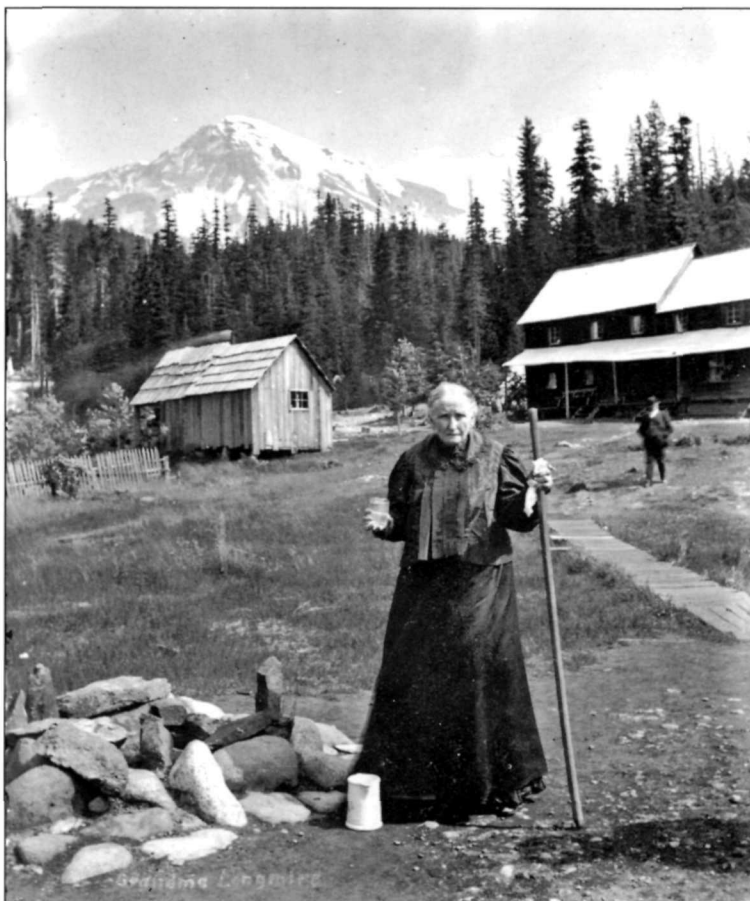
first municipal park systems, and the first mountaineering clubs. This was the period when well-to-do urbanites began moving away from city centers and building homes with views of nearby lakes and forests, saltwater, and mountain ranges. In sum, settler society began paying closer and more appreciative attention than ever before to both the region's past and its natural wonders.

The new appetites for wilderness and for history help to explain the creation of Mount Rainier National Park in 1899. As America became increasingly urbanized and industrialized, more

Mount Rainier's massive glaciers were a scenic and scientific novelty. Nowhere else in the United States outside Alaska could tourists and geologists find such easy access to glaciers. Paradise Inn guests could take guided walks to the Nisqually or Paradise Glacier, and car tourists could inspect the Nisqually Glacier terminus from the park road. Having one's picture taken on or in front of a glacier made a popular souvenir. In 1915, the government permitted a vendor to open a photographic studio at the Nisqually Glacier terminus. The glacier has since receded out of sight from this point.

There were more ambitious entrepreneurial schemes as well. Here, some thought, was a vast store of ice and rushing rivers

to supply hydroelectric power for Seattle and Tacoma and irrigation water for the Yakima Valley. One scheme would have diverted the meltwaters of the Emmons and Frypan glaciers via a tunnel to the east side of the Cascade Range. The plan called for a reservoir in the upper White River valley. Fortunately, all such proposals to exploit Rainier's glacier system fizzled. TC

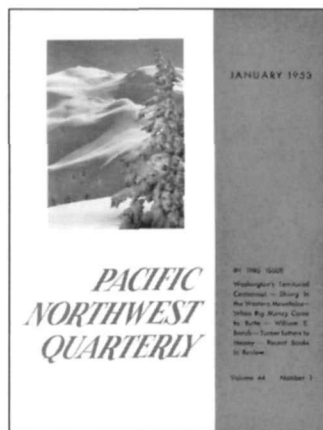
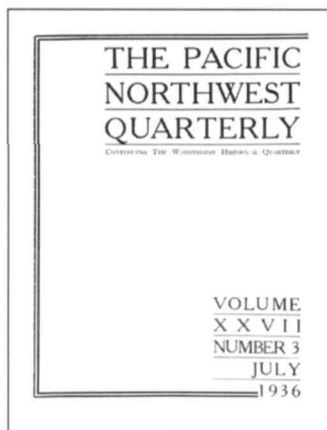
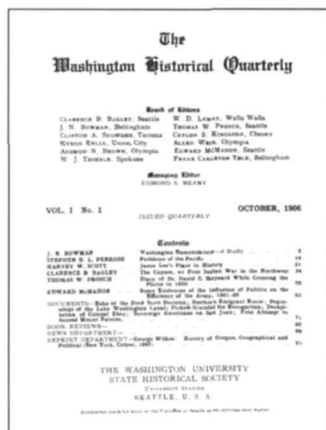


Virinda Longmire holds a jar of mineral water taken from the family's namesake Longmire Springs. James and Virinda Longmire opened their resort in the late 1880s. After the creation of the national park, the Longmires' tourist accommodations were too rustic for some tastes, and the family's 18-acre inholding became an irritant to park management. Virinda offered to sell the parcel to the government for \$60,000 in 1902, was refused, then tried to secure a 160-acre homestead claim on the site. The park superintendent interceded with the General Land Office to have her application rejected. The government finally acquired the property 37 years later. TC

and more people wanted to set aside natural sites like Mount Rainier (and Crater Lake in 1902) as counterpoints to and refuges from a crowded, noisy, mechanized world. But national parks were not merely wild *places* to be protected from modernity. They also stood for a different *time*, a time before non-

Indian society had initiated conquest of the continent. National parks thus preserved the past along with nature. The virtually simultaneous appearance of historical accounts of Mount Rainier in *WHQ* and of Rainier Vista at the University of Washington in 1906 was no idle coincidence.

The photo essay presented here is *PNQ's* way of commemorating the centennial of the founding of Mount Rainier National Park. Given the ties between preserving history and preserving nature, it seems appropriate to review how the pages of *WHQ* and *PNQ* have treated Mount Rainier over the





years. The journal serves as one yardstick of how perceptions of the mountain have changed over time.

Between 1906 and 1935 accounts of Mount Rainier in *Washington Historical Quarterly* generally reflected the interests of Edmond S. Meany, professor at the University of Washington, managing editor of the quarterly, and prominent member of the Seattle-based Mountaineers. Assuming the role of writing down much of the region's past for the first time, Meany was concerned above all with the foundations of state history. He devoted himself to such questions as who first attempted ascent of the mountain and how the peak had received its name, and he also edited and published the accounts of explorers, pioneers, and other leading figures in Northwest history. The matters of the initial ascents and

the naming of the mountain were raised in the inaugural issue of October 1906, and revisited in the April 1917, July 1917, October 1918, July 1920, and January 1930 issues. Meany's devotion to Mount Rainier's history also took the form of a 1916 anthology, *Mount Rainier, A Record of Exploration*, reviewed in the January 1917 issue by Hiram M. Chittenden.

With the death of Meany in 1935 and the renaming of the quarterly in 1936, Mount Rainier received somewhat less textual attention than it had. There remained some interest in early travels on the mountain (see, for example, the 1857 journal of Lieutenant August V. Kautz in the October 1957 issue), but the peak increasingly appeared in the publication's pages in different form. *PNQ* hesitantly began to make use of maps, charts, and other graphics during

Railroads were vital to the development of the Cascade region's coal, timber, and scenic resources. Branch railroads were built into the Cascade foothills near Mount Rainier around the time of the park's establishment. The Tacoma Eastern's line to Ashford, seven miles from the national park entrance, provided early access for tourists. Although the railroad company was chiefly interested in the log freight business, it ran excursion trains between Tacoma and Ashford and operated the National Park Inn at Longmire.

From the end of the line at Ashford, tourists covered the remaining distance to the park by various modes of transportation. "During the season of 1910," the superintendent reported, "2,620 traveled by stage, 4,413 by automobile, 343 by wagon, 113 by motorcycle, 237 on foot, 15 by bicycle, and 13 on horseback." This menagerie of transportation did not last long. In remarkably short order, the automobile was king. TC



the 1940s, and then announced in January 1953 that it was joining the trend among “state and regional journals toward more modern design in magazine format,” including “more generous use of illustrations.” That very issue featured an article by Joseph T. Hazard on “Winter Sports in the Western Mountains,” which occasioned a photograph of Mount Baker for *PNQ*’s first illustrated cover and another of a Mount Rainier “ski field” inside.

Thereafter photographs and drawings of the peak found their way quite regularly into the journal’s pages. Essays on regional photographers (in the April 1977 and October 1984 issues), for example, demonstrated how Mount Rainier had

become an integral part of Northwest scenery. Yet the mountain was seldom the main focus of the articles in which the images of it appeared. For example, the October 1953 issue featured a philatelic essay that included a representation of the mountain on a postage stamp marking the centennial of the creation of Washington Territory; in the July 1962 and April 1984 issues, Mount Rainier served once more as backdrop, this time in pictures of Rainier Vista during the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909; and in January 1974 Mount Rainier made its first appearance on the cover, as drawn in 1792 during George Vancouver’s exploring expedition into Puget Sound, in conjunction with an article

“The view from the road.” In the early 20th century, roads were essential to how people experienced Mount Rainier. They were the primary means of access to and through the national park and offered visitors intimate encounters with it. The roads appeared to be part of the landscape through which they traveled. Landscape architects and engineers designed roads so they would not intrude on the natural scene. They routed them like paths through a garden, following the contours of terrain, to create an unfolding scenic narrative. Most scenes were selected as representative of the park’s natural wonders: a vista of the glacier-clad dome or the alpine wildflower meadows for which the park was renowned. Visitors mostly saw what road builders wanted them to see. And whether traveling by wagon or automobile, tourists traversed



roads that gave the illusion of discovering Mount Rainier for themselves. DL

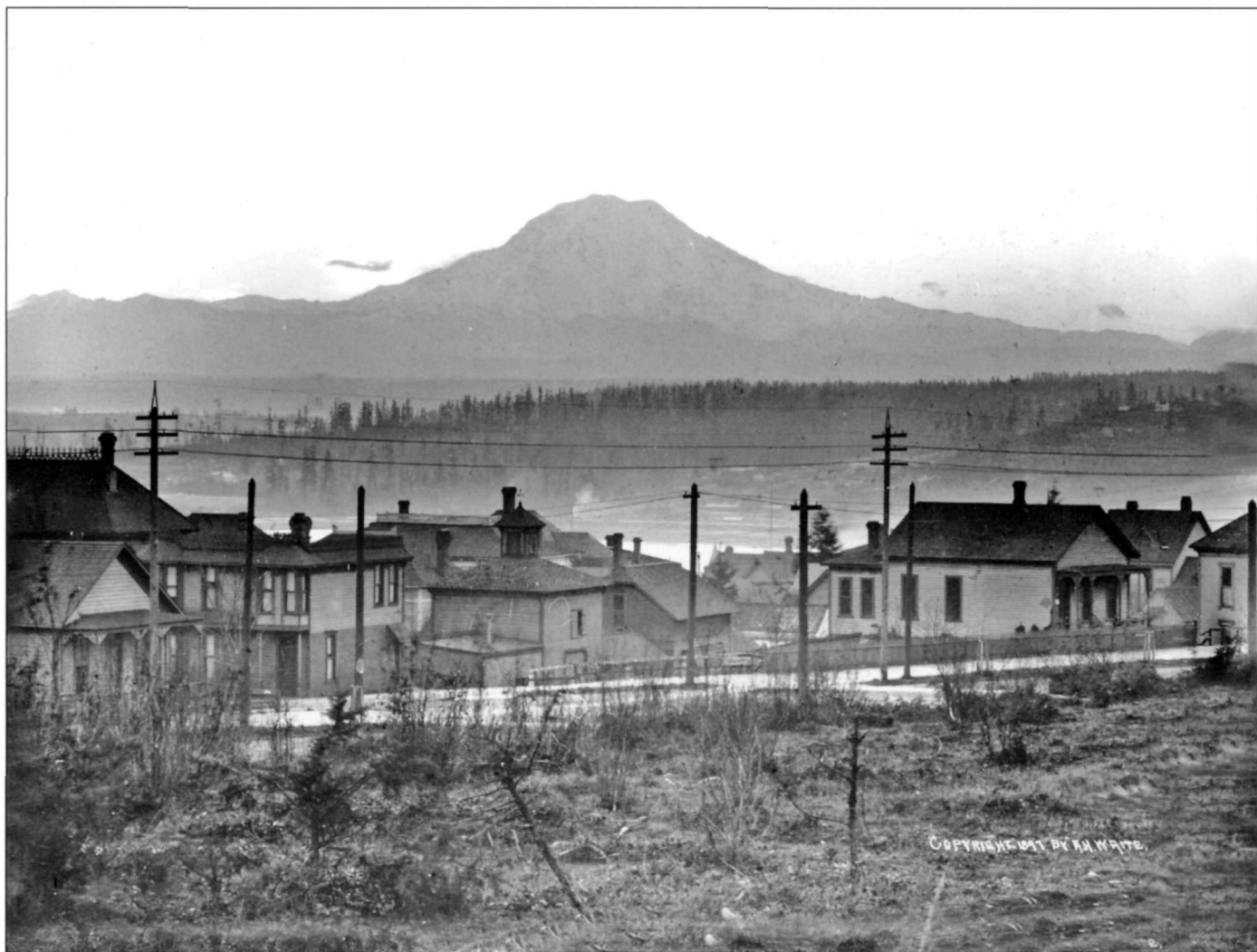
Early promoters of the park often compared Mount Rainier to the Swiss Alps, noting that this is where flowers met glaciers. The naturalist John Muir, an eloquent and enthusiastic advocate, described Mount Rainier as the “highest and most flowery” peak in the Cascade Range. “Above the forests,” he wrote in 1901, “there is a zone of the loveliest flowers, fifty miles in circuit and nearly two miles wide, so closely planted and luxuriant that it seems as if Nature, glad to make an open space between woods so dense and ice so deep, were economizing the precious ground, and trying to see how many of her darlings she can get together in one mountain wreath.” LM

on English perceptions of the Northwest landscape.

If *PNQ* is a representative indication, Mount Rainier was in some ways increasingly taken for granted as part of the visual background of the region, ubiquitous but infrequently receiving primary attention. Moreover, in these recurring images the mountain usually appeared as part of the scenery framing urban environs. An article from October 1986 by Genevieve McCoy, “‘Mount Tacoma’ vs. ‘Mount Rainier’: The Fight to Rename the Mountain,” about the competition between Tacoma and Seattle for naming rights to the peak, revealed just how much Mount Rainier had been and still was con-

strued as the backyard of urbanites.

If, on the one hand, the mountain has too often been relegated to scenery in the distance, on the other hand it can also serve as backdrop that provides perspective. The cover of *PNQ*’s October 1994 issue featured a cold war Boeing bomber with Mount Rainier rising just behind. One likes to think that the photograph appeals to readers by juxtaposing the machine and the garden. The image resonates among readers who look upon technology more skeptically than previous generations did. Moreover, Americans’ heightened concern about the condition of the planet has encouraged the growth of the field of environmental history, which has



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moved places like Mount Rainier from the background to the foreground. Thus in Spring 1997 *PNQ* published "The Campaign to Establish Mount Rainier National Park, 1893-1899," one of a growing number of articles about the environment of the Pacific Northwest.

For our commemorative album, four historians have provided captions for historical photographs of Mount Rainier. Theodore Catton (TC), author of the Spring 1997 article on the creation of the park, works as a historian with Historical Research Associates, Inc., in Missoula, Montana. His publications include *Wonderland: An Administrative History of Mount Rainier National Park* (1996) and *Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos, and Na-*

"Urban perspective." Filtered through the power lines of a Tacoma neighborhood, Mount Rainier appears in bold contrast to the burgeoning urban-industrial character of the early 20th century. But it was not as isolated from modern life as its shadowy outline on the horizon suggests. Its proximity to the population centers of Seattle and Tacoma made it a visual as well as physical antidote to the ills associated with city life and industry. As a scenic backdrop, the mountain seemed to dwarf urban developments, as if to imply that no amount of development could spoil this mountain wilderness. As a reservoir of wild nature, Mount Rainier offered a place for contemplation and recreation, to renew one's spirit.

Railroads and later automobiles traveling over improved highways tightened the bonds between urban centers and the mountain. They made the trip to Mount Rainier a brief sojourn. They brought the mountain closer to home. City leaders and commercial groups tightened the bonds further when they embraced Mount Rainier in their plans for a regional tourist industry. In a sense, Puget Sound residents knew Mount Rainier intimately from near and far. The mountain's great height placed it figuratively, if not literally, in their backyards and prominently within their sense of place. A dramatic contrast to urbanization and industrial growth, Mount Rainier was a source of business and pleasure. DL



tional Parks in Alaska (1997). Lisa Mighetto (LM), a historian for Historical Research Associates, Inc., in Seattle, has published widely in the environmental history of the American West. She wrote *Wild Animals and American Environmental Ethics* (1991) and edited *Muir among the Animals: The Wildlife Writings of John Muir* (1986). David Louter (DL) works in Seattle as a historian for the National Park Service. He has published *Craters of the Moon National Monument: An Administrative History* (1992) and is currently completing a dissertation on how automobiles have shaped the three national parks in Washington State. Richard Engeman (RE) has contributed to *PNQ* in numerous ways over the years, most regularly since early 1987 as editor of

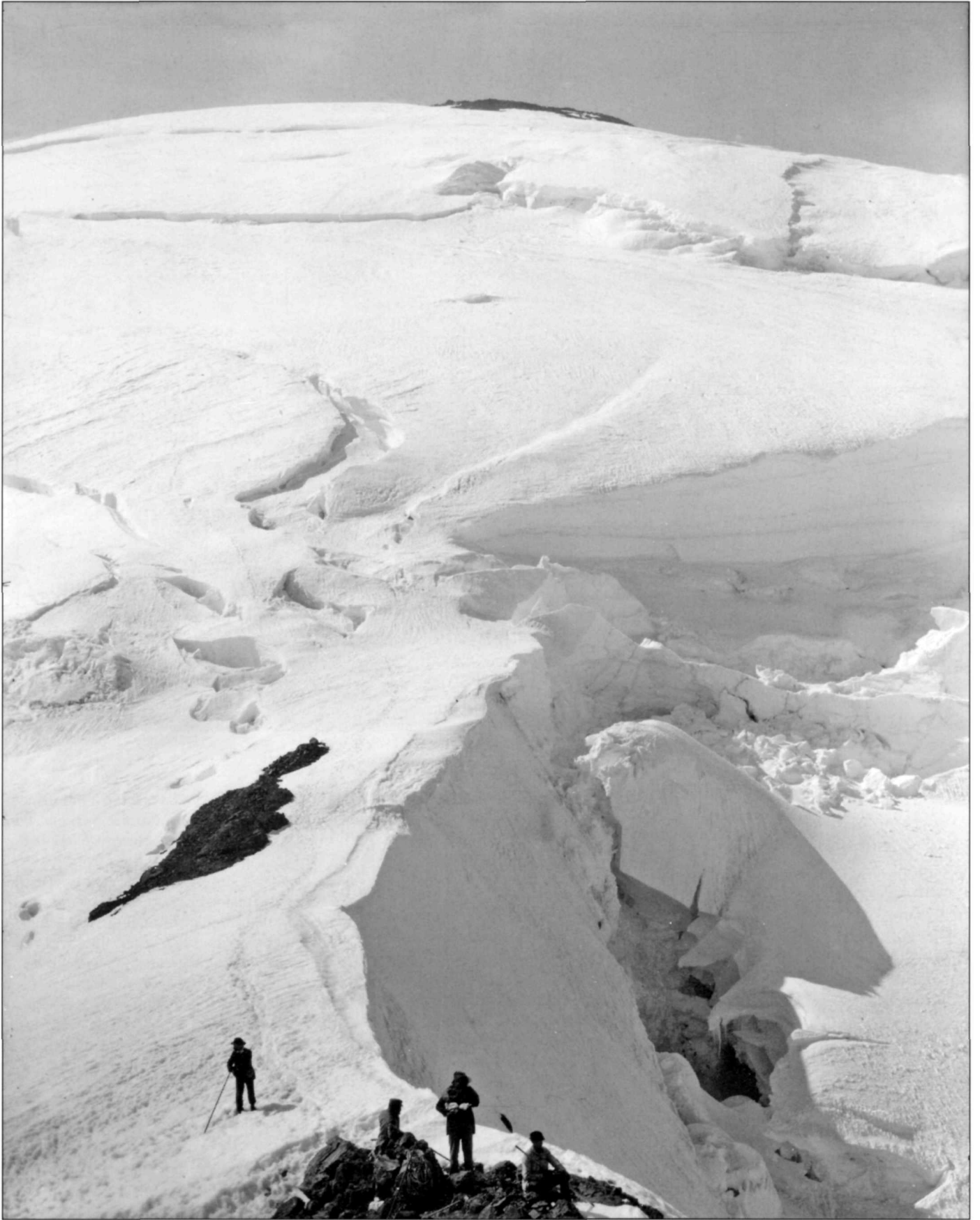
our "Primary Sources" feature, and he is also the author of *The Jacksonville Story* (1980), among other things. Helping select the Rainier photographs was one of his last duties as graphics librarian in Special Collections at the University of Washington Libraries; he now is director of Manuscripts and Archives at the Oregon Historical Society in Portland.

John M. Findlay

Selected readings:

Art Work of the State of Washington.
Text by Edmond S. Meany. Oshkosh,
Wis.: Art Photogravure Co., 1900.

The Paradise Ice Caves were a popular attraction at Mount Rainier National Park during the early 20th century. Visitors, including this party of boys from the Civilian Conservation Corps, marveled at the ethereal forms and the blue and green light that filtered through the ice. Located under the Paradise Glacier, the caves typically became accessible toward the end of the summer. In 1932, the Rainier National Park Company—the park's concessionaire—blasted a hole in the ice to permit visitors to enter them in July. The ice caves melted during the early 1980s. LM





In addition to spectacular scenery, Mount Rainier National Park offered visitors the opportunity to view wildlife—and bears were among the most appealing attractions. Many tourists encountered the park's wildlife from open auto stages, which became popular in the 1920s. Pictured here are visitors coaxing a bear from the forest. LM

John Muir, a founder of the Sierra Club who ascended Mount Rainier in 1888, scoffed at the notion that humans could conquer nature. "When a mountain is climbed it is said to be conquered," he observed. "As well say a man is conquered when a fly lights on his head." Another Sierra Club climber noted the power and sublimity of Mount Rainier, describing the peak as "grand to a degree that is terrifying."

Mount Rainier attracted considerable attention among climbers when it became a national park in 1899. The Sierra Club chose this site in 1905 for its first trip outside California, joining the Mazamas, Appalachian Mountain Club, and American Alpine Club. This expedition, which included 200 people, was widely covered in West Coast newspapers—and its members did their best to add color and fanfare. Two Mazamas, for example, spent the night on the summit, where they lit an enormous fire visible from Tacoma. Boosters in the city responded by shooting off fireworks over Commencement Bay. This whimsical display reflected an era that viewed national parks more as playgrounds than as places to preserve nature. LM

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From the time of George Vancouver's voyage to the present, the majestic white bulk of Mount Rainier has been an inspiration to artists. In 1915, the Seattle photographer Imogen Cunningham took a series of pictures of her husband, Roi Partridge, in faunlike poses on the slopes of the mountain. The scenes were evocative of classical antiquity, the technique and treatment in the pictorialist vein, but Partridge was nude. When the photographs appeared in the Seattle arts and society journal *Town Crier*, there was an outcry, and Cunningham stashed the negatives away for half a century.

The comparison of Mount Rainier with Sylvania, however, recurs in other artwork, and indeed it is compatible with our vision of national parks as places of the gods, Edenic gardens, places where dryads dance by misty tarns. The Asahel Curtis Studio, producer of thousands of images that idealized and exalted the scenery and economic resources of Washington State, is responsible for this iconic view of Mount Rainier. The maidens, in faux classical robes, frame the looming peak, and their presence emphasizes the mountain's Olympian splendor. The photo was one of several similar views taken about 1920, and it was used repeatedly in tourist publicity about the national park and the Northwest.

The amateur snapshot was taken in 1923 by an unknown photographer at Spray Park on the northwest slope of Mount Rainier. Two men in union suits perform *tableaux vivantes*, obviously inspired by the Curtis shots and the prevailing imagery of the national park. Their cavorting for the camera is a parody that still respects the great outdoors, even as it makes some fun of the overt romanticizing that has taken place. RE



All photographs courtesy Special Collections and Preservation Division, University of Washington Libraries: p. 30 top, Dwight Watson, *Mt. Rainier Views*, vol. 2; p. 30 lower, Iwao Matsushita album 6, Coll. 162; p. 31, A. H. Waite 262-15; p. 32, A. H. Barnes 437; p. 33, Barnes 2031; p. 34, Barnes 447; p. 35, Waite 246-15; p. 36, Waite 228-11; p. 37, Asahel Curtis 26-2593 (uw neg. 14013); p. 38, Waite 245-15; p. 39, Curtis 4500 (uw neg. 1573); p. 40 top, Curtis 4385 (uw neg. 1575); p. 40 bottom, Watson, *Mt. Rainier Views*, vol. 2.

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Cover Illustration

This view of Mount Rainier and Emmons Glacier presiding over a miles-long alpine meadow introduces an album of images chosen to commemorate the centennial of Mount Rainier National Park. The album begins on page 30. (Detail, 1922 panorama, Asahel Curtis, neg. 40783, Special Collections and Preservation Division, University of Washington Libraries)

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