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## Illustrations

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L'Quoit in 1899

Winthrop's overland guide Loolowcan

Loolowcan with an Indian police officer circa 1912

The Duke of York, actually Chits-a-mah-han

or Chet-ze-moka

Theodore Winthrop, 1861

## Introduction

In 1853, carrying money in his pocket and elegant attire in his saddlebags, a twenty-four-year-old New Englander named Theodore Winthrop toured the territories of California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia after his job as a clerk in the Panama jungle proved too taxing for his delicate health. His tour of the Northwest yielded two adventure books: a novel, *John Brent*, and a nonfiction travel account, *The Canoe and the Saddle*. Both books appeared posthumously in the 1860s and blazed through many printings. In 1890, the town of Winthrop in Washington's North Cascades would be named for him, as would the Winthrop Glacier on Mount Rainier that he described so vividly.

The Washington Territory, where he spent most time during his six-month tour of the Pacific Northwest, was a place of ecological and racial turmoil. Indians on both sides of the Cascades were dying from diseases, bullets, and drink; their economies had been transformed by white contact and their ancestral lands usurped and

historic lore ridiculed. Lumber vessels loaded with fir trees to be sunk as piles to build San Francisco docks were already thronging the waters of Puget Sound. Miners were raking creek beds and hill-sides for gold. Would-be cattle barons were carving out beef ranches. Winthrop acknowledges few of these historical transitions, even though he traveled some three hundred miles with the S'Klallams and Klickitats, whose tribal names he had planned to use as the title of the book that would become *The Canoe and the Saddle*, until a Confederate bullet fired in an early battle of the Civil War eclipsed his literary plans.

*The Canoe and the Saddle*, initially published in 1862 and edited anew here for the first time since 1957, reveals much about how European American privilege and presumption shaped the West. The book is a novelized memoir, and it has granted Winthrop standing as an ecological prophet who celebrated a pristine wilderness that was beginning already to yield to roads, farms, and harvests of timber and fish. Northwest historians—John H. Williams in 1913, Robert Cantwell in 1972, and Timothy Egan in 1990—have lavished praise on *The Canoe and the Saddle* for its appreciation of landscape. Winthrop wrote, in transcendental tones, “Our race has never yet come into contact with great mountains as companions of daily life, nor felt that daily development of the finer and more comprehensive senses which these signal facts of nature compel. That is an influence of the future.” Unlike his celebrated New England contemporaries Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, however, racial and religious prejudices complicate his writing.

He was born in 1828 in New Haven, Connecticut, twenty-four years before his tour of the West commenced. He traced a genealogical line that stretched back on his father’s side to John Winthrop, first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. On his moth-

er's side, he claimed among his forebears the evangelical Jonathan Edwards, who was the foremost theologian in America, and Timothy Dwight, of a literary coterie at Yale College known as the Connecticut Wits, later a Yale president. A scion of New England gentry, he graduated atop his small Yale class of 1848. Thereafter he lived and clerked abroad, tried his hand at legal practices in St. Louis and New York, socialized with famous landscape painters, and composed the four novels and three nonfiction books on which his slender reputation rests. He died young, in a botched Civil War battle he had helped to plan.

Poor health nagged him his whole life. He suffered from religious doubts, and constant stomach pains very nearly disabled him. His full red beard might have helped to swell his appearance beyond his meager but athletic 126 pounds. Still wobbly from the smallpox he contracted when he first came into the Oregon Territory five months before, he reported in his journal that he had managed to buy some laudanum and baking soda while traveling the Oregon Trail back toward New York. The baking soda was no doubt used to ease his indigestion or dyspepsia, but the laudanum—a concoction that contained opium or an opium derivative—must have been meant to assuage much greater pains.

Like many of his Puritan forebears, he struggled earnestly with his faith. During college he underwent a religious conversion and spent so many hours praying in his room that his sisters feared he was losing his mind. In his later years, nervous fatigue and recurring bouts of depression complicated brief and feverish jags of sociability. When he confessed in a letter to his widowed mother that his belief in Christianity was waning, she grieved openly to her family and friends, and he became the object of gossip in New York, New Haven, Newport, and Boston. One distant and elder relative,

George Templeton Strong, sniffed in his journal that the young Theodore, who at the time was home and making the rounds of New York salons and soirees, was overly prone to issue rank atheist opinions. Religious conflicts also seep into his books. The narrator of his ur-western *John Brent* laments that no one in America would offer prayers for him throughout his travails across the great basins and ranges of the western territories, but instead his countrymen reject him as a pagan.

By late August 1853, the sickly young aristocrat was wrapping up his Northwest excursion. He had enjoyed the hospitality of many community leaders including Jesse Applegate and William Fraser Tolmie. Now, though, a genuine challenge lay before him—a voyage across Washington Territory by water and land at the hands of Indian guides, a voyage that would suggest to his eventual editors an escapade of a title, *The Canoe and the Saddle*. So at rustic Port Townsend, on the northwest shore of Puget Sound, he harshly bartered with the S'Klallam Indians for help and hired a forty-foot dugout canoe and paddlers to transport him some eighty-five miles south to the inner reaches of the sound near present-day Tacoma.

Winthrop accepted the services of the “Duke of York,” actually Chetzemoka, whom he characterized unfairly as “a drunken rascal, a shameless liar, a thief,” but who actually led a large tribe and befriended the white settlers. One year after guiding Winthrop in 1853, Chetzemoka became hereditary chief of his people, an office he held till 1876. Two years afterward, Chetzemoka signed the Treaty of Point No Point, which in the late twentieth century became a compelling legal basis for removing the Elwha and Glines Canyon dams near Port Townsend. Chetzemoka’s two wives, Seehem-itza and Chill’lil, had been satirically renamed “Queen Victoria” and “Jenny Lind” by white settlers. A photo reproduced in this

edition shows Chetzemoka in black dress jacket and hat, his chest outthrust, his eyes appraising the photographer with a mix of distrust and pride. “Civilization came, with step-mother kindness,” Winthrop wrote of Chetzemoka, “baptized him with rum, clothed him in discarded slops, and dubbed him the Duke of York.” In a canoe with Chetzemoka, where his Indian hirelings were paddling hard to earn their blankets, Winthrop confiscated some of their rum. This seizure—in the interest, he alleged, of efficiency and speed—sparked an uprising that Winthrop deemed fit to subdue by flourishing his Colt six-shooter. And that’s the way his expedition across the Washington Territory began.

After a two-day paddle trip, the entourage arrived at Fort Nisqually near present-day Tacoma, where Winthrop paid off his S’Klallam paddlers. Rising early the next day, he got busy trading and bartering, sizing up the horses and the men alike. He purchased pork, hardtack, and three mustangs; hired a young but seasoned Indian guide to take him across the Cascades; and hit the Naches Trail for Fort Dalles on the Columbia River, a journey of more than two hundred miles. An experienced horseman who lavished love upon his well-worn Indian steeds, Winthrop named them and made sure they had adequate water and feed. With his three horses and his guide, he ascended from sea level to the 4,800-foot summit of Naches Pass as swiftly as he dared to push the animals along trails often precipitous or laced with fallen trees. (Several months later the Longmire party had to butcher oxen for leather to lower wagons down those same cliffs.) Over the summit, with their rapport souring, Winthrop again confronted his companion with a pistol and was abandoned to wander lost, ailing, and alone on a desert prairie.

Throughout all of these exploits, he adopted the collar of a cultural minister and thus perhaps fulfilled the spirit of his Puritan

ancestors by entirely secular means. He was self-inspired to deliver civilization in the territory and leaven every less-than-genteel act among his Indian companions. He commended nature's glories with great eloquence, waxing ecstatic in their fine light, inspiring later travelers and wilderness advocates. Instead of settling for hard-tack and pork alone, he bought and shot fresh meat. Cooking up salmon and grouse on the trail, he demonstrated for the hungry Indians the finest in culinary arts. His showy shirts, breeches, and hats found room in his bags alongside more routine supplies. Newly returned from the continent, where he had spent a great deal of time in France, he tried to introduce his haute couture to the indigenous people. Convinced that he was enhancing race relations, he was actually damaging chances for effective intercultural communication between Indians and settlers in later years.

Ethnic tensions were already high when he visited the territories and took notes for his books. In 1847, six years before him, Cayuse Indians had murdered Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and their family in Walla Walla, an act that hardened extant animosities. The Mexican American War, which Henry David Thoreau had protested with his now-famous civil disobedience, had been decided in America's favor in 1848. At the same time as Winthrop's arrival in 1853, Congress created the Washington Territory, separating it from the Oregon Territory because so many immigrants had settled around Puget Sound. Isaac Stevens, territorial governor, initiated a survey for a rail route to extend from the Great Lakes to Puget Sound, a venture that brought 240 soldiers, surveyors, engineers, and naturalists tramping over Indian lands. Stevens also conducted a series of treaty councils on both sides of the Cascades to lubricate more fractious Indians for treaty signings. The Yakama chief Kamiakin, an estimable figure in Winthrop's

narrative, soon led a coalition of interior tribes against the whites in what became known as the Yakima War of 1855-56. To cement his foundation for later settlement proceedings, Governor Stevens adopted the cramped and inadequate Chinook Jargon to translate treaty terms and answer questions, even though skilled bilinguals who spoke both English and the regional Salish dialects were available. Winthrop learned Chinook Jargon, the medium of commercial exchange in the Northwest, and in this eight-hundred-word pidgin he rendered much of the dialogue that passes for Indian-white parley in his book. Intrepid travelers he reasoned—absentee investors and leisurely travelers alike—would benefit from his knowledge of the jargon, which is composed mainly of tribal languages with later additions of English and French.

His overland guide, an Indian whom he knew only as Loolowcan, came to him at the demand of Owhi, Loolowcan's father, a Yakama chief. No other record of the name Loolowcan appears in regional histories, and one may conclude with A. J. Splawn that Winthrop's guide was actually Lo-kout, who enrolled ultimately in the Spokane Tribe as L'Quoit. (Some Indians refused to divulge their names to whites, either for reasons of security or for fear of vengeful deities.) Five years after Winthrop's visit, Lo-kout's brother, Qualchan, would be hanged near Spokane for an alleged murder, and their father, Owhi, would be captured and shot while trying to escape. But Lo-kout would slip the noose and live another sixty years. Dwelling at the confluence of the Columbia and Spokane rivers with his brother's widow in 1906, Lo-kout gave an interview that has been overlooked. In that interview, Lo-kout said he wished that he had murdered Theodore Winthrop when he had the chance. The reasons for Lo-kout's bitterness will come into fuller focus below, but it might suffice at this point to say that Winthrop abused those

Indians to whom he was the most indebted. He behaved like a man whose upper-class breeding made him especially partial to his own cultural values.

And yet Winthrop's exchanges with the Indians contained both give and take. No matter how rushed and abrupt, he had to navigate the contact zone that united Indian-white relations. He needed their help to cross the territory. His exchanges with Chief Owhi at Fort Nisqually demonstrate this interdependence best. Haunted by the clock, burning to make a meeting with fellow travelers at Fort Dalles, Winthrop had to parley politely all the same. To secure Owhi's son as a guide was his interest. To get his way, he had to compromise; he had to traverse the middle ground, as Richard White has termed it. Old Owhi translated into vivid language the landscape that the travelers needed to follow across the Cascades via Naches Pass. He delivered his narrative of the topography of the route in torturous drama and detail, Winthrop thought, but the old man had to be respected and indulged, and his several attendants needed to be deferred to courteously. Ultimately the epic sweep of Owhi's narrative, the grandeur of his dramatic oratory, won over Winthrop, who became an appreciative audience. "Owhhigh as a pantomimist would have commanded brilliant success on any stage," he wrote. "Would that there were more like him in this wordy world." When it came time to fix a price for the scouting and guiding services that Owhi had arranged, Winthrop offered generous compensation for that time and place. In grateful reciprocation, Owhi bestowed a gift on Winthrop—a handmade quilt girded with otter fur, an object Winthrop had admired. When Owhi attempted to append extras to the oral contract—shoes and clothing for his attendants and his son—Winthrop firmly told him no. To travel the middle ground

required compromise. The Indians had to make concessions and press requests in turn.

It might be said the Indians took the tenderfoot traveler for a ride in more than the literal sense. Those whom Winthrop encountered were already Indians in the making, in Alexandra Harmon's fitting phrase for the natives in and around Puget Sound. They were learning the ropes and rewards of their persistence to survive among European American immigrants. When Winthrop drew his pistol in the canoe—to turn his paddlers back to the task of ferrying him down Puget Sound—they suspended their rebellion and fell asleep. This was a brilliant move, one worthy of a judo master, that took Winthrop's greatest strength and turned it to their immediate gain. They chose not to argue, mutiny, or comply submissively with his demand. Instead they gave him cause to think better of his impulsive power trip, his pistol flourish, as they drew his hasty journey to a temporary halt.

Recounting incidents like this one, Winthrop wrote in scenes. He rendered his exchanges with the Indians in dialogue, using Chinook Jargon and thereby simplifying complicated intercultural transactions in that facile tongue. He dramatized his journey by novelizing his memory of it. Histories have borne him out, though: he falsified none of the details. His wit and erudition, his readiness to ornament his Northwest excursion with classical and contemporary allusions, generated a charm that amounts to more than artifice. In milder moods, he might praise the Indians: “in every fact of our little world these children of nature found wonderment and fun,” using language that can be read as condescending, while elsewhere the tone goes elegiac: “The same spirit of our darksome enlightenment that makes slavery possible,” he wrote, “makes maltreatment of Indians certain.” Guilt was another recurrent register

in his emotional range regarding the native people of the Northwest. He was “mindful of the heavy mesne profits for the occupation of a continent, and the uncounted arrears of blood-money owed by [the white] race,” an observation that presages twentieth-century talk of slave reparations. His original title for *The Canoe and the Saddle* was “Klalam and Klickatat,” a title focusing wholly on the indigenous people.

Besides this travel account or memoir, his pioneering western books include one that explores aristocracy and religion on the Oregon Trail. To contemporary eyes, that equestrian saga of a novel, *John Brent*, is as vexed by anti-Mormonism as *The Canoe and the Saddle* is by its harsh judgments of the Indians. In his ethnocentrism and religious intolerance, then, Winthrop again fulfilled the spirit of his Puritan ancestry. If during his lifetime he had failed as a writer—all five books rejected by publishers—his death in the Little Bethel battle of the Civil War accorded him swift notoriety. Publishers contended for the same manuscripts they had at first spurned. By setting his best work in the West, he captured the imagination of English and American readers, so much so that fifty-five editions of his books appeared between 1861 and 1876, and Winthrop ranked as one of the most popular of American writers for that time. His insights into the American West may be traceable to his outsider’s point of view. In this respect his work looked forward to Mark Twain’s *Roughing It* (1872) and backward to Washington Irving’s *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835) and dozens of colonial-era promotion tracts, histories, and ethnographies.

The nineteenth-century literary critic William Dean Howells, who called *The Canoe and the Saddle* “a fresh, vivid, and amusing book,” might have been surprised to find the ways that later scholars used it. Winthrop’s 1913 editor, John H. Williams, lathered his

introduction and footnotes with antiquated praise and apologized for the many Indian names that, he said, must “inspire horror and disgust” in the civilized reader. Williams’s other comments are rife with prejudice too. Winthrop proved “a useful tool for state-building,” Williams wrote, a wrench for furthering manifest destiny. In his 1972 history *The Hidden Northwest*, Robert Cantwell praised Winthrop for his precocious recognition of ways the natural environment may shape character. The notion of nature as nurture, of the abstract wild as a fostering force, might seem romantically antiquated or confined to aficionados of the rural experience, but it still has followers. Journalist Timothy Egan, cowinner of a Pulitzer Prize, effectively lauded and adopted Winthrop as a spirit guide, a surrogate like Dante’s Virgil, on his tour through the Northwest in *The Good Rain*. “He predicted,” Egan noted of Winthrop, “that a regional style and outlook would evolve as the North Cascades were appreciated for their singular beauty.” That prediction was right.

Winthrop instigated a Northwest aesthetic. If the Hudson River School of painters of his era showcased scenic mountain ranges—the Andes, Catskills, Adirondacks, Rockies, and the Sierras—Winthrop delivered the Cascades to the page. That chain of mighty mountains, which runs from southern British Columbia to northern California, includes the highest glaciated peak in the contiguous states, Mount Rainier. Its snowy reflection arrested Winthrop vividly on Puget Sound, and its presence loomed over much of his arduous trip around its flanks. His account of a thunderstorm, a model piece of nature writing, recalls Thomas Cole and Albert Bierstadt in its dense atmospheric: “A gloomy purple storm lay over the Cascades, vaster than they.” Alongside his teenage Indian companion and their trio of mustangs—a packhorse, his own saddle horse, and one that Lo-kout rode bareback—all of them weary