



Number 8  
April 2019

# THURSTON COUNTY HISTORICAL JOURNAL



**Olympia Boys: Heroes of Audenarde Battle**

**Tumwater Vigilantes**

**Through the Lens at Michigan Hill**

**\$5.00**

# THURSTON COUNTY HISTORICAL JOURNAL

The *Thurston County Historical Journal* is dedicated to recording and celebrating the history of Thurston County.

The *Journal* is published by the Olympia Tumwater Foundation as a joint enterprise with the following entities:

City of Lacey, City of Olympia, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, Daughters of the American Revolution, Daughters of the Pioneers of Washington/Olympia Chapter, Lacey Historical Society, Old Brewhouse Foundation, Olympia Historical Society and Bigelow House Museum, South Sound Maritime Heritage Association, South Thurston County Historical Society, Thurston County, Tumwater Historical Association, Yelm Prairie Historical Society, and individual donors.

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**ISSN 2474-8048**



# Table of Contents

**2 Olympia Boys: Heroes of Audenarde Battle**

*Michael M. Wood*

**18 Tumwater Vigilantes**

*Dennis M. Larsen*

**34 Through the Lens at Michigan Hill**

*Karen L. Johnson*

**Back Cover**

**Who/What/Where Is It?**

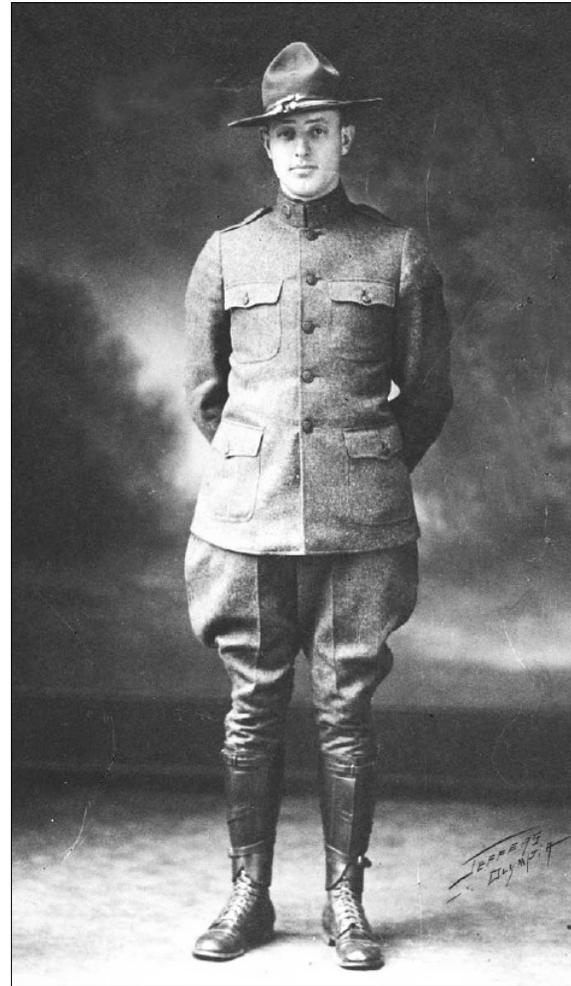
**On the cover:** In 1916, the Triangle Film Corporation distributed this poster advertising its film *Our American Boys in the European War* (poster artwork by Victor Tardieu, a French painter, 1870-1937). The film told the story of the American Ambulance Field Service, and can be viewed on YouTube (search for the film title). Image courtesy of First World War on Film (<https://shootingthegreatwar.blogspot.com>). See article on page 2.

# OLYMPIA BOYS: HEROES OF AUDENARDE BATTLE

*Michael M. Wood*

Ernest Ruben Mallory was born October 16, 1891 in Olympia, Washington, the only son of Henry and Mary Crowley Mallory. His father Henry was an early resident of Olympia, having arrived in the city in 1889 from his birthplace in Canada. Henry Mallory was a well-known wagon-maker, entrepreneur and builder who owned interests in both the Capital and the Eastside Lumber companies.

Before the turn of the century Henry began building homes, at least one of which, built in 1894, still stands today at 1418 Oak Avenue NE in Olympia.<sup>1</sup> It was from their own home on the Eastside that the young Ernie Mallory was asked to walk the family cow over to Priest Point Park for grazing—a task he did each day before school. While working for his dad on a construction project in 1907, Ernie had a “miraculous escape from death,” as the front page of the local newspaper reported.<sup>2</sup> He and his father were hauling gravel, when the brake-handle of the fully-loaded wagon snapped, throwing Ernie under the wagon's rear wheel—which passed over his chest. As the papers reported, he crawled to the sidewalk and later walked home. Although fatal internal injuries were suspected, the attending physician,



*Ernest Mallory. Photo by Joseph C. Jeffers, Olympia; courtesy of the author.*

Dr. Ingram, confirmed Ernie suffered only a few cracked ribs.

He must have received some monies from his work with his father, as on April 12, 1910, while still attending school, Ernie received an automobile license for a 30-horsepower REO.<sup>3</sup> In the eighteen months since the first of Henry Ford's \$900 Model-T cars rolled from the line, Ford had sold more than 10,000 cars and the dream of joining the "motoring public" had swept the nation like wildfire. The international press was outraged at what they saw as folly, calling it a "Motor-Car-Craze," with "a billion dollars" being spent annually on the upkeep of such automobiles.<sup>4</sup>

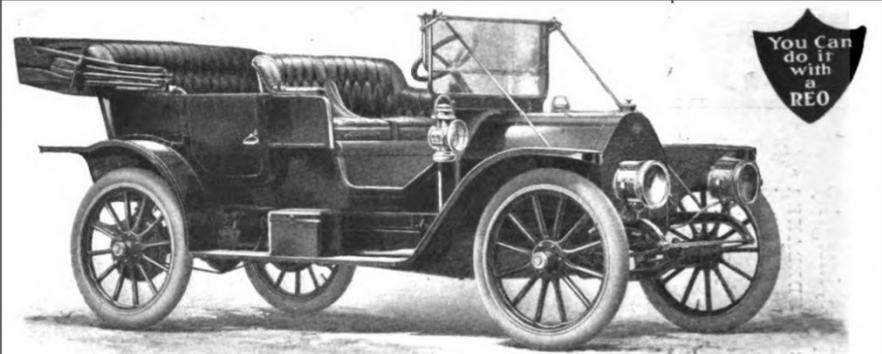
Ransom E. Olds had left Oldsmobile in 1905 to start the REO Motor Car Company, whose products were being marketed to an upscale crowd—touting 30 horsepower and claims of a 50 mph top speed. The 1910 REO which Ernie licensed carried a \$1250 base price (over \$33,000 in today's money), without a top or windshield (which cost \$100 extra). This was a high-end vehicle, considering that the average worker in the U.S. earned \$574 a month in 1910.<sup>5</sup> When Ernie was ticketed for speeding in Olympia, it of course made the press.<sup>6</sup> Gloat-

ing by those who could not afford such luxury helped to sell newspapers and keep local tongues wagging with the latest gossip.

It was May 1912 when Ernie graduated from school in Olympia, one of 23 men in his class.<sup>7</sup> He then attended Pierce's Commercial College in Pennsylvania—at the time, one of the leading business schools in the country.<sup>8</sup>

### WAR BEGINS

In June 1914, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria by a Serb nationalist set off a diplomatic crisis. Austria-Hungary delivered an ultimatum to the Kingdom of Serbia, and entangled international alliances quickly formed. Within weeks the major powers of Europe were at war.<sup>9</sup>



Top and Mezger Automatic Windshield extra. Four-cylinder Roadster same price, \$1250.

**Reo** the price is \$1250—but  
it is not a \$1250 car

*An advertisement for the REO model which Mallory owned. Image from Everybody's Magazine, Volume XXII, 1910.*



*Newspaper headlines from The Sun, New York, New York.*

Almost immediately, young men from across the U.S. started volunteering for the Ambulance Service. The U.S. press loved the work of the American Ambulance Corps, and praised their selflessness in regular full-page headlines, such as these which ran in the *New York Sun* between 1914 and 1916.<sup>10</sup>

In 1914, the French ambulance corps still relied on horse-drawn wagons, as there were few automobiles available and even fewer qualified drivers.<sup>11</sup> Young men in the United States, caught up in the automobile craze engulfing the country and enamored with the romantic idea of “driving a motorized ambulance through glorious battle,” joined the fray by the hundreds.<sup>12</sup>

Three American ambulance organizations were created in France during the first year of the war, and young college men in particular were being recruited to join. Many volunteer ambulance drivers came from Ivy League schools, more than a third signing up from just four Eastern universities.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the most well-known of the young American volunteers was Ernest Hemingway, a driver for the Red

Cross in Italy, who immortalized his role in the novel, *A Farewell to Arms*.

The volunteers worked in two areas, the first being well away from the front, moving the seriously wounded from local hospitals in the countryside to hospitals in the major cities. The other work was much closer to the action, transporting men from the *postes de secours* (emergency dressing stations) on the front lines to triage hospitals in the evacuation zones. Before the Americans arrived in France, it was common for ambulances to drive to a dressing station only when called to evacuate a wounded soldier. The American ambulance corps introduced the idea of parking the ambulances directly at the front-line dressing stations during the heat of the battle, thus allowing for the quick movement of severely wounded soldiers to the next available triage.

Apart from early calls to support for the British, American public opinion strongly reflected the desire for the United States to remain neutral in the war. Over time, however, that sentiment began to change. Especially after reports of atrocities in Belgium in 1914 and the sinking of the passenger

ship RMS *Lusitania* by a German submarine in 1915, the American public increasingly came to see Germany as the aggressor in Europe and called for action.

Even the movie industry promoted the movement, with such films as *Our American Boys in the European War*, advertised in several posters drawn by the French artist Victor Tardieu.

### ERNIE JOINS THE MILITARY

Despite President Wilson's efforts to keep the United States neutral, by 1917 Germany was gaining the upper

hand in Europe and many in the U.S. felt a strong obligation to support our allies. The U.S. Congress declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, and Ernest Mallory heeded the call.

On June 5, 1917, Ernie volunteered to serve in the Red Cross Ambulance Corps of the University of Oregon, and was assigned to Ambulance Company 14. Although he expected to be called up in early July, it was not until September 1917 that he and three others from Olympia were called for active duty. The local papers reported "Four more Olympia boys reported for army service this week," with Ernest Mallory

**REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)**

<b>SERIAL NUMBER</b>	<b>1. NAME (Print)</b>	<b>ORDER NUMBER</b>
U 262	Ernest Ruben Mallory <small>(First) (Middle) (Last)</small>	
<b>2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print)</b>		
2602 Capitol Way Olympia Thurston Wn. <small>(Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)</small>		
<b>[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]</b>		
<b>3. MAILING ADDRESS</b>		
same <small>[Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same]</small>		
<b>4. TELEPHONE</b>	<b>5. AGE IN YEARS</b>	<b>6. PLACE OF BIRTH</b>
5925 <small>(Exchange) (Number)</small>	50 DATE OF BIRTH Oct. 16 1891 <small>(Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)</small>	Olympia <small>(Town or county)</small> Wn. <small>(State or country)</small>
<b>7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS</b>		
Frank M. Kenney (father-in-law) Olympia Wn.		
<b>8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS</b>		
none		
<b>9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS</b>		
none <small>(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)</small>		
<b>I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.</b>		
<b>D. S. Form 1</b> <small>(Revised 4-1-42)</small>	(over)	16-21630-2 <i>Ernest Mallory</i> <small>(Registrant's signature)</small>

Ernest Mallory's draft registration card. Image courtesy of the author.

going to Eugene, Oregon “to join the University of Oregon Ambulance Corps, in which they enlisted last spring.”<sup>14</sup>

After three months of rudimentary medical training at American Lake in Washington, the men of Ambulance Company 14 were stationed at Camp Lewis, a U.S. Army post. Although on active duty, Ernie was able to obtain regular weekend passes to visit his family in Olympia, only 24 miles from the base. That changed in August 1917, when the 91st Division was organized at Camp Lewis, with men drafted in large part from the states of California, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Idaho, and Nevada. Their insignia, a green fir tree, was emblematic of the West. The 91st was known by the nickname the “Wild West Division.” By October, the University of Oregon Ambulance Corps had been absorbed into the 91st Division, becoming the 361st Ambulance Company, and was attached to the American Expeditionary Forces under Major General John J. Pershing. Within a year, the 361st would be headed to war.

On June 15, 1918, Ernest Mallory received promotion to Corporal, and on July 12, 1918 the 361st departed for the front lines of Europe. On July 23, 1918, after a twelve-day trip, the 361st arrived in London, together with the rest of the 91st Division, having safely crossed the ocean “by taking a circuitous and zigzag course taken to baffle the submarines.”<sup>15</sup> They reached France on July 26, 1918.<sup>16</sup>

Within six weeks of arriving in France, the boys from Olympia would be supporting the army fighters on the front lines.

### **EUROPEAN OFFENSIVES**

In March 1918, Germany had begun a major offensive campaign along the Western Front designed to defeat the Allies before the overwhelming resources of the United States could be fully deployed. Due to a temporary advantage in numbers, mainly from 50 divisions of Eastern Front forces redeployed after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Russia, the Germans initially gained more ground than had been taken since the successful offensives of 1914. However, due in great part to a lack of supplies in the newly won areas, the German offensive quickly lost momentum. By August the Allies began a counter-offensive, with the support of more than a million newly deployed American troops, which resulted in a recapture of all of the ground taken by the Germans in the Spring Offensive.

Ernie’s 361st Ambulance Company saw action on several major battlefields of the “Hundred Days Offensive”; the first of these, the Battle of Saint-Mihiel, was fought from September 12-15, 1918. American Expeditionary Forces, backed up by 110,000 French troops, were under the command of General John J. Pershing. Pershing hoped that the attack at Saint-Mihiel would break through the German lines and enable the capture of the



*Company B, 364th Infantry, 91st Division, Ypres-Lys Campaign, September 26, 1918. Photo courtesy of U.S. Signal Corps, Ypres-Lys Offensive Interactive, U.S. Government, American Battle Monuments Commission, photo 25893.*

fortified city of Metz. It was the first and only offensive launched solely by the United States Army in World War I, and quickly established the stature of the U.S. Army in the eyes of the Allies. The U.S. attack fell short of Metz as artillery and food supplies could not be brought up quickly enough, and the Germans refortified their positions.<sup>17</sup> Pershing then turned his focus to the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive was a major part of what would become the final Allied offensive of World War I, and stretched along the entire Western Front. It was fought for 47 days starting on September 26, 1918. The action was the largest in United States military history, involving 1.2 million

American soldiers, of which 26,277 were killed—one of the deadliest battles in American history. Ernie's Company accompanied the advance for more than five miles, before being ordered to evacuate to the village of Épinonville. On October 4, they were relieved by the 32<sup>nd</sup> and redeployed to Belgium to reinforce the Ypres-Lys Offensive.<sup>18</sup> It would take another four weeks for the Americans to advance four miles and finally clear the German stronghold in the Argonne Forest.

Four American divisions fought alongside their Allied counterparts in the Ypres-Lys Offensive. The 91st Division was placed under the command of the King of Belgium, who attached the men to the French VII Corps. The of-



*A detail of a Belgium battle map; Audenarde can be seen in the upper right. Image courtesy of the British Official History of Military Operations.*

fensive, also known as Lys-Scheldt, was one which helped to finally break the German defensive line, allowing Allied troops to cross the Scheldt River. Recurrent major assaults allowed the Allies to bring forward supplies and reinforcements to renew for the next attack.

Shortly after the offensive began, the Germans sought to withdraw from their exposed forward positions, back to the formidable defenses of the so-called “Hindenburg Line.” The Germans delayed or stalled Allied advances using intense machine-gun fire, gas attacks, booby traps, snipers, and artillery. The Allies returned to the attack, time and again, hammering the German defenses. Eventually, the Germans were forced back to the Lys Riv-

er, and then to the Scheldt River.<sup>19</sup> On October 31, 1918, the 91st were ordered to advance nine miles from Waereghem to the German front. Since 1914, the city of Audenarde—some 35 miles from Ypres and inside the Hindenburg Line—had been in the hands of the Germans, who made it the administrative seat of one of their Belgian military districts.<sup>20</sup> It was here on the Scheldt River, in the city of Audenarde, that the “Heroes of Audenarde” were made.

Ernest Mallory was one of the Ambulance Corps men who rendered heroic service on the battlefield in Belgium in early November 1918. As German machine gun batteries and snipers held the town of Audenarde, a small group of Yankee machine-gunners set out to

retake the town, accompanied by ten men from the 361st Ambulance Corps who went onto the front lines to establish a medical station to care for the wounded.

One of the few firsthand stories which Ernie later shared with his daughter (who later shared them with the author) was of going into a combat zone under fire to treat a mortally wounded soldier. Not having sufficient supplies, or the liberty of time, he crushed a morphine tablet in the palm of his hand, used water from his canteen to dissolve it, and with a syringe provided pain relief to the dying soldier. Without exaggeration, the newspapers called these men "heroes."

#### **"OLYMPIA BOYS HEROES OF AUDENARDE BATTLE"**

On February 18, 1919, the *Olympia Daily Recorder* published a lengthy description of the Audenarde Battle:

"The Battle of Audenarde, in which a score of Olympia boys, many of them members of the Oregon Ambulance Corps took part, is described in a dispatch received here. Ernest Mallory of Olympia was one of the Ambulance Corps men who rendered heroic service on the field of the Audenarde battle. Sergeant James F. Gregory, of Tenino, is also mentioned as one of the heroes of the fight.

"The dispatch follows: Ceton, France, Feb. 11. - Hun batteries were sprinkled all about the heights that overlooked Audenarde. Boche [derogatory

term for German] machine guns and snipers were hid away in pockets that gave them full sweep of the city. But this didn't make a fig's worth of difference to the 10 men who went in there to establish a dressing station one day while the Germans still were in a part of the town. One lad showed what he thought of the Boche snipers, machine gunners, artillerymen and everything by twice running down to a bridge a quarter of a mile from the dressing station and bringing back wounded.

"This happened November 3. 'Why didn't you tell about it sooner' will be the chorus. Well, over here a reporter can't see every act of the men of the unit to which he is attached; in fact, a correspondent is unable to view one-thousandth of the things he would like to see. And the boys who do brave things, who really laugh at death, never talk about their deeds. So Private Henri E. Bye, who is now a member of the University of Oregon ambulance company, was never featured because he refuses to say a word about his work that mighty hot day in Audenarde. Tonight a number of his friends related the story.

"Ten ambulance men went into the beautiful city on the Scheldt at 5 o'clock in the morning. They went in with a wave of Yankee machine gunners and were in advance of the doughboys, the rapidfire gunners and the ambulance men being the most advanced olive-drab skirmish line. The hospital boys were unarmed. The Huns still held part of the city, and

their artillery was placed in front, on top and behind the heights that overlook the ancient wheat center of Flanders. All day long the Germans poured shells into the city, striking the beautiful hotel De Ville, in which the dressing station was located, a number of times.

“A quarter of a mile away was one of the numerous bridges the city possessed, all of which were blown up later by the retreating Boche. One of the Americans was shot down as he attempted to work his machine gun across the bridge. Bye saw him fall and, disregarding all thoughts of danger, started to run towards the injured soldier. Private William Kautz of Ralston, Wash. knew that Bye would have a hard time to bring the wounded chap in alone, so followed right after his pal. These members of the ambulance company picked up the wounded boy, placed him on an old door they found near the bridge and carried him back to the dressing station.

“A few hours later, Private Henri E. Bye saw a Belgian girl start to run across the bridge. She had gone only a few steps when she was shot. The soldier again ran through the rain of German bullets and shells, picked up the girl and staggered back to the city hall with his charge without any help. Now, this lad simply considers the work of that day a part of the army game. Ask him about it and he will smile and walk away. His father now lives in Gjovik, Norway, and Henri, having heard his friends talk so much

about Oregon, says he is going to Portland as soon as he is discharged from the Wild West division. Nor will Kautz say anything about his adventure.

“All of the boys in Audenarde that November day had a pyrotechnic time that they will never forget. Two of these lads are natives of Olympia, Wash., a city that was once in a part of the old Oregon territory; and Private Ernest Mallory and Private Albert E. Stuth still call the Washington capital their home. . . . The company to which these 10 Audenarde heroes belong is the one raised in Eugene by Captain John E. Kuykendall. . . .

“Two Portland youngsters acted as engineer and fireman of the ambulance that hauled the others into the city. It was pitch dark; no lights could be used, the roads were filled with shell-holes and bumps, and the only guides the automobile fellows had were the flashes of German guns on the Audenarde heights. But Private Lowell E. Kern and Private Vance T. Ferguson got the car into the place without mishap. Later on, when the dressing station became crowded and there were a number of very seriously wounded men who needed expert surgical attention at once, the boys filled their ambulance and took it back to the field hospital over a road that was in full view of the boche. Shells exploded in front of them and directly behind their car, but neither the ambulance men nor their charges were struck.

“Every one of these 10 boys is loud in



*Ernest Mallory (on left) with the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, circa 1918. Photo courtesy of the author.*

songs of praise for the machine-gunners who waded into Audenarde that morning. The Yankee gunners pushed ahead as rapidly as possible, secured positions where they could fire directly on the Huns, and as the grey-green lines retreated the Americans were right after them. From the roofs of houses, from towers and trees, the boys in olive-drab kept right on the heels, so to speak, of the enemy. By nightfall, the Huns had retreated from Audenarde, leaving a very thin wave of machine-gunners and 10 ambulance boys in complete possession of the city.

“That afternoon orders were given by

the division commander to withdraw the dressing station from the town. The only way to get that order into Audenarde was for runners to carry it in. No cars or motorcycles were allowed on the roads in the daytime. (Kern and Ferguson had disregarded the order because the wounded they carried had to be treated within a very short time or they would have died.) Sergeant James F. Gregory of Tenino, Wash., and Private Colby E. Slater, of Berkeley, Cal., were selected to take the important order to their comrades in the city. The trip was dangerous as could be, for the entire route they had to travel was within the lines of German observation.

“At 7 o’clock that night, in the darkness, the 10 men marched out of the city. It had been one of the longest days they had ever known. . . .”<sup>21</sup>

### **DEATH COMES**

The Ypres-Lys Offensive inflicted heavy casualties on the Germans, but not without a heavy price. The 91st Division lost 6,108 men, many of whom are buried on the fields of Saint-Mihiel, Meuse-Argon and Ypres-Lys.<sup>22</sup> Three of these men, Ernie’s comrades from the 316th Sanitary Train, were killed in the fighting which occurred in the last six weeks of the war, and are buried where they fell in U.S. military cemeteries: Private Rex A. Meacham, 316th Sanitary Train, killed October 3, 1918 at Meuse-Argonne; Sergeant Turner Neil, 316th Sanitary Train, killed October 15, 1918 at Saint-Mihiel; and Private William A. Roder, 316th Sanitary Train, killed October 29, 1918 at Waereghem.<sup>23</sup>

Just one day after the fighting at Audenarde ended, the Allies agreed to Germany’s request to begin negotiations for a truce. Germany, its lines breached and facing imminent invasion, sent a delegation headed by Matthias Erzberger to meet with the Allies in France. They crossed the front line in five cars and were escorted to a secret destination in the forest of Compiègne, arriving on November 8, 1918. Three days of negotiations ensued, which amounted more or less to Germany being handed the list of Allied demands and given 72 hours to agree.<sup>24</sup>

The “war to end all wars” came to its conclusion at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918. The war had left nine million soldiers dead and more than twenty million wounded; some ten million civilians were also killed or injured in the conflict.<sup>25</sup>

### **ACCOLADES FOR THE AMBULANCE SERVICE**

Ernie was present on November 17, 1918, when the King of Belgium visited a convent hospital in which the 316th Sanitary Train had assembled the sick. His Majesty expressed appreciation of the method by which the Division had cleaned the streets and moved the debris of the bombardment and assisted in re-establishing civil government in Audenarde. On November 22, 1918, a detachment of the 91st division participated in the ceremony in connection with the reentrance into Brussels by the King and Queen of Belgium.

Such accolades for the work of the Americans were many. Major General Pershing specifically praised the work of the 91st in a letter to General Johnston, writing:

“My dear General Johnston:

“It gives me great pleasure to extend to you and the officers and men of the 91st Division my compliments upon their splendid record in France.

“Arriving on July 12, the Division was thrown into the active fighting in the

Meuse-Argonne offensive without previous training in the line. From September 26 to October 3 it was actively engaged in this offensive, making an advance of thirteen kilometers against strong opposition, capturing the towns of Very, Gesnes and Épinonville. When the Division was withdrawn on October 3, the 181st Brigade remained in the battle line until October 12, its units operating with the 32nd and 1st Divisions. In the middle of October the Division was attached to the Seventh French Army Corps of the Sixth French Army in Flanders. Between October 31 and November 2, the Division made an advance of eleven kilometers, capturing the town of Audenarde. Crossing the Scheldt River, on November 10 and 11, the Division was in pursuit of the enemy when the armistice ended hostilities.

“It was gratifying to see your troops in such good physical shape, but still more so to know that the moral tone of all ranks is so high, which it is hoped will continue even after their return to civil life.

“Sincerely yours,  
John J. Pershing”<sup>26</sup>

The danger they faced, and the bravery of these men, was not overstated. From official government reports we know that upon arriving in the village of Mooregem on November 1, 1918, and less than two miles from the front at Audenarde, Captain Hughes of the First Battalion and the commanding office of the 361st Infantry, Colonel W.

D. Davis, were both killed by enemy shelling.<sup>27</sup> By piecing together information from multiple gallantry citations, we know that when Ernie and the Ambulance crew followed the American machine gunners into the city to set up a forward dressing station, Audenarde was “occupied by detachments of the enemy” and “machine gun emplacements held the streets of the City of Audenarde under their enfilading fire” while the city itself “was under violent bombardment.” “Enemy machine gunners and sharpshooters” ravaged the streets which had already “been blown up” and where “timbers from bombarded buildings were falling.”<sup>28</sup>

The gallantry of the American troops at Audenarde did not go unnoticed. Of the more than 4.7 million American men and women who served in the First World War, only 6,185 were awarded the Army Distinguished Service Cross.<sup>29</sup> On these four November days in Audenarde, ten men would be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for extreme gallantry and risk of life in combat.<sup>30</sup> This award, exceeded only by the Medal of Honor, is awarded to someone who has exhibited “extraordinary acts of heroism so notable and involving a risk of life so extraordinary, as to set the individual apart from his or her comrades.” Two of these Distinguished Service Crosses were awarded to fellow privates in the Ambulance Corps of the 316th Sanitary Train: Harold W. Rose and Harry J. Rexroth.

Private Rexroth’s citation is typical of

those that were issued for bravery at Audenarde:

“[The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to] Private First Class Harry J. Rexroth (ASN: 2276437), United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in action . . . near Audenarde, Belgium, November 1-4, 1918. Private Rexroth repeatedly showed utter disregard for his safety in establishing and maintaining liaison between advanced dressing stations and battalion aid stations and in searching the battlefields for wounded, passing over areas under heavy fire from enemy artillery, machine-guns and snipers. On November 4 he entered the town of Audenarde while it was under terrific bombardment, made a thorough search for wounded, and later accompanied ambulances back into the town to evacuate the wounded.”<sup>31</sup>

Two dozen other men of the unit were awarded the Army’s silver Citation Star for “Gallantry in action against an enemy of the United States” and/or the Croix-de-Guerre with Gilt Star; many others received the silver discharge insignia given to soldiers wounded in battle. Each man in Company H of the 361st Infantry, the first to enter the city of Audenarde, was awarded a French Croix-de-Guerre with a corps citation entitling each to wear a gilt star with the decoration.<sup>32</sup>

Ernie’s commanding officer, Captain John E. Kuykendall, was one of the men of the Ambulance Corps who was cited by the AEF Commanding General for gallantry in action:<sup>33</sup>

“Captain Kuykendall distinguished himself by gallantry in action while serving with the 316th Sanitary Train, American Expeditionary Forces, in action during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, France, 30 October - 3 November 1918, in evacuating the wounded under heavy shell fire.”

Captain Kuykendall died the following February in France from pneumonia, one of some 45,000 soldiers who would succumb to the Spanish Flu epidemic while in the line of duty.

### **HOME SAFELY**

Ernie remained in Europe for five months after the Armistice, his overseas tour of duty ending on April 20, 1919 when his Company, minus their commanding officer Kuykendall, sailed for home.<sup>34</sup> Just a few days later, the *Olympia Daily Recorder* reported “Olympia Boys Arrive Safely”;<sup>35</sup> the men had returned to New York and would celebrate Easter on U.S. soil.<sup>36</sup>

On May 10, 1919, Ernie was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army. He was awarded a Victory Medal with four battle clasps, presented for participation in the major ground conflicts of Saint-Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne and Lys, and for service in the Defensive Sector. Family members from Olympia drove to Camp Lewis to greet the returning troops and bring their boys home.

Back in his hometown, Ernie was influential in organizing the American Legion in Olympia, being elected vice-

commander at the inaugural meeting in November 1919.<sup>37</sup> He was a successful entrepreneur, opening the Mallory Motor Company around 1920, followed by the Mallory Tire Company in 1923.<sup>38</sup> He fell in love with Grace Kenney and on February 27, 1924 they were married in Seattle. As family lore retells it, theirs was a true love story.



*Ernest and Grace Mallory's headstone in Tumwater's Calvary Cemetery. Photo by Cynthia Chapman, courtesy of Find A Grave.*

Ernie had a very successful career in Olympia, built his own home, and was very active in the community—even being elected mayor of Olympia for the term 1947-1949. Ernest Mallory passed away on June 6, 1959 and is buried in Calvary Cemetery. Grace never remarried after Ernie's passing, strongly believing that they would be reunited again in the afterlife, where she joined him on April 15, 1984.

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#### NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> “Ernest Mallory Run Over by Gravel Wagon.” *Olympia Daily Recorder*, Olympia, WA, July 6, 1907, page 1.

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<sup>4</sup> “Motor-Car Craze in America.” *Queensland Times*, Ipswich, Queensland, Australia, August 19, 1910, page 5.

<sup>5</sup> Value of a Dollar 1860—1999, Grey House Publishing, 1999, [https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/his/e\\_prices1.htm](https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/his/e_prices1.htm) (accessed October 30, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> *Olympia Daily Recorder*, January 21, 1922, page 8.

<sup>7</sup> “City and Country.” *Washington Standard*, Olympia, WA, May 3, 1912, page 3.

<sup>8</sup> “Personal News.” *Washington Standard*, June 27, 1913, page 9.

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<sup>11</sup> Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of the American Ambulance Drivers in the First World War*.

Delaware, Arcade Publishing, 2011.

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<sup>17</sup> “Battle of Saint-Mihiel.” Wikimedia Foundation, 2018, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Saint-Mihiel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Saint-Mihiel) (accessed October 30, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Ypres-Lys Offensive Interactive, U.S. Government, American Battle Monuments Commission, <https://www.abmc.gov/news-events/news/ypres-lys-offensive-world-war-i-online-interactive-released#.Wo05JKjwaUl> (accessed October 30, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> Ypres-Lys Offensive Interactive.

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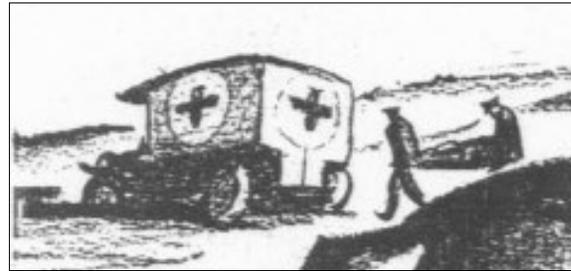
<sup>21</sup> “Olympia Boys Heroes of Audenarde Battle; Help Care for Injured.” *Olympia Daily Recorder*, February 18, 1919, page 1—based on a cable dispatch

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<sup>22</sup> Ypres-Lys Offensive Interactive.

<sup>23</sup> 316th Sanitary Trains, 91st Division, U.S. Government, American Battle Monuments Commission, <https://abmc.gov/node/331021#.Wo17lajwaUk> (accessed October 30, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> Armistice of 11 November 1918, Wikimedia Foundation, 2018, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armistice\\_of\\_11\\_November\\_1918#October\\_1918\\_telegrams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armistice_of_11_November_1918#October_1918_telegrams) (accessed October 30, 2018).



*American Ambulance workers on the field of battle. Image from The Day Book, Chicago, November 18, 1915.*

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<sup>28</sup> Burton, page 147.

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs, [https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs\\_american\\_wars.pdf](https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs_american_wars.pdf) and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distinguished\\_Service\\_Cross\\_\(United\\_States\)#World\\_War\\_I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distinguished_Service_Cross_(United_States)#World_War_I) (accessed October 30, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Harold W. Rose, Harry J. Rexroth, John E. Reese, Charles R. Reilley, Richard M. Kirk, John H. Leavell, John Maddox, Joseph N. Kerwin, John W. Cramer, and Leslie Bridenstine.

<sup>31</sup> Valor Awards, <https://valor.militarytimes.com/recipient.php?recipientid=14286> (accessed October 30, 2018).

<sup>32</sup> Burton, page 148.

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<sup>35</sup> "Olympia Boys Arrive Safely." *Olympia Daily Recorder*, April 23, 1919, page 1.

<sup>36</sup> "More Local Boys Land." *Washington Standard*, April 25, 1919, page 2.

<sup>37</sup> "Veterans of Foreign Wars Install Post Here." *Washington Standard*, November 14, 1919, page 1.

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#### EDITOR'S NOTE

Other Olympia residents who were members of the 316th Sanitary Train included: Reed McKinney, Ward McKinney, Robert R. Dalton, and Albert E. Stuth. These young men, along with Ernest Mallory, returned safely to the U.S. in April 1919.

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*Michael Wood inherited several 18<sup>th</sup> Century family letters in 1987 and has been actively researching and sharing family history ever since. His peer-reviewed publications include: Jonathan Wood (1747-1820) of Little Compton, Rhode Island and Dutchess County, New York (NEHGS American Ancestors, 2009); Stolen Honor: The Land Bounty of Midshipman Thomas Masterson (Journal of the American Revolution, 2017); John Wood, Master of the Peregrine (Genealogists' Magazine, 2017); Colonel William L. Farrow—Pioneer, Soldier, Statesman (Kentucky Ancestors, 2018); The Token Books of St. Saviour's (NEHGS American Ancestors, 2018); and Crew of the Tempest (Magazine of Virginia Genealogy, 2018). Michael lives with his wife and two children in Munich, Germany.*

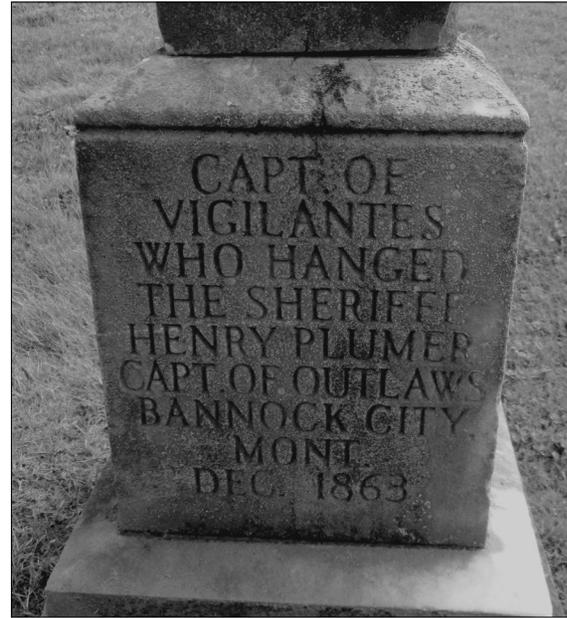
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# TUMWATER VIGILANTES

*Dennis M. Larsen*

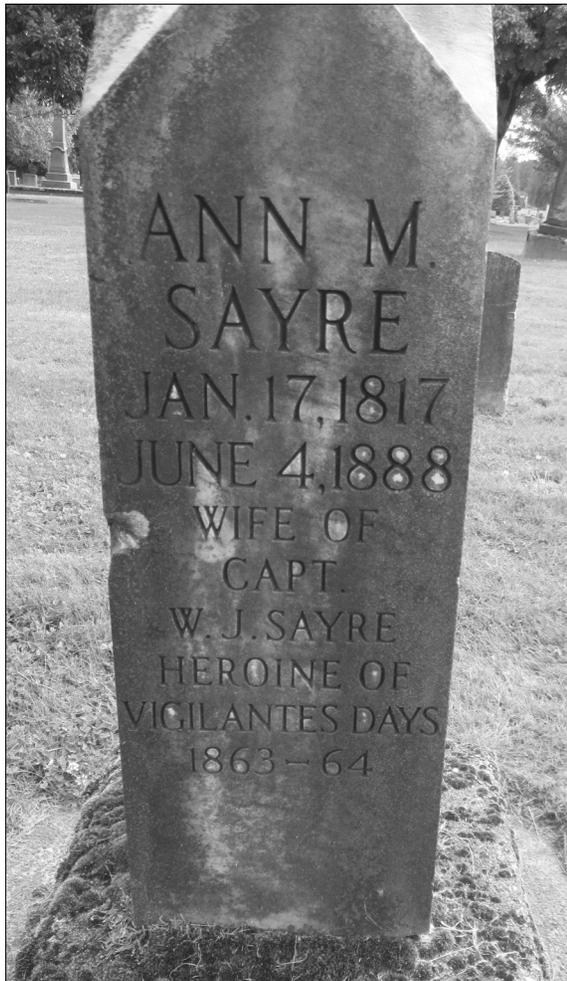
I have spent a goodly amount of time wandering around Thurston County cemeteries looking at inscriptions on tombstones. Where a line has been added in addition to name and dates, tombstones mostly express the universal sentiments one expects to find: “Beloved Husband . . . Wife . . . Child,” or a line of scripture or poetry. Others acknowledge various major life accomplishments such as Pioneer of, Member of, Founder of, Mayor of, Signer of, and so on. Two graves in Tumwater’s Masonic Cemetery on Cleveland Avenue recently caught my attention, as the inscriptions were unusual to say the least. Instead of “Beloved Husband,” Whittington Johnston Sayre’s inscription reads, “Capt. of Vigilantes who hanged the Sherifff Henry Plumer Capt. of Outlaws Bannock City, Mont., Dec. 1863.” And instead of “Beloved Wife,” Ann Maria Crosby Sayre’s inscription reads, “Heroine of Vigilantes Days.” Needless to say, my curiosity was piqued. Who were these people, what was their story, and why such grisly epitaphs?

I was unable to find obituaries, but census records suggest Whittington and Ann were born in southwestern New York in 1813 and 1817 respectively. They grew up in the Empire State and married there around 1840. For some reason they wandered south



*Whittington Sayre’s gravestone in Row 1, Grave 2, Block 64 of Tumwater’s Masonic cemetery. Photo by P. Ziobron.*

to Pennsylvania where their first child Eliza was born in 1842, but they were back in New York for the birth of daughter Alice (1843) and son Delos (1845). Then it was on to Wisconsin around 1847 with their children and both sets of parents. A fourth child, Sophia, was born there. It is likely the Sayres followed Whittington’s brother, William, who moved to Wisconsin in 1846. From 1847 to 1860 the family lived in Jefferson and Adams Counties, Wisconsin, as farmers, on property valued at \$5000. Their parents died



*Ann Sayre's gravestone in Row 1, Grave 3, Block 64 of Tumwater's Masonic cemetery. Photo by P. Ziobron.*

and were buried in Wisconsin. Sometime after 1860 the Whittington Sayre family moved to Montana. Nothing suggested what was to come.

### **MONTANA IN THE 1860s**

On July 28, 1862 when John White discovered gold on Montana's Grasshopper Creek, the town of Bannack

did not exist. The area that encompasses today's Montana was, in fact, split into two separate jurisdictions. The parts west of the continental divide (today's Missoula and Bitterroot Valley) were part of Washington Territory. Its capital city Olympia was 700 miles and several mountain ranges away to the west. The area east of the continental divide (Bannack and Virginia City) was part of Dakota Territory. Its capital was Yankton, some 900 miles away.

In 1862 four routes led into the developing Montana mining districts, all difficult and long. The first was up the Clearwater River from Lewiston and over Lolo Pass to a few modest settlements along a 60-mile stretch of the Clark Fork River bearing names such as Hell Gate and Gold Creek. The route then continued over other high mountain passes to the Big Hole Valley. As the year 1862 dawned, less than 100 white settlers, adventurers, and prospectors lived in this area, but it was settled enough that the legislature in Olympia created Missoula County and made arrangements for a government. Thirty voters elected a county commissioner and a sheriff.

A second route followed a course west of today's I-15 over Bannack Pass some 300 miles from Salt Lake City. It eventually became a wagon road leading to the gold strike towns of Bannack and Virginia City. The third route was along the Missouri River, via steamboat or overland, to the head of navigation at Fort Benton that operated as a fur trading post by the

American Fur Company. The fort was 300 miles from Bannack and consisted of a few modest wooden buildings. The fourth was the 1859 Mullan Road that connected Walla Walla and Fort Benton, crossing the mountains over what is today's Idaho panhandle.

This great emptiness was about to change. Steamboats such as the *Emilie* that plied the Missouri River discharged a large number of gold seekers into the area in the summer of 1862. Also, the first overland wagon train, consisting of 117 men and thirteen women who followed the Missouri River from Minnesota, reached Fort Benton that year. Then the floodgates opened when gold was discovered on Grasshopper Creek in July. The boom town of Bannack that sprang up overnight was absorbed into Idaho Territory when it was formed in March 1863. Its seat of government was at Lewiston, some 360 miles distant but still a lot of mountains away. By November 21, 1863, Bannack was a booming city with a U.S. Post Office, but the reach of government into this area was virtually non-existent.

### **HENRY PLUMMER**

William Henry Handy Plummer (known as Henry) rode into this world in early 1862. He was born in Addison, Maine, in 1832 from a line that can be traced back to 1634. He was elected sheriff of Bannack, Montana, in 1863 and was hanged by vigilantes led, according to a Tumwater tombstone, by Whittington Sayre in January 1864.<sup>1</sup> Plummer's story is compli-



*Henry Plummer, sheriff of Bannack City, Montana, and victim of vigilante justice. Photo courtesy of Find A Grave, Memorial 10952198.*

cated and controversial and the subject of multiple books and articles.

Plummer traveled west to California via the Isthmus of Panama in 1852 as a nineteen-year-old looking for gold, making the passage from New York to San Francisco in 24 days. Within two years he owned a ranch and a bakery in Nevada City, California. Within four years he was elected sheriff of what was then the third largest city in California.

Plummer was re-elected in 1857. Shortly after that election he became involved in the marital affairs of John and Lucy Vedder. Apparently John was abusive to the point of beating Lucy. Sheriff Plummer put her under police protection and connected her with an attorney to help her obtain a divorce. On the night Lucy was to depart on the stagecoach, Plummer was guarding her. As she packed, John snuck in with a gun and shots were allegedly exchanged.

When the smoke cleared, Plummer was standing and John was dead. "After two trials, a jury—which concluded that a marshal who would send a lawyer to break up a marriage must be a seducer—found the defendant guilty of murder in the second degree."<sup>2</sup> The case twice went to the California Supreme Court before Plummer was finally sentenced to ten years in San Quentin Prison. He served just six months before being pardoned by the governor in 1859 at the urging of over 100 friends and officials in the two adjoining counties. Rather than exonerate him, the governor based the pardon on Plummer's ill health with tuberculosis.

Plummer then returned to Nevada City where two totally divergent narratives of his actions were reported, as if the accounts were discussing two different men. This split in perceptions trailed him for the rest of his life. The first version has him consorting with prostitutes and involving himself in illegal activities. The other has him recuperating from his illness and taking up

mining. The first has him killing William Riley in a brawl over a "painted lady." The other maintains Plummer attempted a citizen's arrest of Riley, who had escaped from San Quentin. After being slashed with a Bowie knife, Plummer shot his assailant and immediately turned himself in to the local police. Version One has him bribing the jailer to allow him to escape. Version Two has the police agreeing he acted in self-defense, but counseling him to leave the area and allowing him to walk out of jail.

Plummer next appeared in the city of Lewiston in January 1862. The area, still part of Washington Territory but soon to become Idaho Territory, was teeming with thousands of prospectors working their way up various valleys deep into the mountains, chasing any rumor of a strike. Lewiston was the supply point for these people and it drew all sorts of unsavory characters. It was also the only real city near the gold strikes. At this time few prospectors had yet pushed east over the Bitterroot Mountains.

Plummer's life story continues to diverge. Version One reports he went to work in a local casino and formed a gang that began robbing gold shipments coming in via overland roads to Lewiston. Version Two states that hotel records show he was in Lewiston for only three weeks, and that during that time he dissolved a lynch mob with an eloquent address about due process of the law.

Both versions agree that in 1862, after

being ejected from a dance hall in Orofino (a small town east of Lewiston), Plummer and his companions were followed outside by the saloon keeper who opened fire on them with two guns. Plummer was the more accurate shot and Patrick Ford died. A *Sacramento Union* reporter residing in the area confirmed that Plummer fired in self-defense. Nevertheless, Ford's compatriots organized a lynch mob and Plummer deemed it wise to flee east of the Bitterroot Mountains.

At this point Plummer decided to return to Maine, and he made his way to Fort Benton to catch a steamboat down the Missouri River. Unfortunately the upper river was ice-clogged, stopping steamboat traffic for the winter and sending Plummer's life in another direction.

While at Fort Benton he was approached by James Vail who was recruiting help to work at the Sun River Indian Agency. Plummer and an acquaintance from California, Jack Cleveland, followed Vail to Sun River. While there, both men began courting Vail's sister-in-law, Electa Bryan, who had arrived that summer with the Vails on the *Emilie*. Plummer won her heart and she promised to marry him in the spring.

Cleveland and Plummer rode together to Bannack where gold had recently been discovered. On January 14, 1863, as Plummer sat warming himself at the fire in the Goodrich Hotel Saloon, a jealous Cleveland forced him into a gunfight. Plummer's shot was

again true, and he killed Cleveland in self-defense in front of dozens of witnesses.

### **PLUMMER BECOMES SHERIFF**

Two versions once again recount the story of Plummer's election as sheriff of Bannack. The *Sacramento Union* reported, "No man stands higher in the estimation of the community than Henry Plummer."<sup>3</sup> Frederick Allen wrote, "On Election Day, May 24, 1863, Plummer defeated his opponent, Jefferson Durley, with a handy majority of the 554 votes cast."<sup>4</sup> Version Two asserted that after losing the election, Plummer frightened the winner out of town. In this version Plummer ran unopposed in the subsequent re-vote and became sheriff on May 24, 1863. Either way, he rode back to Sun River for a June wedding and settled Electa into his log home in Bannack.

One of his first acts as sheriff was to build a jail. To that end Plummer collected subscriptions at \$2.50 a head, and succeeded in building the first jail in what became Montana. In August, the Bannack Union League unanimously recommended him for the position of Deputy U.S. Marshal for the region of Idaho Territory east of the mountains.<sup>5</sup> In September, Electa departed to visit her family in Iowa and never saw Plummer again.

Again the stories diverge. According to the first narrative, only four serious crimes were committed between October and December 1863: a murder, two stagecoach robberies, and an at-



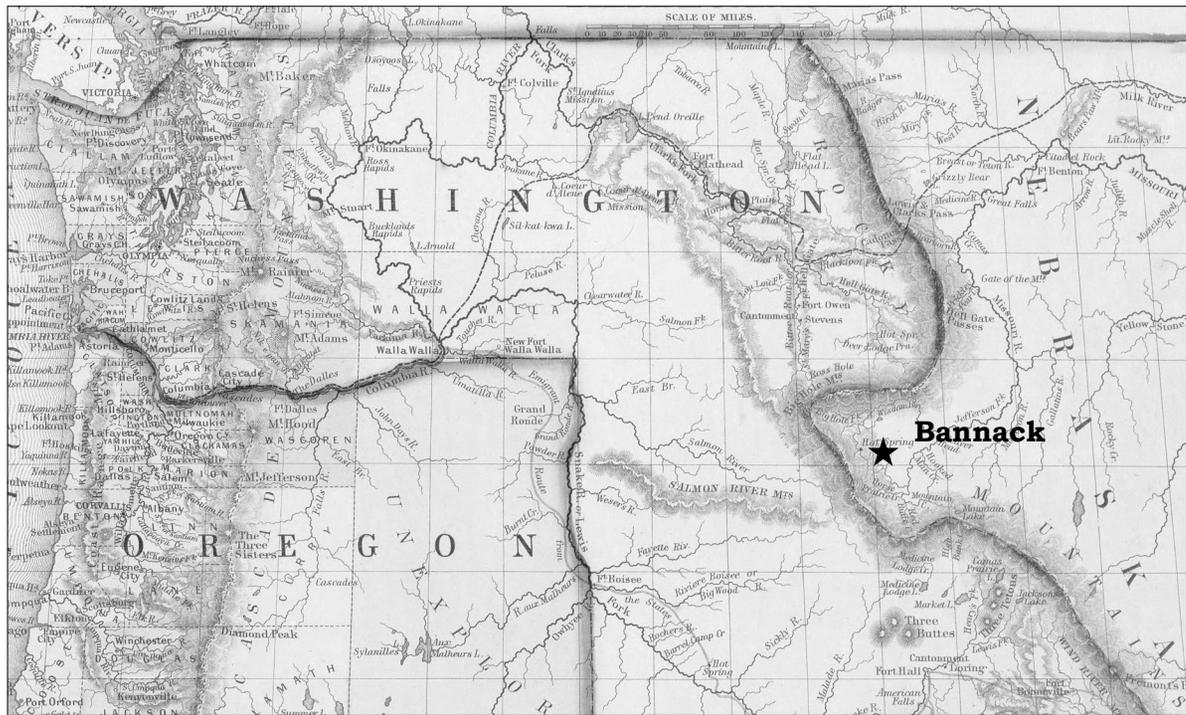
*The log jail, built by Henry Plummer, was the first jail erected in what would become Montana. The refurbished structure still stands in the ghost town of Bannack. Photo by P. Ziobron.*

tempted robbery of a freight caravan. It documents that in contemporary writings the sheriff was viewed as a “genteel-mannered police officer, fastidiously neat in his elegant overcoat, patrolling Bannack’s streets at dawn.”<sup>6</sup> The second account has the sheriff and his Bannack cohort forming a gang called the Innocents and committing over a hundred robberies and murders primarily in and around Alder Gulch and Virginia City, some

60 miles east of Bannack, both gold camp boom towns teeming with an itinerant and volatile population, with no law and order of which to speak.

### **VIGILANTISM**

The vigilantism began when some citizens of Virginia City captured George Ives, one of the supposed “Bannack outlaws,” tried him for murder in a raucous miner’s trial in late December



*An 1860 map of Washington Territory, which at that time included all of present-day Idaho and a portion of present-day Montana. Bannack is noted right of center. “Oregon, Washington, and part of British Columbia” map by S. Augustus Mitchell Jr. Image courtesy of Washington State Library.*

1863, and hanged him. Two days later (December 23) the Vigilance Committee of Alder Gulch in Virginia City was formed. Twenty-four men met in the back room of a Virginia City store and signed what became known as the Vigilante Oath. James Williams is credited with being the author and first signer of the document, which is held today by the Montana Historical Society in Helena.

In their organizational meeting, the committee decided to investigate all serious crimes, operate in secret, and punish those deemed guilty with death. No appeal would be allowed.

Beyond these 24 signatories the identities of other vigilantes are pretty much unknown.

As the New Year dawned the vigilantes turned their focus on Henry Plummer. The executive committee ordered that parties be sent to Bannack to arrest and execute Sheriff Plummer and members of his “gang.” Complicating this effort was the fact that the sheriff had the support of a great number of Bannack residents, and that his detractors kept their opinions private and within a small circle. Further complicating the situation were comments Plummer made when an alleged

outlaw was brought into town. He offered to take custody of the prisoner saying, "This new way our people have of hanging men without law or evidence isn't exactly the thing. It's time to put a stop to it."<sup>7</sup>

On January 8, 1864, John Lott and three other vigilantes left Alder Gulch for the 60-mile horseback ride in below-zero weather to Bannack where they hoped to recruit local citizens. The four riders arrived on January 9 and met in secret with their supporters. Some discussion was made to simply assassinate Plummer, but this action was discouraged by Sidney Edgerton, Chief Justice of Idaho Territory.<sup>8</sup> Edgerton was in Bannack with his family by chance that winter and was among Plummer's detractors. By noon on January 10, Lott had sworn in several dozen men as vigilantes. Horses belonging to the sheriff and his deputies were secretly removed from the town's stables to prevent escape. Near dusk the vigilantes gathered up a surprised Plummer along with his two main deputies and summarily hanged them from the town gallows.<sup>9</sup>

All three were eventually buried in shallow graves in nearby Hangman's Gulch. Plummer was the only one given a coffin. Sometime later the graves were vandalized and local children collected the skulls of the dead men as trophies. In any case, subsequent flooding disturbed the shallow graves and washed away the bones.<sup>10</sup>

Electa Plummer, who learned by letter of her husband's fate, always main-

tained that he was innocent. She eventually remarried, moved to South Dakota and raised two sons.

The killing spree escalated, and blood lust took over. It can be rightly argued that at this point the vigilantes forfeited their claims to respectability and the service of justice. Jose Pizantia lived in a cabin on a hillside above town, and while not accused of any specific crimes, the committee considered him an unsavory character. On



*A replica of the Hangman's Gulch Gallows used to hang victims of vigilante justice in Bannack. Photo by P. Ziobron.*

January 11, just hours after the hanging of Plummer and his deputies, a delegation acting on behalf of the Vigilance Committee went to Pizanthia's cabin and shouted for him to surrender. He did not.

When two vigilantes shoved the door open and entered the dark cabin, Pizanthia opened fire and shot one of the intruders in the chest and the other in the hip. The crowd of bystanders howled for blood. A small howitzer was obtained from Sidney Edgerton and brought to the cabin.<sup>11</sup> Three shells from the small cannon partially collapsed the cabin, and when the vigilantes entered the wreckage they found Pizanthia's feet sticking out from under a detached door. They lifted the door off the injured man, held him down, and one of the wounded vigilantes emptied six shots from his revolver into him. The mob then dragged the corpse outside and hung it from a pole where the crowd riddled it with more than a hundred rounds. The cabin ruins were next set afire, the body cut down and tossed into the flames. When the ashes had cooled they were sifted to see if Pizanthia had any gold on him. He did not.<sup>12</sup>

Next the vigilantes turned their attention to John Wagner who had been brought into Bannack accused of armed robbery. They hanged him from a crossbeam in the building where Plummer's body was laid out preparatory to being put into his coffin.

Their work in Bannack done, the vigilantes rode back to Virginia City where

five men were rounded up on January 14 and hanged side by side, one after the other, from a beam in Clayton & Hale's Drug Store. One yelled out his support for the Confederacy before the rope snapped his neck. The five are buried in boot hill above the town just as they died, side by side.

The Vigilance Committee then drafted 21 men (some unwilling but afraid of the consequences of resisting the order) to ride into the country and collect other condemned men. Throughout the remainder of January this "posse" ranged as far as present-day Missoula hanging victims. By January 26, 1864, the vigilantes had hanged 21 people, whereupon they returned to Virginia City. The editor of the *Montana Post* welcomed them home with congratulations and thanks and compared them to Joshua's army.<sup>13</sup>

When some 10,000 prospectors and camp followers descended en masse on this remote part of Montana in 1862-63, all seats of formal government were far distant and governmental authority was tenuous at best. The constant changing of these seats did not help the situation, and the fact that the federal government's attention was focused on the Civil War also contributed to the lawlessness.

The bill creating Montana Territory was passed by Congress on May 6, 1864 and signed into law by President Lincoln on May 26, 1864. Bannack became its capital, but the sheriff of this newly minted capital city had just been hanged along with his deputies.



*The main street of Bannack, Montana, now a ghost town and state park. Photo by P. Ziobron.*

Idaho Territory Chief Justice Sidney Edgerton, who supplied the howitzer used to destroy Jose Pizantia's cabin, was appointed the first governor of the new territory, but shortly after the capital was moved to Virginia City on February 7, 1865, Governor Edgerton returned to Ohio. The vigilantes ruled the Montana mining districts from Virginia City to Helena unchallenged, and indulged in hanging after hanging through 1865 bringing their total to 37. By 1870 the number had reached

50. It was only then that the Grant administration began to assert federal control over the territory and put an end to vigilante rule. However, it wasn't until 1875 that Montana had its first "legal" execution.

"Captain" Whittington Sayre's role in the Plummer hanging is unsubstantiated. Only his tombstone links him to this event. Bannack State Park Ranger and historian John Phillips confirmed that the names of most of the vigilan-

tes are simply unknown. A few men in addition to the original 24 signers of the Vigilante Oath have been identified over the years, mostly recounted in family stories or memoirs or sleuthed out by historians, but the name Whittington J. Sayre has not appeared in any account. Compounding the difficulty is the fact that without a local newspaper until 1864, no census until 1870, and no other reliable means to determine who even lived in these towns until 1870, the great majority of this highly mobile population came and went without leaving a traceable historical trail.

In 1865, the *Montana Post* published announcements of unclaimed letters at the post office in Virginia City for the Sayre family; this is the first evidence of Sayres being in the area. They next appeared in the 1870 U.S. Census. However, nothing links them specifically to events in Bannack. An intriguing but unsubstantiated online family reminiscence stated that Sayre was operating a hotel in Bannack in January 1864 and that his nephew George went onto a building roof with another boy to watch the January 10 hangings.<sup>14</sup> This appears to be untrue. The two hotels in Bannack in 1864 were owned by Alvin Frank Sears and William Goodrich, and there is no evidence that Sayre co-owned or lived in either of them.

Whittington Johnston Sayre self-identifies as a captain of the vigilantes through these troubling times, and his epitaph suggests no doubts over the years about the rightness of his cause

or actions. However, one thing is certain. Plummer and his deputies were duly elected and appointed law officers who were executed without due process, as apt a definition of lawlessness as you will find. That being said, Montana has a long tradition of honoring (perhaps glamorizing) its frontier history of vigilante justice and giving respectability to the "people's police force." Since 1956 the numbers 3-7-77 have appeared on the shoulder patches of Montana Highway Patrol troopers as a dubious tribute to "law and order." These numbers, with a mysterious (possibly Masonic) origin, are associated with early vigilante groups.<sup>15</sup>

And what of Henry Plummer: was he a bloodthirsty demon addicted to robbery and murder? There is no doubt he left a trail of bodies in his wake, from California to Idaho to Montana, though always claiming self-defense. Or was he a rough but common enough man of his times charged with the Herculean task of keeping a lid on a sprawling district of 10,000 fractious miners, ready to use gunplay if needed? Were the vigilantes the bad guys in this story or justified in what they did? Can lynching ever be justified?

Some historians today question whether Plummer was guilty of the crimes of which he was accused. They argue not a shred of evidence links Plummer to any crime committed in Bannack or Alder Gulch. They also argue that many confessions the vigilantes obtained were elicited through what most would today call torture. On May 7, 1993, Henry Plummer was

tried posthumously in the Virginia City courthouse, resulting in a 6-6 verdict and a mistrial declared by Judge Barbara Brook. Even today opinion is split, although the requirement for a preponderance of evidence to support a conviction would probably ensure that Plummer could never be found guilty by today's standards. The former frontier city of Bannack, now a ghost town, is today a state park.

As for the Sayres, the trail is sketchy. After the local vigilante excitement ended, the Sayres remained in Montana for the next several years. The 1870 U.S. Census listed Whittington and Ann as raising stock and living near the Ryan Post Office, just south of today's Dillon.<sup>16</sup> Daughters Alice Oliver and Sophia Miller were living next door with their families. Daughter Eliza was living in Virginia City with her three children, married to a man identified as S. Merrill. Son Delos disappeared from the record until 1880 when he and his parents, along with his sister Eliza Merrill and three children, were listed in the U.S. Census as farmers in The Dalles, Oregon.



*Boot Hill graveyard in Virginia City, Montana, where five vigilante victims were hanged on January 14, 1864. Photo by P. Ziobron.*

### **MOVING TO TUMWATER**

The next move for the Sayre family was to Tumwater, Washington Territory, where Delos bought four city lots in 1884, apparently for himself and his parents.<sup>17</sup> The next year Delos, in partnership with John Cannon, a fu-

ture mayor of Tumwater,<sup>18</sup> homesteaded on 160 acres at Ticknor Prairie just east of Tenino where the partners intended to raise cattle.<sup>19</sup> Whittington died in 1886 at age 72. His widow Ann appeared in the 1887 Washington Territorial Census living with Delos who was farming, probably out on Ticknor Prairie. Ann died in 1888 and was buried next to her husband. Delos, still unmarried, next appeared in the 1900 U.S. Census living in Mullen, Idaho, with his sister Eliza Mulkey.

A final note about vigilante phenomena. It would be wrong to think that the events described in this article were unique to Montana. Vigilante outbreaks occurred as early as 1851 and 1856 in San Francisco during which twelve people were lynched. After the Civil War, Kansas saw its share of vigilantism, as did Texas, Missouri, Arizona, and even Alaska during the Soapy Smith era. If one were to include the anti-Chinese movement in the 1880s under the banner of vigilantism, several more states, including Washington Territory, must be added to the list.

The fact that Montana has turned its vigilante history into a tourist industry clearly shows that the romantic appeal endures today. The reality is harsher. In order to thrive, vigilantism needs not only outright support but also the silence of those too afraid to speak out against it. Just beneath the veneer of civilization, law and order remains a fragile aspiration.

#### **GENERAL SOURCES (NOT LISTED IN ENDNOTES)**

Buxbaum, Linda. *The Life and Times of Henry Plummer*. Self-published, 2014.

Graetz, Rick and Susie. *Bannack, Foundation of Montana*. Helena: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 2004.

Graves, F. Lee. *Bannack Cradle of Montana*. Helena: Montana Magazine American & World Geographic Publishing, 1991.

Langford, Nathaniel Pitt. *Vigilante Days and Ways, Vol. 1*. Boston: J. G. Cupples Co. Publishers, 1890.

Pauley, Art. *Henry Plummer Lawman and Outlaw*. White Sulphur Springs, MT: *The Meagher County News*, 1980.

An on-site visit in September 2018 to Bannack and Virginia City, and discussions and e-mails with John Phillips, Bannack State Park Ranger and historian.

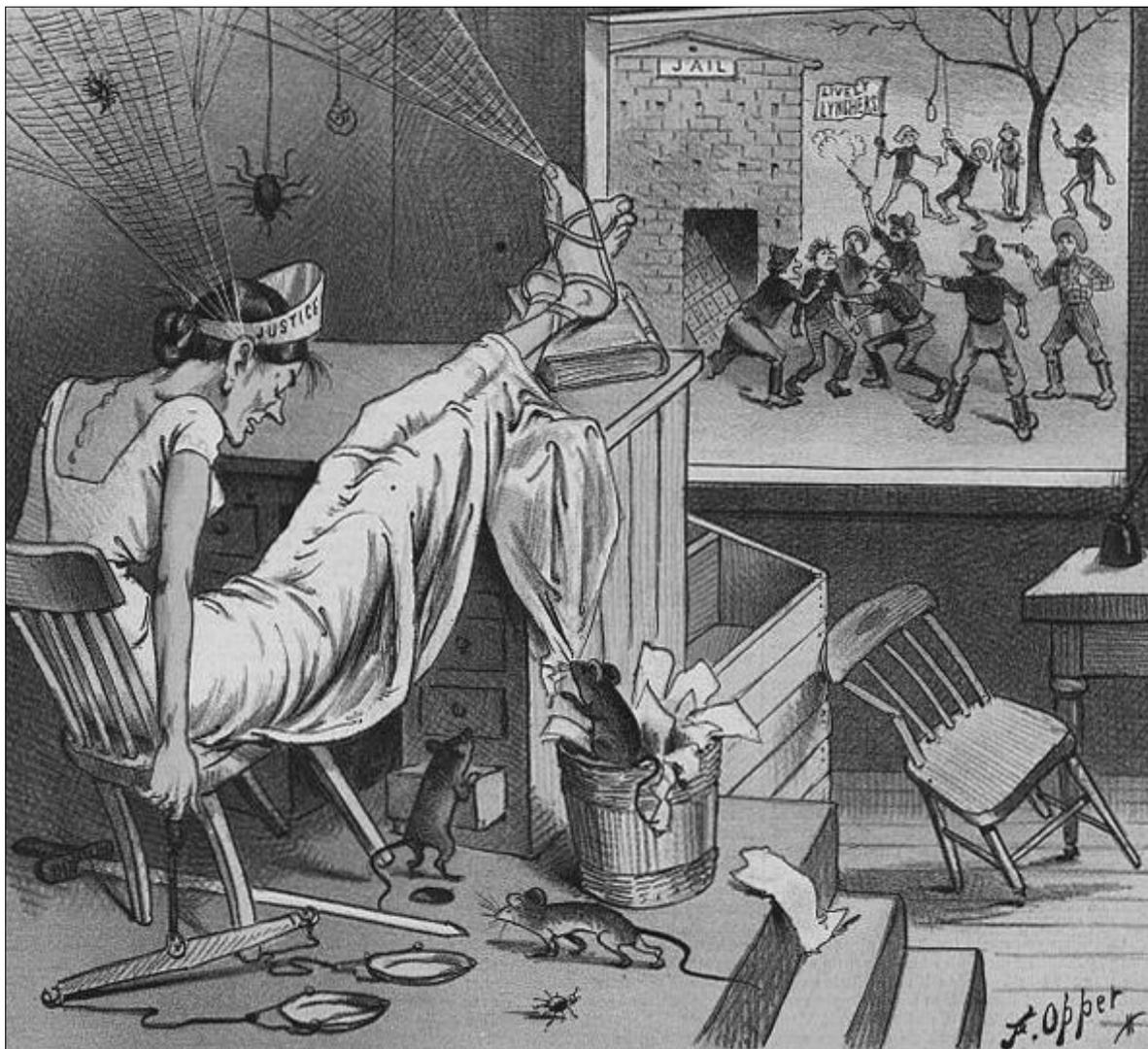
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#### **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> The tombstone incorrectly listed 1863 as the date of the hanging. It was January 10, 1864.

<sup>2</sup> R. E. Mather and R. E. Boswell, "Henry Plummer." *Wild West*, August 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Mather.



In 1883, Puck Magazine published this cartoon titled “Justice Out of a Job” as a commentary on the days of vigilantism and lawlessness in the American West. New York: Keppler & Schwarzmann, July 4, 1883.

<sup>4</sup> Frederick Allen, *A Decent, Orderly Lynching: The Montana Vigilantes*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004, page 88.

<sup>5</sup> The appointment apparently never happened. Note the name “Union

League.” The Civil War was raging at this time and the literature cited at the end of this article suggests that war passions may have spilled over into Montana. It has been suggested that the majority of the hanged men might have been Confederate sympa-

thizers, although Plummer was not one of them.

<sup>6</sup> Mather.

<sup>7</sup> Allen, page 221.

<sup>8</sup> Sidney Edgerton, a radical Republican Congressman from Ohio, was appointed Chief Justice of the newly-created Idaho Territory by President Lincoln. He made his way west via Salt Lake City to Bannack where he arrived on September 6, 1863. Because of the lateness of the season he decided to overwinter there before going on to Lewiston, which he learned was new Governor William Wallace's choice for the capital. Wallace previously was Washington Territory's delegate to Congress.

<sup>9</sup> Allen, pages 226-227.

<sup>10</sup> Dennis Larsen (September 2018). Personal interview with John Phillips, Ranger, Bannack State Park.

<sup>11</sup> Edgerton apparently thought it was not good form for a chief justice to be involved in such activities. He went up a hill on the edge of town and watched the events from that vantage point.

<sup>12</sup> Allen, pages 230-231.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas J. Dimsdale, *The Vigilantes of Montana: Being a Correct and Impartial Narrative of the Chase, Trial, Capture and Execution of Henry Plummer's Road Agent Band*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953, "Tired and Worn," page 159.

<sup>14</sup> Angie Kumlien Main. A Google search under Captain Whittington Sayre leads to a summary of her document, *A lineal descent from Thomas Sayre: one of the founders of Southampton, L.I., to George Ralph Sayre*. Ft. Atkinson, WI: [publisher not identified], 1945. The entire document may be viewed at the Olympia LDS center on Yew Avenue. Main wrote primarily about Whittington's brother William and his family, whom she said came to Montana in 1863 via wagon train, hoping to improve the health of his two eldest sons who were suffering from tuberculosis. The reminiscence stated William and sons visited Bannack during these troubling times but that they returned to Wisconsin by 1865. William Sayer (name misspelled in the 1870 Census) and his thirteen-year-old son George were living there in Jefferson County after the deaths of the two eldest sons. Main based part of her story on conversations with an elderly George H. Sayre.

<sup>15</sup> For a history of the 3-7-77 shoulder patches, visit Association of Montana Troopers website, <https://www.montanatrooper.com/3-7-77/>.

<sup>16</sup> The 1870 Montana census for Beaverhead County, Big Hole, listed Sayre Whittington (first and last names were reversed), age 57, and Sayre Ann, age 53.

<sup>17</sup> "O.H. Ott to Delos Sayre, lots 3, 4, 5 and 6, blk 6, Tumwater, \$2150." "Real Estate Transfers." *Washington Standard*, Olympia, WA, May 2, 1884, page 3.



*Bannack, Montana, now a ghost town and state park. Photo by P. Ziobron.*

<sup>18</sup> Cannon and his wife are buried next to Whittington and Ann Sayre in a section of the Masonic Cemetery that was owned by Delos Sayre, next to empty plots that are still owned today, probably unknowingly, by Sayre family descendants.

<sup>19</sup> “John Cannon, formerly of Seattle, more lately of Tumwater, has homesteaded 160 acres near Ticknor prairie, and in partnership with Mr. Delos Sayers, of Tumwater, has bought out the Guilliams farm, adjoining his homestead. They intend to go into cat-

tle-raising as soon as practicable.” “Tichnor Prairie Items.” *Washington Standard*, May 22, 1885, page 4.

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*Dennis Larsen is a retired high school history teacher who for the last fifteen years has been writing and lecturing about Northwest pioneers. He is the author or co-author of five books, with a sixth due out in spring 2020.*

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# THROUGH THE LENS AT MICHIGAN HILL

*Karen L. Johnson*

Called a humanitarian, artist, and one of the preeminent and pioneering documentary photographers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century,<sup>1</sup> Dorothea Lange is a nationally recognized figure in American photography, along with the likes of Ansel Adams and Walker Evans. Known primarily for her images of migrant workers in California and the Southwest, Lange also visited Thurston County in her travels during the Great Depression.

Lange was born in New Jersey in 1895. She probably empathized with struggling families, as her own childhood was not a comfortable one. At age seven, Lange contracted polio which left her with a permanent limp. Lange later said, “I think [polio] was the most important thing that happened to me. It formed me, guided me, instructed me, helped me, and humiliated me.”<sup>2</sup> When Lange was only twelve, her father abandoned the family, who then moved in with a grandmother and great aunt.

Lange did not fare well in school. Although her mother urged her to consider a career as a teacher (a common career for women in the early 1900s), Lange felt a strong connection to photography. She eventually made her way to San Francisco and obtained a job in a photo-developing center. After



*Dorothea Lange, Resettlement Administration photographer, in California, February 1936. Photo courtesy of Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017759800/>.*

joining a camera club, she opened a portrait studio and became an avid member of the local art scene. Struggling with a failing marriage, and coping with the onset of the Great Depression, Lange felt compelled to turn from portrait work to using photography to expose social problems. This led to her eventual employment with the federal Resettlement Administration (later the Farm Security Administration or FSA).

As a photographer for FSA, Lange traveled the nation, recording the devastating but often hidden effects of the

Depression. *Migrant Mother*, undoubtedly Lange's most famous photograph, featured an unidentified woman: downtrodden, worried, hopeless, with her children at her side.<sup>3</sup> The mother personified the plight of so many Americans beset by the rampant poverty and homelessness of the economic crisis.

Lange's reputation as a serious photographer was heightened by the publication of this photo. But more importantly, her photos brought about positive actions. After the publication of *Pea Picker Family, California* (later renamed *Migrant Mother*), the State Relief Administration delivered food to over 2,000 fruit pickers. In this case and others, Lange's photographs were indeed worth a thousand words.

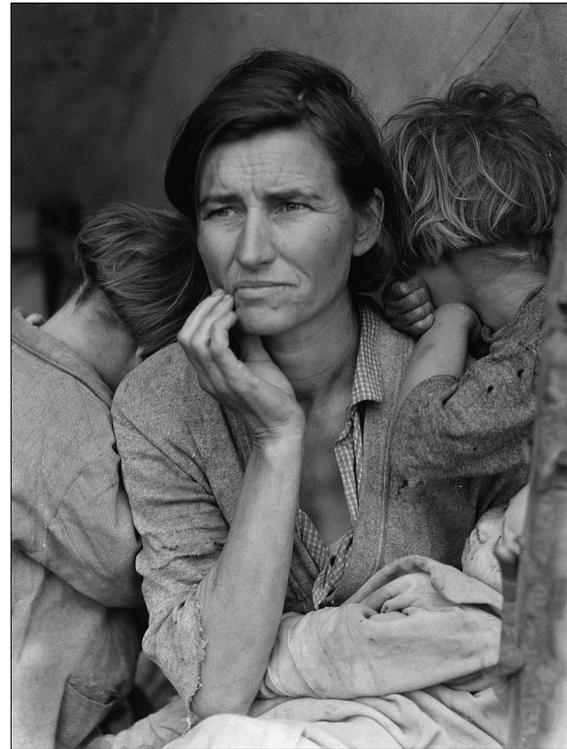
#### **LANGE VISITS WASHINGTON**

Lange spent much of her time in the American Southwest. But in 1939, she visited Washington State. Locally, she took several photos of Tenino, and also made many images of stump farms on Michigan Hill (in extreme southwest Thurston County and northwest Lewis County).

A stump farm was generally considered to be a poor man's farm, or at least the very modest beginning of a more sophisticated farm. Forested land was cleared of trees (and no doubt the logs were sold for lumber, when possible) but the stumps were left standing. The ground between the stumps was then turned to agriculture. As the farmers had time and en-

ergy, they grubbed out the stumps and made stump piles, which were then burned; this left larger fields free of obstacles. But it was a lengthy and tiresome process, often completed by the farmer's wife and children.

By the time Lange arrived in the summer of 1939, many parts of Michigan Hill had been cleared and turned into



*Lange's most famous photo was originally exhibited in 1940 at New York's Museum of Modern Art, and was titled Pea Picker Family, California. Two decades later, the photo had been retitled Migrant Mother, Nipomo, California. Photo courtesy of Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017762891>.*

pastureland or berry fields. Uncultivated land between stumps and along roads quickly returned to a brushy state, where native plants such as blackberries, grasses, bracken ferns, snowberries, and goldenrod flourished.

In her photos of life on Michigan Hill, Lange focused on two families: the Arnolds and the Kyttas.

The Arnolds photographed by Lange (see pages 38-41) may have been the Irving and Eleanor Arnold family. They lived in the Independence Election Precinct, and their children were Irving Jr. (age 11 in 1939), Hazel (9), Charles (7), and Norma (6).<sup>4</sup> The Arnolds had moved here from New Mexico, and the parents must have returned at some point, as they are both buried in Las Cruces, New Mexico.<sup>5</sup>

The Kyttas in Lange's photos (see pages 43-44) were probably the William and Amanda Kytta family. They also lived in the Independence Election Precinct, and their children were Hazel (age 20 in 1939), William (18), and Glen (17).<sup>6</sup> The Kytta family apparently never strayed far from the Michigan Hill area, as both William and Amanda are buried in the Grand Mound Cemetery nearby.<sup>7</sup>

Although Lange's portraits of California workers received greater national recognition, the Michigan Hill residents were just as much a part of her social commentary on the effects of the Great Depression.

## LANGE'S LATER CAREER

By 1941, Lange was officially recognized for her work. That year, she was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship, a twelve-month monetary grant which allowed her to explore her field free of the constraints of earning money. Lange was the first woman to be so honored, "for the making of documentary photographs of the American social scene, particularly in rural communities."<sup>8</sup>

During World War II, Lange worked for the Office of War Information. She photographed the internment of Japanese Americans, which she considered unjust; some of her work was suppressed by the federal government. She also documented the conference in San Francisco which established the United Nations. Later, she traveled around the world, continuing her documentation of ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. Lange died from esophageal cancer in 1965, and is buried in Hoboken, New Jersey.<sup>9</sup>

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Dorothea Lange, Photographer 1895-1965." Biography. <https://www.biography.com/people/dorothea-lange-9372993> (accessed March 6, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Crecia C. Swaim, "Dorothea Lange and Documentary Modes of Expression." Yale National Initiative, [http://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/viewer/new\\_haven\\_06.03.10\\_u](http://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/viewer/new_haven_06.03.10_u) (accessed March 6, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Decades later, the Migrant Mother was tracked down by a reporter. Her name was Florence Owens Thompson; she was a Cherokee Indian who had married young and migrated to California. Even after the Depression ended, her life was not easy. Ben Phelan, "The Story of the 'Migrant Mother.'" Antiques Roadshow, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/stories/articles/2014/4/14/migrant-mother-dorothea-lange> (accessed March 6, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> "United States Census, 1940," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K9SJ-GK6>: 14 March 2018), Irving Arnold, Independence Election Precinct, Thurston, Washington, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 34-19, sheet 3B, line 80, family 64, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, NARA digital publication T627. Records of the Bureau of the Census, 1790 - 2007, RG 29. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2012, roll 4365 (accessed March 5, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> *Find A Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), memorial page for Irving Gardner Arnold, Sr (25 Apr 1900–14 Jun 1992), Find A Grave Memorial no. 38694467, and memorial page for Eleanor Mae Peterson Arnold (16 May 1909–Jun 1987), Find A Grave Memorial no. 38694474, citing Hillcrest Memorial Gardens Cemetery, Las Cruces, Doña Ana County, New Mexico, USA; maintained by Stan Arnold (contributor 48121400) (accessed March 6, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> "United States Census, 1940," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K9SJ-GV3>: 14 March 2018), William Kytta, Independence Election Precinct, Thurston, Washington, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 34-19, sheet 3A, line 40, family 54, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, NARA digital publication T627. Records of the Bureau of the Census, 1790 - 2007, RG 29. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2012, roll 4365 (accessed March 5, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> *Find A Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), memorial page for William Kytta (1894–1965), Find A Grave Memorial no. 36993252, and memorial page for Amanda Kytta (1898–1983), Find A Grave Memorial no. 36993251, citing Grand Mound Cemetery, Rochester, Thurston County, Washington, USA; maintained by Scott Bolliger (contributor 46935216) (accessed March 6, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. <https://www.gf.org/fellows/all-fellows/dorothea-lange/> (accessed March 7, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Biography.

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*The following photographs were taken by Dorothea Lange in August 1939; all are in the collection of the Library of Congress. Lange's own captions are delineated by quotation marks. "The Arnold farm, seen from road. Traveling medicine salesman is calling. Shows vegetable garden to right, and berry patch in front of house. The land which family has cleared is across a deep gully at the back and extends up and over the hill behind the house." Western Washington, Thurston County, Michigan Hill. August 1939. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017772944/>.*



*Mrs. Arnold and children burn a stump pile. "After bulldozer has taken out and piled the heavy stumps, the family gathers the debris, roots and chunks from the field to the stump pile for burning. Negative made in rain." Western Washington, Thurston County, Michigan Hill. August 1939. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017773207/>.*



*Although Lange's caption mentions only three Arnold children, the younger boy peeks out from the window on the far right. The older boy must have been very proud of his bicycle. "Three of the four Arnold children. The oldest boy earned the money to buy his bicycle." Western Washington, Thurston County, Michigan Hill. August 1939. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017773260/>.*



*“Arnold children picking raspberries in the new berry patch.” Western Washington, Thurston County, Michigan Hill. August 1939. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017773259/>.*



*This farm was not identified by Lange; it may be the Kytta or Arnold farm, or another nearby farm altogether. "Part of stump farm." Western Washington, Thurston County, near Michigan Hill. August 1939. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017772843/>.*



*“Kytta family, Farm Security Administration FSA borrowers on non-commercial experiment, build a well.” Michigan Hill, Thurston County, western Washington. August 1939. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017773246/>.*



*The Kyttas obviously wore their clothing to a frazzle, but took care of the few things they owned. "Detail on Kytta farm." Western Washington, Thurston County, Michigan Hill. August 1939. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017773253/>.*

## WHO/WHAT/WHERE IS IT?

Although this photo is not dated, it was likely taken between 1905 and 1909. The location of this photo is also unknown; it could be almost anywhere on Puget Sound, but is most likely around Olympia or Bellingham. Whatever the location, the fishing was good that day!

From left to right:

**Captain James Wright McKnight Tarte.** Tarte was born in England in 1849 and came to Puget Sound in 1863. He eventually settled in Bellingham, and served on various steamboats, including *Colfax*, *Nellie*, *Addie*, *Despatch*, *Eliza Anderson*, *Evangel*, and *Brick*. His last command was on the steamboat *Bessie*. During that time, he also served as deputy fish commissioner for the state. Tarte died in 1933, and is buried in Bellingham.

**Unidentified man** (on roof of cabin).

**Mina Jane Piper Mead.** Mrs. Mead was born in Iowa in 1860. When she moved to Bellingham, she married Albert Mead and became stepmother to Mead's four children from a previous marriage. She and Mead had one son of their own. The family lived in Olympia while Mead was governor. In her later years, Mrs. Mead was active in the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Young Women's Christian Association. She died in 1941, and is buried in Bellingham.

**Albert Vincent Mead** (on roof of cabin). Albert was born in 1900 to Mina and Albert E. Mead. He attended Kansas State College, then moved to Olympia where he supervised the utilities tariff section of the Public Service Commission. He died in 1955, and is buried in Bellingham.

**Jean McLeod Holloway** (identity uncertain). Holloway was born in Canada in 1875, and came to Washington with her mother in 1880. She worked as executive clerk, stenographer, and assistant secretary to Governors Mead, Cosgrove, and Hay. She married E. Stimson Holloway in 1914. She died in 1966, and her ashes are interred in Tumwater.

**Albert Edward Mead.** Mead was born in Kansas in 1861, obtained a law degree, and lived in Iowa and Illinois before moving to Blaine in 1889. He served as mayor of Blaine, a member of the State House of Representatives, and prosecuting attorney of Whatcom County, before being elected to the governorship in 1905. He served only one term. In 1909, he returned to Bellingham where he practiced law and was president of the Chamber of Commerce. He died in 1913, and is buried in Bellingham.

**Bessie.** The *Bessie* was a small steamboat which served as the official launch of the state fishing commission.

# WHO/WHAT/WHERE IS IT?

A ROTATING FEATURE SHOWCASING ARTIFACTS FROM THURSTON COUNTY HERITAGE GROUPS



Who were these mariners? Hint: the gentleman on the right was the governor of Washington for one term. Turn to the inside back cover for the answer. Photograph courtesy of the Washington State Archives, AR-07809001-ph004471.