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**NOT QUITE AMERICA:
ALONZO MARION POE IN THE WASHINGTON TERRITORY**

Submitted by

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BA Hons, Grad. Dip. Hum. (La Trobe)

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
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Statement of Authorship and Sources

This thesis contains no material that has been extracted in whole or in part from a thesis that I have submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

Signed:



Date: 17 March 2022

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Rand Careaga generously sent me copies of hard-to-get books on the United States Customs Service in Oregon and Washington for which he was series editor. Kimberly Toney, of the American Antiquarian Society kindly located and forwarded copies of the *Napa Reporter* not available in California which mention Poe. Dr John Lutz, University of Victoria, bravely lent me his microfilm copy of the *Daily Press*. Drew Crooks, South Puget Sound historian and author, read early drafts of the first and second chapters and helped ensure that geographic and chronological misapprehensions were minimised.

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Abstract

Alonzo Marion Poe (1826-1866) was once remembered as a newspaperman in the Washington Territory. In time memory of his role faded. Poe was a respected civic player and, while certainly a newspaperman, was principally concerned with developing the Territory in accordance with his vision of the American polity: a Whig vision of America as an exemplar nation for free trade and democracy.

The thesis aims to place Poe and his newspaper the *Overland Press* into the narrative of the formation of Washington Territory and in so doing enhance understanding of this formative period in America's Pacific Northwest. Placing Poe in the context of his time not only fleshes out the snippets of his life which appear in some histories, it also offers opportunities for new reflections on nationalism as expressed in the region.

The thesis explores Poe's family, early life, and the factors which encouraged him to become a settler in the Oregon Country at a time when its eventual national home was far from clear. It examines his role in establishing Tumwater as a settler-colonist. Poe's unanticipated venture in the California Gold Rush charged his determination to develop Olympia and create a separate American Territory north of the Columbia River. His involvement in the 1851 Cowlitz Convention, and the establishment of *The Columbian*, were instrumental in creating the Washington Territory.

The creation of Washington Territory led to a clash of approaches to colonisation during this period. Governor Isaac Stevens wanted to impose his vision as quickly as possible, while older settlers advocated a more democratic approach. Both wanted Indians moved and the British gone, while Poe and some others who had benefitted from engagement with both were content with more ambiguous relations. Poe's affinity for an urban lifestyle attracted him to Victoria, capital of the British Colony of Vancouver Island, where he found not only British subjects but lapsed American citizens who became an important part of his unique newspaper audience.

Poe entered into the theatrics of controversy which was good for circulation, but observers seemed unsure about his party affiliation. His criticism of Republicans led some to assume he was a Democrat, but his role in closing the *Pioneer and Democrat* convinced others he was a Republican. While changing political coats was not uncommon for some editors in the Territory, Poe was intentionally 'all things' to his readers while maintaining a consistent 'Old Whig' perspective after the Whig Party itself had disappeared.

The Civil War, provided Poe with the opportunity to create his own newspaper and also provoked him to editorialise on what it meant to be American, often by comparison with the English. While he was not a systematic political philosopher, his views on the nature of American democracy tapped into and encouraged sentiments present in his community. The thesis sets out to understand Poe's life in the context of the development of the Washington Territory. Poe's life in turn opens a new window to issues of governance, the press and political identity in the Washington Territory at its creation.

Abbreviations

HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
<i>Journal</i>	<i>Journal of the Council of the Territory of Washington</i> , followed by the session year.
<i>OHQ</i>	<i>Oregon Historical Quarterly</i>
<i>OP</i>	<i>Overland Press</i>
<i>PNQ</i>	<i>Pacific Northwest Quarterly</i>
US	United States of America
<i>WHQ</i>	<i>Washington Historical Quarterly</i>
Yale Series	William W. Miller collection, letters between W. W. Miller, I. N. Ebey and A. M. Poe, 1850-1859, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

Notes on Nomenclature

The word 'Indian' refers to the indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest, in keeping with the preference of the Nations and Tribes of Washington State < <https://ais.washington.edu/nations-and-tribes-washington-state> >. Because of variations in the spellings of individual Indian names in the nineteenth century, the usage here is that preferred by the relevant tribe.

The Colony of Vancouver Island and the mainland Colony of British Columbia were merged in 1866, after Poe had died. For simplicity, the term 'British Columbia' will be used to denote the mainland and island inclusive unless otherwise indicated. The largest town in the region was Victoria, initially the capital of Vancouver Island and later capital of the combined colony, and the goldfields were on the mainland.

Variations in surname spelling were not uncommon in the period. Alonzo Marion Poe occasionally used 'Powe' which was the consistent use of his father's generation.

Preface

One strand of the past is our family history. Understanding it can personalise history when we see how the past has acted on our present existence. If my mother had not worked on the complaints desk at Myer department store, she would never have met that suave salesman from the furniture department for example. My father was fostered out as a child and did not speak about this until I pressed him in my 20s. He often mentioned Edgar Allan Poe being on the family tree, but never explained how. I noticed that the story did not fit with what else he said of the Lyell family. 'Pop' was Bill Lyell, and his father was Bill Lyell, and before that was a Scottish ship's captain, and way before that was an unknown Spanish sailor escaping Sir Francis Drake who was shipwrecked off Ayrshire coast where the Lyells took him in. A wonderful, unverified, and probably allegorical story – and a long way from America.

My mother told me what she knew about her father-in-law - a fellow she knew as Al Poe – Alexander Marion Poe. I was sworn to secrecy. The excuse I found to raise it with my father was to get a copy of his birth certificate. He had changed his surname from Poe to Lyell the day before his marriage. Perfect. A tense chat followed. My father quickly concluded it with: 'Well see what you can find out and I'll tell you if it's true'. Mum broke the silence with a cure-all: 'Anyone for a cup of tea... ?'

It was not hard to find the name of my great-grandfather: Alonzo Marion Poe – not the fellow in this study. My ancestor was born thirty years after him. He grew hops near Sacramento, was elected sheriff in Placer County, California, but was forced to resign after some scandal. Grandfather Poe and a sister ran away from home and Al ended up as a vaudeville performer in New South Wales. When I searched for more, the only thing which kept coming up was this Washington Territory 'law man' whom I could see no connection to, but I was hooked. Who was this fellow?

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to find out.

As for my great grandfather, Alonzo Marion Poe, he was named after his uncle the Washington Territory 'law man'. My great-great-grandfather was the older Alonzo's youngest brother Alexander Hamilton Poe. Alexander passed up the opportunity to join Alonzo in the Washington Territory and remained in Missouri to look after their mother. After she died, he moved to California to live next door to his remaining brother Americus.

Aristocracy and the Democrat

I believe in aristocracy, though - if that is the right word, and if a democrat may use it. Not an aristocracy of power, based upon rank and influence, but an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky. Its members are to be found in all nations and classes, and all through the ages, and there is a secret understanding between them when they meet. They represent the true human tradition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos. Thousands of them perish in obscurity; a few are great names. They are sensitive for others as well as themselves, they are considerate without being fussy, their pluck is not swankiness but power to endure, and they can take a joke.

E. M. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy* (London: Edward Arnold 1951, 1962 edition), 73.

Dramatis Personae

Bagley, Rev. Daniel (1842-1905). Pennsylvania-born Methodist minister arrived in Seattle in 1860. Outspoken critic of slavery, commissioner to the Washington Territorial University. Employed Poe to survey and sell university lands. Seattle agent for *Overland Press*.

Bigelow, Daniel Richardson (1824-1905). Whig-Republican. Harvard-trained lawyer who arrived in northern Oregon in 1851. Served in the first three terms of the Territorial Council, often in common cause with Poe. Co-founded Olympia's first public school, Collegiate Institute and Methodist church. Promoted voting rights for women and civil rights for non-whites.

Bush, George (1779-1863). Black co-organiser/funder of Bush-Simmons party. Supported several neighbours for the trek and provided food from his farm to those in need when he settled on Bush Prairie. His exclusion from Oregon Country caused the group to settle north of the Columbia River.

De Cosmos, Amor (1825-1897). Businessman, photographer, journalist, and politician. Born William Alexander Smith in Nova Scotia. After time in the California goldfields, he moved to Fort Victoria where he became founding editor of *British Colonist* from 1858 to 1863 when he was elected to the Colony legislature. He became premier of British Columbia in 1872.

Douglas, Sir James (1803-1877). Fur trader and politician. Son of a Scottish merchant and free coloured woman. He worked for the North West Company and then the HBC, becoming Chief Trader, mostly located in what became Washington Territory. From 1851 he was Governor of the Colony of Vancouver Island. In 1858, he became governor of the Colony of British Columbia during the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush to prevent the mainland becoming US territory. He remained governor of both colonies until his retirement in 1864.

Eaton, Charles H. (1818-1876). Settled on Puget Sound in 1846. Captain of Eaton's Rangers during Puget Sound Indian-Settler War of 1855-56. Married Kalakala, daughter of Chief Leschi.

Ebey, Colonel Isaac Neff (1818-1857) Democrat. Born in Ohio, studied law in Missouri. Close friend of Poe and Miller with whom he worked in US Customs Service. Member of first session of Territorial Council.

Evans, Elwood (1828-1898). Whig-Republican. Philadelphia-born lawyer. Appointed first deputy collector of customs for Puget Sound in 1852 and secretary to Governor Stevens. Opposed martial law in 1856. Convinced most Territorial Whigs to become Republicans. Pioneer historian for Washington.

Hartshorn, Emma (1829-1872). Hamilton College educated schoolteacher, daughter of Rev Chancellor Hartshorn and house guest of the following in Napa. Married Poe in January 1863.

Hartson, Judge Chancellor (1824-1889). Whig-Republican legal practitioner, politician and investor, cousin of Rev Chancellor Hartshorn. Poe sought him out in California.

Henry, Dr Anson (1804-1865). Republican. Physician and politician, best known for his friendship with Abraham Lincoln. Received patronage appointments to Oregon Territory through Lincoln from 1852 onwards, first as an Indian agent and then as Surveyor General of Washington Territory.

Hewitt, Judge Christopher C. (1809-1891). Republican. Territorial Judge. Came to Oregon about 1852, settled in Seattle, 1855. Opposed Stevens' martial law in 1856. Appointed Chief Justice of Washington Territory by President Lincoln in 1861. First Master of Olympia Oddfellows.

Kendall, Bion Freeman (1827-1863). Democrat until martial law controversy in 1856 which he publicly opposed. Dartmouth educated lawyer appointed to Isaac Stevens' surveying party for the northern railroad and first Territorial Librarian. Appointed Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Washington Territory. Subsequently joined *Overland Press* and bought it from Poe in 1862.

Lander, Judge Edward (1816-1903). Whig. First Chief Justice of the Washington Territory. Imprisoned by Stevens for overturning his martial law order during the 'Indian Wars'. Lent funds to Kendall to purchase *Overland Press*.

Leschi, Chief (1808-1858). Initially friendly to American settlement but opposed the Medicine Creek Treaty Council of 1854. Militia was dispatched to apprehend him, initiating the Puget Sound War. He was tried and executed for the murder of a territorial militiaman Colonel Abram Moses.

Miller, William Winlock (1822-1876). Whig then Democrat. Businessman, public official in Washington Territory and friend of Poe. Moved to Oregon Territory in 1849. Appointed Surveyor and Inspector of Revenue for the Port of Nisqually in 1851, Quarter Master General 1857-61, and Superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1861. He was later mayor of Olympia.

Moses, Simpson P. (1822-1883) Whig. Appointed first Collector of Customs for Puget Sound in 1852. Replaced in 1853 by Colonel I. N. Ebey, who had been an assistant under him. Poe, Miller and Ebey worked with him and considered him incompetent and corrupt.

Murphy, John Miller (1839-1916). Republican. Editor and publisher. Settled in Olympia with his sister and brother-in-law. In 1856 he moved to Portland, Oregon, to learn the printing trade and in 1860 began the *Washington Standard*, which he owned and operated until 1912.

Poe, Americus Napoleon (1827-1906). Poe's younger brother who farmed his Whatcom claim and preceded him to Napa.

Prosch, Charles (1822-1913). Democrat. Editor and publisher. Moved to Washington Territory in the winter of 1857-58. Founding editor of *Puget Sound Herald*. Later purchased plant of *Overland Press* and used it to print *Pacific Tribune*. Commended Poe's cross-border business model but did not follow it.

Simmons, 'Colonel' Michael Troutman (1814-1867). Democrat. Leader of the Bush-Simmons group and the Tumwater community which they became. In 1850 he moved to Olympia to become postmaster. Governor Stevens appointed him an Indian agent in 1854 and he played a leading role in treaty discussions and subsequent enforcement.

Stevens, Governor Isaac Ingalls (1818-1862). Democrat. West Point graduate who served in the Corps of Engineers and as an officer during the Mexican War. He mapped a railroad route to the Northwest and was first Governor of Washington Territory from 1853 to 1857. From 1857 to 1861 he was Territorial delegate to Congress.

Introduction: Finding Alonzo Marion Poe

Alonzo Marion Poe was one of the earliest white American residents of Puget Sound in the United States Pacific Northwest (PNW). He arrived in 1846 and held many positions of trust while he was there. Prominent among them were membership of the Washington Territory Legislative Assembly, Public Printer and publisher and editor of the *Overland Press*. Bion Freeman Kendall, who had become editor of the *Overland Press*, wrote an appreciation of his friend when he moved to California in 1862, concluding: 'he leaves behind many friends ...'¹

Clarence Bagley, historian of the PNW, described Poe in 1906 as 'one of the pioneer newspaper men of Washington ... [whom] ... old Oregonians remembered with admiration.'² Poe died young, left no descendants and memory of him faded. Few subsequent historians noticed him before William Lang's 1996 study of politician William Whitlock Miller, and fewer since have paid him much attention.³ Despite the *Overland Press* under Poe's editorship having the largest circulation in the region, including in neighbouring British Columbia, no substantive evaluation of his life has yet been undertaken. This thesis seeks to address that omission, and to document Poe's life as a Territory-building newspaperman, to enhance understanding of this formative period.

This introduction surveys historical literature where Poe features, as well as thematic studies which relate to Poe's life. Building on existing scholarship, this thesis sets out to understand Poe's life in the context of the development of the Washington Territory. Poe's life in turn opens a new window onto issues of governance, the press and political identity in the Washington Territory at its creation and up to the middle of the Civil War.

¹ *OP*, August 25, 1862, 2.

² Clarence B. Bagley, "Our First Indian War," *WHQ* 1, no. 1 (Oct. 1906): 49.

³ William Lang, *Confederacy of Ambition: William Winlock Miller and the Making of Washington Territory* (University of Washington Press, 1996).

Poe became a newspaperman in order to shape a political role for himself without the backing of a political party. He advocated views on the emerging American polity in the region based on free-trade, hard work, education, material progress and a gentlemanly character rooted in an imagined English tradition of democracy. His unique life adds complexity and depth to our understanding of the pioneer press in Washington Territory and how early settler communities viewed themselves and their American identity.

This study aims to give context to Poe's life and suggests refinements to our understanding of settler colonialism, the role of frontier newspapermen and how the Civil War was perceived in the territory most closely engaged with Britain and furthest removed from the American capital. Poe saw himself as an American committed to the constitution and the union, but his new home in Oregon Country was not quite American. His aim was to make it so.

History and Biography: Life History

This thesis is a life history of Poe with a focus is on his public activity, which is better documented than his private life. Although biography and history are sometimes characterised as alternatives, the combination of biographical and historical analyses can add nuance to our understanding of the past.⁴ The method selected for a historical project needs to fit the purpose intended for it.⁵ Global microhistory links the particular (in this case, biography) to the general, glean information about an individual life and placing them in the context of large historical processes to bring these ideas together in a 'structured means of coping with the chaos of history.'⁶

⁴ Lawrence Goldman, "History and Biography," *Historical Research* 89, no. 245 (2016): 399-411. Biography is described as a 'middle path' in Daniel R. Meister, "The Biographical Turn and the Case for Historical Biography," *History Compass* 16, no. 1 (2018): 16.

⁵ John-Paul A. Ghobrial, "Introduction: Seeing the World Like a Microhistorian," *Past & Present*, 242. Supplement 14: 1-22 and Amy Stanley, "Maidservants' Tales: Narrating Domestic and Global History in Eurasia, 1600-1900," *The United States Historical Review* 121, no. 2 (2016): 437, 439.

⁶ Mark Gamsa, "Biography and (Global) Microhistory," *New Global Studies* 11, no. 3 (2017): 231-41.

Historian Penny Russell describes the dynamic this way: '[i]n biography, the context is important where it illuminates the life. In history, the life is important where it illuminates the context.'⁷ Individual lives can offer 'insights into the ways in which particular institutions and events and larger-scale social, economic and political developments were felt' by 'providing a way of accessing subjective understanding and experience.'⁸

As a 'life history', this study looks at Poe to probe what it meant to be American in the contested place which was the Antebellum PNW.⁹ While global history seeks to escape the limitations of Eurocentric and nation-based histories, Sebastian Conrad notes that a 'focus on individuals or small groups can lead to new insights into the processes of global change and how they frame the space for individual agency.'¹⁰ In contrast to the good sense of melding biography and history, the popular author Nigel Hamilton sees biography as a 'corrective' to the work of historians. This dichotomy seems exaggerated, and in listing the qualities of a biographer he includes compassion for the 'human dimension of history and achievement'.¹¹ That biography is a dimension of history seems a better way of expressing how both are mutually supportive ways to understand the past, and underpins the approach adopted in this thesis.

Poe in the Historiography of the Pacific Northwest

Recent thematic studies of the period (1845-1866) are a counterpoint to earlier 'pioneer' histories and augment biographical works. Poe is mentioned in some studies of the press, one study of frontier lawmen, and Lang's biography of William Winlock Miller (businessman, politician, and

⁷ Penny Russell, "Life's Illusions: The "Art" of Critical Biography," *Journal of Women's History* 21, no. 4, (Winter 2009): 154.

⁸ Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (London: Macmillan International Higher Education, 2019), 2.

⁹ Judith M. Brown, "'Life Histories' and the History of Modern South Asia," *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (2009): 587.

¹⁰ Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 15-16, 131.

¹¹ Nigel Hamilton, *How to Do Biography: A Primer* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2012), 66, 185, 197; Nigel Hamilton, "Biography as Corrective," in H. Renders, B. de Haan, & J. Harmsma (Eds.), *The Biographical Turn: Lives in History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 15-30, 66.

public official in Washington Territory). This thesis builds on Lang's work to place Poe in the context of his political networks, while integrating his life story with the insights of more general scholarship on the history of the PNW. Another recent work, Kent Richards' biography of Governor Isaac Stevens, does not mention Poe but complements Lang's biography of Miller, focussing on issues Poe confronted while in the Legislature, the 'Indian Wars' of the mid-1850s.¹²

Most historical works which mention Poe were written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Any historiographical survey of Washington Territory begins with Hubert Howe Bancroft's partial volume on Washington history, which is more accurately ascribed to Frances Fuller Victor.¹³ Victor combined oral history with Bancroft's system of indexing newspapers and primary documents, making these volumes useful in locating references. Bancroft and Victor were, however, primarily interested in laying out a broad sweep of apparently inevitable events and important players, as a part of a late nineteenth century boom in pioneer histories, tailored to an audience which had idealised its beginnings.¹⁴ Victor's *Washington* identifies Poe as an early settler in Tumwater, describes some of his appointments and notes the creation of *The Overland Press* in 1861. However, these snippets are not comprehensive and there is no discussion of Poe's impact.

In 1909 two new histories emerged: Clinton A. Snowden's *History of Washington* and Edmond Meany's *History of the State of Washington*.¹⁵ Snowden mentioned Poe and the significance of his actions during the Washington Legislature's winter session of 1855-56, when Governor Stevens

¹² Richards, Kent D. *Isaac I. Stevens: Young Man in a Hurry* (Revised edition. Pullman, Washington: Washington State University Press, 2016).

¹³ Hubert Howe Bancroft [and Frances Fuller Victor], *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft: History of Washington, Idaho and Montana, 1845-1889* (San Francisco Calif.: History Co., 1890); Kent D. Richards, "In Search of the Pacific Northwest: The Historiography of Oregon and Washington," *Pacific Historical Review* 50, no. 4 (1981): 419 – 429.

¹⁴ John Walton Caughey, "Hubert Howe Bancroft, Historian of Western America," *American Historical Review* 50, no. 3 (1945): 461-70. Caughey judges that Bancroft's failure to credit his helpers 'the greatest mistake of his life', 467; Chad Reimer, "'Historic Explorations Northward': Hubert Howe, Bancroft and the Beginnings of British Columbia History," *PNQ* 86, no. 3 (1995): 131-38.

¹⁵ Clinton A., Snowden, C. H. Hanford, Miles C. Moore, William D. Tyler, and Stephen James Chadwick, *History of Washington; the Rise and Progress of an American State*, (New York: Century History Co., 1909) and Edmond S. Meany, *History of the State of Washington*, (New York: Macmillan Co, 1909).

declared martial law. Snowden characterised the dispute as one of members abandoning party allegiances to vote according to whether they supported the governor personally. Poe and others who opposed martial law were involved in the press or militia.¹⁶ Snowden does not, however, reference the debates.

Edmond Meany dwelt at length, usually uncritically, on 'successful' pioneers such as Governor Stevens. Meany did not include Poe in his *History*, but elsewhere placed him at the 1851 Cowlitz Convention, arguing convincingly that this was the convention that influenced Congress to create a separate Territory from Oregon north of the Columbia River.¹⁷ Meany also published a list of Washington Territory newspapers including *The Overland Press*, crediting Poe's innovative role in establishing it.¹⁸ Later histories of Washington State do not mention Poe, as they are generally shorter works describing broad developments.¹⁹

Poe's time in Whatcom County, from 1853 to 1858 was mentioned in Lottie Roeder Roth's *History of Whatcom County*, created in 1926 as a 'mug book', as was Snowden's.²⁰ Roth's father knew Poe and employed him to 'plat' (map) the town in order to sell its land.²¹ Roth recorded Poe's appointment to the Territorial Convention but is incorrect regarding his place of birth and his wife.²² These errors were repeated in subsequent histories, until corrected by the Oregon State

¹⁶ Snowden, *History of Washington*, 4, 14-19.

¹⁷ Edmond S. Meany, "The Cowlitz Convention: Inception of Washington Territory," *WHQ* 13, no. 1 (1922): 3-19.

¹⁸ Edmond S. Meany, "Newspapers of Washington Territory (Continued)," *WHQ* 13, no. 4 (1922): 251-68.

¹⁹ Most recently Robert E. Ficken *Washington Territory* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2002) and Carlos A. Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History*. Revised and enlarged edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996). Dorothy O. Johansen and Charles M. Gates, *Empire of the Columbia: A History of the Pacific Northwest* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row, second edition, 1967) takes a regional view. David J. Jepsen and David J. Norberg, *Contested Boundaries: A New Pacific Northwest History*, (New Jersey: Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), is written for secondary students and informed by recent historiography.

²⁰ Lottie Roeder Roth, *History of Whatcom County* (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Pub. Co., 1926).

²¹ *The Land Ordinance of 1785* provided the authority and guidelines for mapping continental America, George W. Geib, "The Land Ordinance of 1785: A Bicentennial Review," *Indiana Magazine of History* 81 no. 1: 1-13. Poe would have needed relevant training and equipment to undertake this work.

²² Roth, *History*, 1: 126.

Government.²³ Some local histories saw Poe as a transient opportunist but some reassessment has occurred in recent years.²⁴ Others have sorted the complex land sale arrangements relating to his Donation Land Claim and detailed his standing as a 'civil engineer'.²⁵

Poe is almost invisible in local histories of Lewis and Thurston counties, where he spent the majority of his time in the Territory. He worked with Edmund Sylvester, founder of Olympia, to plat the town and was involved in the creation of two successful newspapers there. He is mentioned in the first history of Thurston County published in 1895, which relies on Bancroft with additional details probably sourced from local newspapers.²⁶ Gordon Newell included Poe in his humorous account of Washington State history, mirroring the mention of Poe by George E. Blankenship in 1923.²⁷

In 1903, Bagley created a listing of pioneer newspapers in Puget Sound which included Poe's *Overland Press* as well as the work of better-known publishers who were still publishing, John Miller Murphy and Charles Prosch.²⁸ In 1889 Prosch commented that 'Poe succeeded in making his paper popular both on Puget Sound and in Victoria [British Columbia], obtaining in the latter place a larger patronage than any journal on this side of the boundary ever before or since....'²⁹ Prosch's comment

²³ Notably Lelah Jackson Edson, *The Fourth Corner: Highlights from the Early Northwest* (Bellingham, Wash.: Whatcom Museum of History and Art, 1978). See 'Poe, Alonzo Marion', *Early Oregonian Search* accessed 5 June 2020 <https://secure.sos.state.or.us/prs/personprofile.do?recordNumber=106622> .

²⁴ 'Poe's Point Dedication' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTxOYGRZs6w>; Michelle Nolan, "Retired doctor wants park to honor Alonzo Poe forevermore," *Bellingham Herald*, accessed 22 May 2020 <https://www.bellinghamherald.com/living/seniors-aging/article33281991.html> .

²⁵ Ralph W. Thacker, 'Dan Harris Stakes his Claim'. Published by the author, September 30, 2008 and expanded March 30, 2012, accessed 9 June 2020 <http://dan-harris.info/stakes1.html>; Tim Ransom, *For the Good of the Order: The Braget Farm and Land Use in the Nisqually Valley* (self-published, 2020), records one of Poe's land deals. Jerry C. Olson, *Surveying North of the River, The Surveyors Associated with the Washington Survey General's Office in the Contract Era, 1851-1910* (Winter Creek Ranch, Ariel Washington, 2010, revised 2018). Brian L. Griffin, *Fairhaven: A history* (Bellingham, WA, Knox Cellars Publishing Company, 2015) summarised Poe's time in Whatcom.

²⁶ John C. Rathbun, *History of Thurston Co., Washington* (Olympia, Wash., 1895), 18, 115-116.

²⁷ Gordon R. Newell, *Rogues, Buffoons & Statesmen; the inside Story of Washington's Capital City & the Hilarious History of 120 Years of State Politics* (Seattle, Wash.: Superior Pub. Co., 1975); Gordon R. Newell, *So Fair a Dwelling Place: A History of Olympia and Thurston County Washington* ([Olympia, Wash.]: G. Newell and F.G. Warren, 1985). George E. Blankenship, *Lights and Shades of Pioneer Life on Puget Sound* (Seattle, Wash.: Shorey Book Store, 1972), 65.

²⁸ Clarence B. Bagley, "Pioneer Papers of Puget Sound," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 4, no. 4 (1903): 365-85.

²⁹ Quoted in Meany, "Newspapers (Continued)," : 262.

makes an examination of Poe's editorials essential. After Poe's resignation due to illness and several quick changes of ownership, Prosch acquired Poe's plant and built his successful *Pacific Tribune* on the *Press'* remains but focussed on an exclusively American audience. In so doing, he highlighted the uniqueness of Poe's cross-border perspective.

A partial portrait of Poe comes from the work of Arthur Beardsley, who identified Poe as a player in his never-published 'frontier justice' *magnum opus*.³⁰ Beardsley was thwarted in his efforts to construct a reliable portrait of Poe, but did include descriptions of his roles in Territorial Government and as a law practitioner in the Territory.³¹ In this case, magnifying one aspect of Poe's life created a blurred image, whereas a wider view reveals a complex tapestry of Poe as more than a 'frontier lawman'.

This historiography leaves much to explore. Poe's early death, mobility, and lack of close family in the Territory meant that there was no one to remember him.³² His two closest friends, Isaac Ebey and B. F. Kendall, predeceased him and his brothers were not involved in public life. While fellow newspapermen recorded snippets of Poe's life, they also reinterpreted their own past to fit with more triumphalist times and with their passing Poe became a name without a story.

Poe's American Identity

Prior to 1852, the Whigs were in the ascendancy nationally. The 'free soil' movement had expanded west with an anti-slavery and anti-black ethos and was prominent in the wider Oregon

³⁰ Arthur S. Beardsley, *Arthur Beardsley Papers: First Draft Manuscript, Etc. Arthur Beardsley's Correspondence Regarding Old Washington Attorneys and Judges: Letters Dated 1942 and 1943*. Arthur Beardsley's Correspondence Regarding Old Washington Attorneys and Judges. 1940, Gallagher Law Library, Special Collections Rare Folio KF354.W3 B44, University of Washington. The book manuscript is Folio KF354.W3 B43.

³¹ Arthur S. Beardsley, "Early Efforts to Locate the Capital of Washington Territory," *PNQ* 32, no. 3 (1941): 239-87, 272; Arthur S. Beardsley & Donald A. McDonald, "The Courts and Early Bar of the Washington Territory," *Washington Law Review & State Bar Journal* 14, no. 2 (1942): 65, 70.

³² Several cousins in the region knew they were related. Eva and Elsie Poe are described as 'relatives of Mr Alonzo Poe who took up a donation claim [at] Fairhaven; "Coming Events," *Bellingham Herald*, July 23, 1909: 4.

Country. In 1854, after the Washington Territory had been proclaimed, Poe was elected to the Territorial Assembly as a Whig candidate. The Whig platform reflected local interests as much as the national party and remained a basis of Poe's thinking after the party had ceased to exist. Many of their views were similar to the Territory's Democrats. The two main points of disagreement were over Democratic President Franklin Pierce's trustworthiness and the credibility of the Missouri Compromise of 1820. Democrats argued Congress had no power to adopt it and Whigs asserted that it was the guarantee that Washington would remain a free state.³³

Poe's vision for Washington was to bind it to the Union and Constitution in order to fund infrastructure and confer land ownership on migrants from the States who would be organised with a democratic government, free from federally imposed political officers. It was the new frontier of his generation, replicating the experience of his father in Missouri and his grandfather in Kentucky. As Chapter Four will show, Poe did not invoke the American Revolution or the heroes that he and his brothers were named after but claimed a Yankee and English vision of democratic government in a similar way to the Revolutionary generation.

On heading west, Poe made his home in the then disputed area of Puget Sound (see Figure 0.1). At the time it could have become either British or American territory. Poe's decision to move north of the Columbia River was motivated by a desire to meet up with an earlier group from Missouri who had made the same decision a few months before. When they arrived in the region, they discovered that the Provisional Government of Oregon excluded black settlers. Although the provision would only have applied to one member of the group, they all decided to move north – as did Poe once he found out what had happened.³⁴ Chapter One will explore this initial journey and arrival in more detail.

³³ *Puget Sound Courier*, May 19, 1855: 3, that is, a US state in which slavery was prohibited before the Civil War.

³⁴ Robert W. O'Brien and M. Lee, "Brooks Race Relations in the Pacific Northwest," *Phylon* 7:1 (1st Qtr., 1946): 21-22.



Figure 0.1. Oregon Country. (Copyright holder could not be located.)

One overarching question draws together the various strands of Poe’s story and his place in the history of the PNW: what did ‘becoming American’ mean to him? Poe might have assumed his Americanness to be a given, though what it meant was contingent. The thesis explores this fluidity and complexity in a geographic and political space that was ‘not quite America’. The region was home to a range of mobile people including US settlers, HBC operatives and Indian groups who had a range of visions for the future. Poe advocated a pro-Union vision of a future American state based on the assumption that land was there for the taking.

Race relations between settler communities and both Black and Indian populations were also imported with all their historical ambiguities. Poe’s approach was consistent with the relative

openness of American society north of the Columbia River.³⁵ The militia were used as the focus of conflict with the Indian populations through the 'Indian Wars' of the 1850s.³⁶ When not engaged in this way, the militia helped order society, reinforced democratic practice and earned members much-coveted land, but also reinforced the settler colonial logic of elimination.³⁷

Settler Colonialism and the Pacific Northwest

Settler colonialism is a useful model for examining the PNW of Poe's time. It is a distinct form of colonialism structured around the replacement an existing population in a colonised territory with a new society of settlers.³⁸ Scholars initially utilised settler colonialism as a framework to understand the territorial expansion inherent in the creation of settler societies such as Australia and US, but the concept has been applied usefully to other places and times.³⁹

The primary characteristic of settler colonialism is 'elimination' of the indigenous population in order to access land.⁴⁰ The model posits three groups: colonial settlers, indigenous others, and metropolitan elites. Domination is supported by the external metropole and may be pursued by a variety of means ranging from violent dispossession and murder to assimilation of indigenous people within a colonial framework. Elimination is justified in part because indigenous peoples are regarded as inferior and is enabled by settler views of imagined legal or cultural superiority. Settler colonialism contrasts with extractive colonialism, which entails conquest to use the existing population as cheap

³⁵ Darrell Millner, "George Bush of Tumwater: Founder of the First American Colony on Puget Sound," *Columbia Magazine* 4. no 8 (Winter 1994-1995): 14-19.

³⁶ Lisa Blee, *Framing Chief Leschi: narratives and the politics of historical justice* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

³⁷ Rowe, Mary Ellen, *Bulwark of the Republic: The American Militia in Antebellum West* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003), 143-157.

³⁸ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Basingstoke: Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2-15, 17.

³⁹ Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini (editors), *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism* (Routledge History Handbooks. London, [England], Routledge, 2017), 4.

⁴⁰ Patrick Wolfe, "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 no. 4 2006: 387-409.

labour and natural resources as raw material. As settler colonisers intend permanent occupation, it is an ongoing structure. At the same time, transitional forms of society can emerge in the dynamics between the three groups.⁴¹

While Poe wished to ensure that his new home became a fully American place, he resisted the imposition of force from the metropole. Poe believed the method of dispossession and land acquisition was unfair to Indians or dismissive of the will of settlers. Like many of his contemporaries, he built a pragmatic engagement with the British (whose forts dotted the region) and Indians in the same space but was clearly a settler colonist. His assumptions predisposed him to think with sympathy, if not equality, toward Indians and to express an affinity for the English. His engagement with Indians reflected George Washington's philosophy of 'expansion with honor' which, while at odds with the more aggressive approach taken by Democratic appointed Governor Stevens in the 1850s, still assumed American sovereignty.⁴²

When Poe settled in Puget Sound, there were more British than American settlers in the region.⁴³ The British did not directly contest Indian sovereignty and took possession of land for a string of forts, whereas American settlers expected to acquire all land held by either the British or the Indians and took possession in anticipation of the US Government confirming this action. With the fur trade in decline and harassment from some American settlers, the forts closed, and the land was eventually bought by the US.⁴⁴

For Poe and his contemporaries land acquisition was an assumption justified by the 'discovery doctrine' established in law before Poe was born. The concept was expounded by the United States

⁴¹ Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 7-11, 122 fn3.

⁴² Colin G. Calloway, *The Indian World of George Washington: the first president, the first Americans, and the birth of the nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 486 describes this as preferring negotiation of land succession and only go to war if diplomacy failed.

⁴³ Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*. 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 55-67.

⁴⁴ John S. Galbraith, "The British and Americans at Fort Nisqually, 1846-1859," *PNQ* 41, no. 2 (1950): 109-20; O. B. Sperlin, "Washington Forts of the Fur Trade Regime," *WHQ* 8, no. 2 (1917): 102-113.

Supreme Court in a series of decisions, most notably *Johnson v. M'Intosh* in 1823. Chief Justice John Marshall applied the way that colonial powers laid claim to lands belonging to foreign sovereign nations. European governments effectively had first right of purchase over non-European territory on the basis that the colonisers 'discovered' the territory. Thomas Jefferson was aware of this principle, which became the primary reason for the Lewis and Clark expedition to the Pacific Northwest in 1803. Pre-emption sanctioned European priority, but a complicating factor for Puget Sound was the competing interests of the HBC who asserted prior discovery.⁴⁵ For historians, the key issue for Poe's time is settler colonialism as a meta structure; but the experience of Poe and his contemporaries was complicated in that the PNW was still a transitional borderland. These places are 'ambiguous and often-unstable realms where boundaries are also crossroads, peripheries are also central places, homelands are also passing through places, and the end points of empire are also forks in the road.'⁴⁶ The future was far from certain.

Poe's attitude to both the British presence and pressing forward with Indian treaties reflects colonialism as being 'dynamic interactive politics and not just conquest'.⁴⁷ Resisting Stevens' authority was an exercise of local sovereign independence and evidence of James Belich's notion of settler colonial 'cloning', where frontier territories reproduced the democratic features developed in colonial America and institutionalised by the American Revolution. Specifically, these were representative assemblies, common law, white male suffrage and political decentralisation; all ideas which Poe embraced.⁴⁸ The confidence that the settlers had in their American institutions gave many the courage to resist Governor Stevens' declaration of martial law, explained in more detail in Chapter Two.

⁴⁵ See Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land Law and Power on the Frontier* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Lisa Ford, and Tim Rowse, *Between Indigenous and Settler Governance* (Abingdon, Oxon New York: Abingdon, Oxon New York: Routledge, 2013); Robert J. Miller, *Native America, discovered and conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, and Manifest Destiny* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers 2006).

⁴⁶ Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, "On Borderlands." *Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (2011): 338-61.

⁴⁷ Blee, *Framing Chief Leschi*, 23.

⁴⁸ Blee, *Framing Chief Leschi*, 24, Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 11, suggests that settler transition forms may sustain an understanding between the peripheries and the metropolitan cores. For competing narratives see;

In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner famously promoted the idea that American democracy was formed by the experience of the frontier.⁴⁹ The self-perception of the US as a special exemplar of freedom evolved from an earlier religious view of America's millennial destiny. However, the narrative runs against a global perspective of history which sees American uniqueness as overdrawn. Current scholarship sees developments as influenced by a range of transnational actors, events, ideas, and processes.⁵⁰ Poe did not express belief in the idea of Manifest Destiny or that the frontier experience was what made America unique; indeed, he aimed to *bring* America to his new home. He held a Whig sense of exemplar status for America's place in the world, based on the free expression of Yankee-English democracy and economic development freed from aristocratic control. He promoted American democracy in a situation where the British held *de facto* control. Poe moved in both American and British spheres, in Indian dominated territory, and exemplified Belich's 'settler transition' community (characterised as having 'an uplift in the standing in emigration'), with his own 'hierarchical' government in Washington City (later Washington DC) represented in Governor Stevens.⁵¹

James Belich posits a rhythm of settlement – boom, bust and export rescue - through the 'Anglo Wests', though his examples leave aside the PNW of Poe's time.⁵² His wide-angled history, however, assists in understanding some features in Poe's life. While until 1845, the westward

Marc James Carpenter, "Pioneer Problems: 'Wanton Murder,' Indian War Veterans, and Oregon's Violent History," *OHQ* 121, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 156-185. James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth, the Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 185-9.

⁴⁹ Frederick J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in United States History (1893)," *Historical Archives*. United States Historical Association, https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/historical-archives/the-significance-of-the-frontier-in-United_States_n-history. He accepts the experience as unique but replaces Bancroft's determinist explanation for an environmental one. H. V. Nelles, "United States Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword," *United States Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (Jun. 1997): 749-57.

⁵⁰ Ian Tyrrell, "American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History." *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (1991): 1031.

⁵¹ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth the Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 153. The *District of Columbia Organic Act* of 1871 established a new territorial government for the District of Columbia.

⁵² Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 88, 123.

movement of American settlers was internal migration, that may not be how all participants saw it.⁵³ Belich's discussion of the transfer of information through written form and his discussions of push and pull factors for migration are also helpful.⁵⁴ Belich is concerned with the 'settler revolution' and 'explosive colonization', which characterise Poe's time in the Territory, where he worked to encourage the dramatic growth of the settler population. Belich notes that later generations *looked back* to what they called the 'settler' era, and this is certainly what Poe's colleagues did in their later years. Belich's focus is the 'settler revolution', and the concept of settler 'transition' is helpful for understanding the mindset of Poe's generation and the older settlers' resistance to Stevens' top-down approach to territorial governance and expansion.⁵⁵

Frontier Press and Imagined Communities

Benedict Anderson famously proposes 'imagined communities' to explain nationalism, defining the nation as a socially constructed community, imagined by those who see themselves as part of that group.⁵⁶ In Anderson's words, 'print capitalism' shaped a national language, buttressed shared identity and sharpened the difference to distinct communities of readers beyond the borders. Poe's American community was concerned that the distant metropole might fall into the aristocratic tyranny which characterised the English system. At the same time, he saw true Englishmen as inclined to democratic government and used his newspaper to promote this to fellow citizens and the Englishmen who lived nearby in British Columbia.

⁵³ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 68.

⁵⁴ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 120-123, 128, 132.

⁵⁵ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 145-176, 347. See D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of United States: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History. Vol. 2: Continental United States, 1800-1867* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). Belich refers to D. W. Meinig's observation that the comparative rates of development in Oregon and Washington States, suggest that a 'settler spirit' coexisted with a more aggressive/enterprising 'Seattle spirit'.

⁵⁶ Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition (London, New York: Verso, 2006), 6-7.

An integral part of Poe's American identity was his role in the 'frontier press'. Jeff Pasley's "*The Tyranny of Printers*" provides a valuable model for understanding this aspect of Poe's life. It argues that American newspapers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were the 'linchpin' which 'embodied the parties.'⁵⁷ This role provided a means for men to rise from the manual labour of operating the printing press to influencing government, and in so doing they challenged the gentlemanly class, thus aiding democratisation. Pasley's depiction of the editor as politician helps to understand Poe, a politician-cum-editor. Poe worked in a more democratised environment, but wrote for a different kind of democratic-gentlemanly class.

While Pasley's suggestion that newspaper editors need to be understood as political operatives is central to understanding Poe, it has yet to be applied to histories of the frontier press in the PNW. Barbara Cloud identifies the attributes which made successful frontier newspapermen, such as attracting advertising and 'job printing'.⁵⁸ Cloud's books do not discuss Poe, though she considers the *Overland Press* in her thesis and judges Poe as 'more comfortable with politics than printing'.⁵⁹ This thesis argues that Poe's comfort in politics was central to what made him a 'frontier newspaperman', as Pasley's narrative anticipates. Poe's case confirms that newspapers could shape their 'imagined community' – not just reflect it. Cloud's discussion of the *Columbian*, a newspaper created to urge a sense of identity for the future Washington Territory, minimises its impact as an expression of the political will of the 1851 Cowlitz Convention.

Cloud focusses on the role of the 'booster press' in town growth; town newspapers were often focussed on boosting the town's reputation to attract further settlers.⁶⁰ David Dary, writing after Cloud but before Pasley, covers a similar period in *Red Blood & Black Ink* and makes the link between the

⁵⁷Jeffrey L. Pasley, "*The Tyranny of Printers*": *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 3, 12.

⁵⁸ A nineteenth-century term for printing other than books or newspapers, such as tickets, letterheads, posters, and timetables.

⁵⁹ Barbara Cloud, "Start the Presses: The Birth of Journalism in Washington Territory" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1979), 101.

⁶⁰ Cloud, *The Coming of the Frontier Press*, 67-83. Though her discussion suggests the press helped to fulfill manifest destiny, she notes that most people moved for economic reasons.

press and boosting efforts explicit.⁶¹ Boosterism in this context is the act of promoting ('boosting') a town with the aim of improving public perception of it, to attract migrants and customers, and was originally seen as a press activity. As Chapters Two and Three explain, Poe was a town booster in both Olympia and Whatcom and used the press for that objective. However, Elaine Naylor's study of boosterism in Port Townsend suggests a 'more inclusive definition of boosters' that encompasses the actions of the community rather than just printed literature and is helpful in understanding the role played by communities. Her work confirms that boosting was important to initiating urban development in the American West and builds on Richard C. Wade, who challenged Turner's thesis that town building was the capstone of western settlement.⁶²

Thomas Richards examines the words and actions of western migrants before 1846.⁶³ He argues that migrants left the eastern US because their economic prospects were poor and cared little whether Americans conquered the West. Poe, however, thought his new home should quickly become part of the US and his participation in the campaign to convince others reminds us that it was not a universally held proposition. Free land promised financial gain and, for many, a return to an idealised traditional agrarian family as well as perceived health benefits and an in-built desire to keep moving west as their ancestors had done.

Jean Barman imagines a different community on the western frontier.⁶⁴ She refers to the ideology sweeping America, arguing that 'Destiny' was on the nation's side.⁶⁵ Manifest destiny was added to the narrative by participants who survived the Civil War after the fact and saw themselves as part of the new United States. Regardless of rhetoric, many of Poe's contemporaries were

⁶¹ David Dary, *Red Blood & Black Ink: Journalism in the Old West* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1999).

⁶² Elaine Naylor, *Frontier Boosters: Port Townsend and the Culture of Development in the American West, 1850-1895* (Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014) and Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: the Rise of Western Cities, 1790 to 1830* (Oxford University Press: Harvard University Press, 1969).

⁶³ Thomas Richards JR, "'Farewell to America': The Expatriation Politics of Overland Migration, 1841-1846," *Pacific Historical Review* 86 no. 1 (February 2017): 114-152.

⁶⁴ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, integrates people who might otherwise not be considered worthy of inclusion.

⁶⁵ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 45.

captivated by earth-bound visions of health, agrarian prosperity, and economic freedom. While Poe wanted to ensure that Puget Sound did not become British territory, he experienced the benefits of trade with the British and their presence in the Territory.⁶⁶ Studies which address how the Civil War was perceived in the region are useful in understanding the context of Poe's expression of American identity in the *Overland Press*, but his familiarity with British Columbia adds to this scholarship.⁶⁷

On another level, Poe's life is an exemplar of movement within the Washington Territory and the networks of pressmen. Charles Prosch showed a late-life admiration for Poe's engagement with the Victoria based *Daily Press*, highlighting how the themes of mobility and frontier professions coalesced.⁶⁸ Willis A. Katz's survey of Washington Territory newspapermen and their relationships includes Poe and is helpful in placing him in those dynamics.⁶⁹ Poe's networking and multi-faceted interests were common amongst pressmen; they all promoted themselves, their views, and their towns.

Methodology and Structure

This thesis is based on extensive archival research with sources from Washington Territory during Poe's lifetime. A critical source is newspapers, in particular Poe's *Overland Press* which has not been extensively considered previously, together with some personal letters by or about Poe. Before Poe was an editor and publisher, he was a political and civic actor. Newspapers are sources of information, but editors like Poe were also players in their communities. Many had overt political affiliations, and all expressed strong opinions on issues of government and society. History is

⁶⁶ His preference for naming the territory 'Columbia' would have mirrored the British name for the region.

⁶⁷ James Robbins Jewell, "Left arm of the Republic: The Department of the Pacific during the Civil War" (PhD diss., West Virginia University, 2006). Scott McArthur, *The enemy never came: the Civil War in the Pacific Northwest*, (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Press 2012).

⁶⁸ Quoted in Edmond S. Meany, "Newspapers of Washington Territory (Continued)," *WHQ* 13, no. 4 (Oct. 1922): 262. Prosch (1822-1913) published the *Puget Sound Herald*.

⁶⁹ Willis A. Katz, "The Public Printer: Washington Territory, 1852-1889," (PhD diss. University of Washington, 1965); Willis A. Katz, "Benjamin F. Kendall, Territorial Politician," *PNQ* 49, no. 1 (1958): 29-39.

concerned with what happened, what people *thought* was happening and what community leaders wanted people to think about what was happening, as revealed to them through the means of mass communication. Poe's editorials are viewed in this way.⁷⁰ That said, the value of newspapers as sources needs to be tempered with an understanding of the publishers' aims, which typically included partisan promotion, their own business development and region-boosting in differing proportions. They remain primary sources for editorial opinion and, subject to those caveats, sources of information not found in other records.

The chapters which follow are broadly chronological, with discussion of key themes as they emerge. The primary documents include court, land and census records; minutes of the Territorial Legislature; newspaper items created by or about Poe; and a number of letters.⁷¹ Poe's editorials in the *Overland Press* express his views on events within the Territory and the nation. All documents indexed in library or archive catalogues which show Poe as the author or subject have been obtained from relevant libraries. These and a microfilm of the *Overland Press*, which is not available online, were, fortunately, secured prior to restrictions introduced into many US institutions due to COVID-19. The author's main disappointment has been the inability to visit the region and examine documents written by Poe's contemporaries, which might have revealed further details about him. Nonetheless, the sources obtained and the generally good access to other newspapers and records has provided a substantial collection of primary material. Through analysis of these sources, the thesis explores – for the first time in detail – the life of Alonzo Marion Poe. It also suggests some possibilities for further research.

Poe's most important professional relationships were with legislators and newspapermen who might be cast as friends or foes in newspaper articles. Several remarks show editors as entertainers building their audiences by creating a sense of conflict, as political rivals stirring their

⁷⁰ Adapted from Jerry W. Knudson, "Late to the Feast: Newspapers as Historical Sources," *Perspectives on History* 31, no 7 (October 1993). Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann, *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth and Twentieth Century History* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

⁷¹ Detailed in the bibliography.

readers as much as their opponents. Friends could turn into courtroom adversaries over money. Poe's ability to maintain productive relationships across these divides indicates his pragmatism and convivial manner. The one exception to this was Poe's unrelenting pursuit of President Lincoln's would-be friend and adviser Dr Anson Henry, discussed in Chapter Three.

Historian Greg Dening advocates imagination as a method to fill the gaps in historical knowledge, while seeking to recover the past *in its own terms*, and then to consider what a modern reader might expect from that experience. He sees history as cross cultural and advocates trust and imagination to hear what is unsaid.⁷² 'Imagination', he suggests, 'is the ability to see those fine-lined and faint webs of significance.'⁷³ This thesis will attempt such an approach where it may prove helpful.

Chapter One explores Poe's family, early life, and the factors which encouraged him to become a settler and civic actor. His diversion to the California Gold Rush focussed his resolve to develop the PNW. Poe's subsequent involvement in the 1851 Cowlitz Convention and the establishment of the *Columbian* were outcomes of this re-commitment and instrumental in creating the Washington Territory. Chapter Two covers Poe's life in Whatcom, which he represented in the Territorial Legislature. There he argued for issues which supported development, free-enterprise and fairness for women in financial stress. He was also Secretary of the Whatcom Wharf Company, which was behind much of the town's development; promoted Whatcom as a destination for would-be gold miners aiming for British Columbia; and objected to Governor Stevens' aggressive Indian policies.

Becoming a newspaperman was important to Poe and is the focus of Chapter Three. It represented a combination of economic opportunity and a desire to play a civic role in his developing urban community. His actions were similar to other newspapermen of this period, with two exceptions: his party, the Whigs, were a spent force, and he already had experience in governance

⁷² Greg Dening, *Readings/Writings* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1998), 101, 111.

⁷³ Greg Dening, "Empowering imaginations," *Contemporary Pacific* 9, no. 2 (1997): 419, referring to Bernard Bailyn *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (New York: Alfred A Knof, 1986) who preferred 'marchlands' to 'frontier'. The picture is complex, see Dening, *Readings/Writings*, 166.

and as a legislator. The issues he editorialised were consistent with the views he expressed during his membership of the Legislature. The final chapter explores Poe's views of what it meant to be American through his reflections on the Civil War and American engagement with the English. His editorials ended in September 1862 when the outcome of the war was far from clear. The conclusion outlines Poe's life in California, where his activities echoed those of his earlier life.

The thesis sets out to understand Poe's life in the context of the development of the Washington Territory. Poe's life in turn opens a new window to issues of governance, the press and political identity in the Washington Territory at its creation and up to the Trent Affair. Poe became a newspaperman to shape a political role for himself without the backing of a political party. He advocated views on the emerging American polity in the Washington Territory based on free-trade, hard work, education, material progress and a gentlemanly character rooted, in an imagined English tradition of democracy. Poe's unique life adds complexity and depth to our understanding of the Pacific Northwest and the views of early settlers about their American identity.

Chapter One: Apprentice on the Road to Cowlitz

Alonzo Marion Poe probably awoke early on Tuesday, 6 May 1845. 'Marion' was a naive 19-year-old eager for adventure with nothing keeping him in his Missouri home.¹ John Lemmon, leader of what became known as the Walden-Lemmon group, had employed Marion to look after the cattle, negotiate with Indians and provide some muscle for his trek on the Oregon Trail. Like the growing number of people making the journey, Lemmon was aiming for the fertile Willamette Valley south of the Columbia River in the far-off Oregon Country - then not quite America.²

This chapter tells the story of Poe's journey from Missouri to the Oregon Country and how he helped turn part of that borderland region into the Washington Territory. It argues that Poe's family background and early life disposed him not only to become a settler, but also to participate in the democratic institutions of his community. This phase of Poe's life was an apprenticeship for working the institutions of American democracy: free enterprise, elected office and the press. His 'master' was Michael T. Simmons, founder of the first American settlement on Puget Sound.³

Settlers aimed for the secure and fertile Willamette Valley to settle in an American community, away from British control. When Poe arrived in October 1845, northern Oregon Country was jointly claimed by the US and Britain. When Poe joined an earlier Missouri travelling party, the Bush-Simmons party, in the region the following summer, he found a community of less than three

¹ Adventure was the motivation for young men trekking west according to Antonio B. Rabbeson, 'Growth of towns: Olympia, Tumwater, Portland and San Francisco. Olympia, Washington', 1878. BANC MSS P-B 17, Berkeley Library, University of California, 1.

² The Lemmon party trek is described in Sarah J. Cummins, *Autobiography and Reminiscences* (La Grande printing Company, La Grande, Oregon, 1914), 31-32, 46, 67; Mrs M. J. Allen in *Oregon Journal* July 18, 1925 reprinted in Fred Lockley (ed. Mike Helm), *Conversations with pioneer women* (Eugene, Or.: Rainy Day Press, 1981), 141-4. Poe was taller than average at 6 foot (1.82 m), with a dark complexion brown hair and hazel eyes; AR82-1-12-5265 Military Department, Indian War Muster Rolls, 1855-1856, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives, <http://digitalarchives.wa.gov>, accessed 3 November 2021.

³ John C. Rathbun, *History of Thurston Co., Washington* (Olympia, Wash., 1895), 7-13, calls it 'the first American settlement north of the Columbia River.'

dozen which had replicated an American system of governance and welcomed Poe as someone who would keep the wheels of that machinery turning.

Poe's Family Background

Poe was the second child and eldest of three sons, born in 1826 in Clay County, Missouri, three years after his sister was born in Kentucky.⁴ His parents, Margaret and William Powe, had migrated with extended family to the frontier of their day to escape the poverty of Garrard County, Kentucky, repeating the course of his grandfather's generation who left Virginia in the 1790s after serving in the Revolutionary War.⁵ Poe's forebears were English about two generations before his father William.⁶ Escape from mostly economic constraints to a new land of promise was a theme in the family's story. Poe's maternal ancestors came from New England. His mother was a widow with two children (Aristippus and Arathusa) when she married William Romulus Powe in 1817. William continued to give his children 'A' names but changed the theme to American politics for his sons.⁷

Poe's father worked out that acquiring and selling land was more profitable than farming it. William taught Alonzo surveying, provided his son with a marketable skill, and gifted him surveyors' tools and a familiarity with land law. A more profitable business was selling home-made whiskey to the local Indians. Although it was an offence, the fines were small enough to be considered a cost of

⁴ There are no records for children born between the time of his parents' marriage in 1817 to the birth of Agnes, suggesting infant deaths, an indication of poor circumstances as is his father's 1812 War service as a paid 'substitute', where a man obliged to serve could pay someone to meet that obligation.

⁵ Small farmers and artisans made that trek led by Rev. Lewis Craig and Captain William Ellis of the Baptist Church in Spotsylvania County Virginia and their neighbours. George W. Ranck, "'The Travelling Church": an Account of the Baptist Exodus from Virginia to Kentucky in 1781.' *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 79, no. 3 (1981): 240-65 [Edited version of 1910].

⁶ The family were aware that a 'cousin' (identified as John Poë) fought for the British in the Revolutionary War.

⁷ 'Brown Surname,' Wadleigh-Brown-Plymale-Bixby, accessed 2 December 2021, <http://www.ryanwadleigh.com/brown2.html>

operating a busy distillery. A William Powe (either Poe's father or his father's cousin) was convicted of selling liquor to Indians about 1840 and fined accordingly.⁸ Poe's subsequent views against selling liquor to Indians were formed in this environment.

Poe also inherited a militia tradition. His grandfather had enlisted in Virginia during the Revolutionary War, his father had been a militia member in the War of 1812, and his youngest brother joined the Enrolled Missouri Militia before it was required during the Civil War.⁹ The obligation was a national necessity in the context of the small standing army. It was variously fuelled by patriotism, access to alcohol and potential access to land as a reward for service in battle and was important in shaping militiamen's expectations of democratic organisation as officers were often elected.¹⁰ The militia experience had a particular impact on Poe's father who, with other veterans of the Battle of New Orleans, carried antipathy for General Andrew Jackson, who had led them and became president in 1829. The Whig Party was formed in 1834 by opponents of President Andrew Jackson and Jacksonian Democrats. Led by Henry Clay, their name derived from the English antimonarchist party and portrayed Jackson as undemocratic 'King Andrew'.¹¹

Poe's family was not unusual in naming male children after American heroes. 'Marion' honoured General Francis Marion, the 'Swamp Fox' of the American Revolution, who, after George

⁸ Missouri Circuit Court Records 1839-1846, described in letter from Eva Monnett to Leon Lyell 19 August 1992, in author's possession. Court records are unindexed. William E. Unrau, *White Man's Wicked Water: The Alcohol Trade and Prohibition in Indian Country, 1802-1892* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas), 1996.

⁹ 'War of 1812 Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files,' database and images, Fold3 accessed 6 December 2020 <https://www.fold3.com/image/646228105-646228169>; images of bounty-land warrant WO16486 and widow Mary Jane Powe's pension claim WC34824, service of William R. Powe (Private, Captain William Wood's KY Militia), National Archives Catalog ID: 564415, Record Group 15, Roll RG15-1812PB-Bx2765, National Archives, Washington, D.C and Service Cards, Box 66, Civil War, 1861-1865, card for Alexander H. Poe, Enrolled Missouri Militia, 89th Regiment, Company B, Office of Adjutant General Missouri.

¹⁰ Mary Ellen Rowe, 'The Sure Bulwark of the Republic: The militia tradition and the Yakima War Volunteers' (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 1988): 1-7, 122, 169, 396; Ryan Sturdevant, 'The Indian Wars in the Pacific Northwest 1855-1858' (MA diss. University of Oklahoma, 2012): 2, 21.

¹¹ See Chapter 9 'War in the South and the Battle of New Orleans', in Edward Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015).

Washington, was the second most popular Revolutionary War hero of the time.¹² Poe's younger brother was named Americus, a penname of Federalist Alexander Hamilton (1755/7 – 1804), with the seemingly anomalous middle name Napoleon. The construction may be a reminder that Americus criticised Napoleon, making him a warning against tyranny.¹³ Their youngest brother, Alexander Hamilton, underlined the Federalist message. Alonzo's father had also named himself, adopting the middle name Romulus, probably to ensure he was not confused with his cousin William and as a nod to the separation of powers providing protection against tyranny.¹⁴

Poe's education shaped his view of America and the world. The Missouri Constitution of 1820 provided that 'one school or more shall be established in each township ... where the poor shall be taught gratis.' There was also a private system for people of means, such as the Powe family.¹⁵ Poe may have shown promise as a boy and been educated accordingly. Those who went to school, and family members who read their history textbooks, were taught that American history began in New England with the expression of English democracy free from aristocratic government.¹⁶ Years later Poe would echo these ideas in the *Overland Press*.

William was involved in local politics and community building. In 1822, he was one of five commissioners appointed to select the site for the Clinton County seat and a founding member of the

¹² Francis Marion served in the Continental Army and South Carolina militia during the Revolutionary War and founded modern guerrilla warfare. Hugh F. Rankin, *Francis Marion: the Swamp Fox* (New York: Crowell, 1973).

¹³ Alexander Hamilton, *Alexander Hamilton Papers: Speeches and Writings File, -1804; 1797; Jan. 27-Mar. 2, "The Warning," by Americus*. 1797. Manuscript/Mixed Material. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/mss246120243/>. The warning was against the excesses of Napoleon. Transcript of the first in the series is at <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-20-02-0315>. It is possible that 'Napoleon' may reference the Louisiana Purchase which provided the opportunity for westward expansion. Both options tie the name to ideas about America.

¹⁴ Romulus founded the Roman senate, regarded as a model for American ideas of the separation of powers. David Bederman, *The classical foundations of the American Constitution: prevailing wisdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ *The History of Clinton County, Missouri* (St. Joseph, Mo.: National Historical Co., 1881), 66.

¹⁶ Abram C. van Engen, 'The Rise of National History,' in *City on a Hill: A History of American Exceptionalism* (New Haven; London Yale University Press, 2020).

County Freemasons in 1848.¹⁷ Freemasons provided social support for those in need and were often a vehicle for the social advancement of merchants and artisans. Although most of Alonzo's later Washington Territory associates were Freemasons, he chose to join the less politicised Oddfellows, which was the usual choice for those with more traditional religious beliefs, including Methodists, and progressive inclinations.¹⁸

The Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) was the largest denomination in the country.¹⁹ It was not aligned to any political party but became a political force in its own right. In 1844 its Southern wing separated over the issue of slavery to become the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Poe and his family were Whig supporters and Methodists. One of the stories spread through the *Methodist Magazine* in 1831 was that American control over Oregon Country was justified because the Indians (supposedly) expressed a desire to learn about Christianity. Poe would have been exposed to this idea and, whether he believed it or not, it created positive expectations about occupation. However, the MEC saw English-Protestant civilisation as superior to Indian society, and in the Oregon Country, Methodists generally mixed the HBC's pragmatism with American ideas of control and land acquisition.²⁰

¹⁷ Steve Olsen, Clay County Archives, email to author, February 2, 2019, in author's possession, and *The History of Clinton County, Missouri*: St. Joseph (Mo.: National Historical Co., 1881), 170-172.

¹⁸ David G. Hackett, 'Anti-Masonry and the Public Sphere, 1826-1850' *That Religion in Which All Men Agree: Freemasonry in American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015).

¹⁹ The MEC provided a focus for otherwise separatist groups around common social issues. N. O. Hatch, *The Democratization of Christianity and the Character of American Politics*. 2011 and Howe, Daniel Walker, 'The Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North During the Second Party System,' *The Journal of American History*, 77, No. 4 (1991): 1216-1239.

²⁰ Cameron Addis, 'The Whitman Massacre: Religion and Manifest Destiny on the Columbia Plateau, 1809-1858,' *Journal of the Early Republic*, 25: 2 (Summer, 2005): 224, 231.

Heading for Oregon Country

'Old [John] Lemmon' had left New York after he and his family were 'attacked with lung fever' in early 1845.²¹ His doctor told him to go to Oregon Country, so he sold his house and went to St Joseph, Missouri, to buy supplies for the six-month trek. There he met Poe. St. Joseph was the last supply town on the Missouri River and the starting point for wagon trains heading west. Poe's family had land in both Buchanan and adjacent Clinton County, so St. Joseph would have been the place for the Poe to seek opportunity - whether selling provisions to travelling parties or looking for the right chance to join one. Poe's subsequent actions show that he intended to 'catch-up' to the earlier Bush-Simmons party – a group of Poe's Missouri neighbours who had left the previous season. The reason he did not leave with them is unknown. He also did not join a much larger group which included two cousins of his extended family in 1845.²² Poe's family could have funded his participation, but they may have been unwilling to do so, making paid employment Poe's only option. Bush was older than the rest of his group and was not permitted to own land in Missouri because his father was black. Poe's neighbour Simmons, with his extended family, joined Bush's family and they helped poorer neighbours to take part in the trek.²³

If the prospect of settling with the Bush-Simmons party encouraged Poe, the trek was attractive for other reasons. Despite the opportunities provided in supplying wagon trains, the economy of Missouri had slumped.²⁴ Poe's father had acquired several lots of land in the region but

²¹ Cummins, *Autobiography*, 21. The condition is pyrexia. Groups left in the spring and arrived in Oregon the following autumn.

²² Hardin Martin and his sister Elizabeth Martin Knighton. 'The Organizational Journal of An Emigrant Train of 1845 Captained by Solomon Tetherow', (Typescript, Lane County Pioneer-Historical Society, Eugene, Oregon, 1960): 22, 30.

²³ Ezra Meeker, 'George [Washington] Bush and the Human Spirit of Westward [Expansion],' *The Museum Gazette*, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, National Park, Service, U.S. Department of the Interior [nd], accessed 20 November 2020 https://www.nps.gov/jeff/learn/historyculture/upload/george_washington_bush.pdf . The original manuscript is in the University of Washington Archives.

²⁴ Dorothy B. Dorsey, 'The Panic and Depression of 1837-43 in Missouri,' *Missouri Historical Review* 30 no. 2 (1936), 132 – 161. Land prices boomed before a depression. Voters blamed President Jackson.

would have been affected by the downturn. Trekking was also in Poe's blood. In addition to 'pull' factors, a 'push' factor may have been family disharmony. In 1849 Alonzo's mother obtained a divorce from William for desertion, the dynamics of which were likely to have been building over time. This shaped Poe's sympathy for the financial difficulties of women facing divorce.²⁵

Sarah Cummins' reminiscences, compiled from her diary of the trek with reflections (mostly about patriotism) written five decades later, provide some insight into Poe's character. He enjoyed shooting small animals to pass the time, which meant his ammunition was often low or exhausted. One morning Lemmon called Poe to help him retrieve a cow that had fallen behind. After finding the cow, they ambled back to the wagons but noticed a group of Indians behind them. Poe rode out to chat, perhaps confident in his ability to charm. As they spoke, one Indian held Poe's horse while two others slipped his feet from the stirrups. Too frightened to speak and with no bullets in his gun, Poe did not think to bluff them. One Indian was about to push Poe from his horse, but Lemmon galloped towards them and cracked his whip across the Indian's hands, then gave Poe's horse a whack and told him to hang on. Campfire chats repeated the story at Poe's expense and 'improved the general mood' for the rest of the journey; apparently Poe took himself rather seriously.²⁶ Cummins describes Indians with a sense of otherness, and highlights Poe's embarrassment at not having any ammunition.

The story of the Bush-Simmons party is recounted in several places.²⁷ Bush inherited wealth, was older than the other trekkers and had wanted to settle in Missouri after his late-in-life marriage. Simmons was Bush's friend and brought his own extended family. Simmons was elected the party's 'colonel' and regarded as the community's leader for the rest of his life. On reaching The Dalles, they learned about the Oregon Provisional Government's *Black Exclusion Law*; white members of the group

²⁵ 'Margaret Powe plaintiff against William R. Powe, defendant, 4 September 1849, Circuit Court of Clinton County Record Book, unpaginated; Norma Basch, *Framing American divorce: from the revolutionary generation to the Victorians* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press 2001).

²⁶ Cummins, *Autobiography*, 5, 31-32.

²⁷ Ezra Meeker, 'George [Washington] Bush' and 'Puget Sound the Past and Present', *The Columbian*, September 25, 1852: 2, framed the story at an early date.

were welcome, but not Bush because he was black.²⁸ The group did not abandon Bush, however, and moved north of the Columbia River, seeking shelter for the winter at the HBC's Fort Vancouver, out of the effective reach of the Provisional Government (this is not the Vancouver of present-day Canada, see Figure 1.1). Although the region was 'jointly occupied' by Britain and America, the HBC discouraged Americans from moving north of the Columbia River. Dr John McLoughlin, superintendent of the HBC's Columbia Department, though was sympathetic and permitted them to remain. This kindness established positive relations with the American settlement which, ironically, later became instrumental in removing the British from the region.

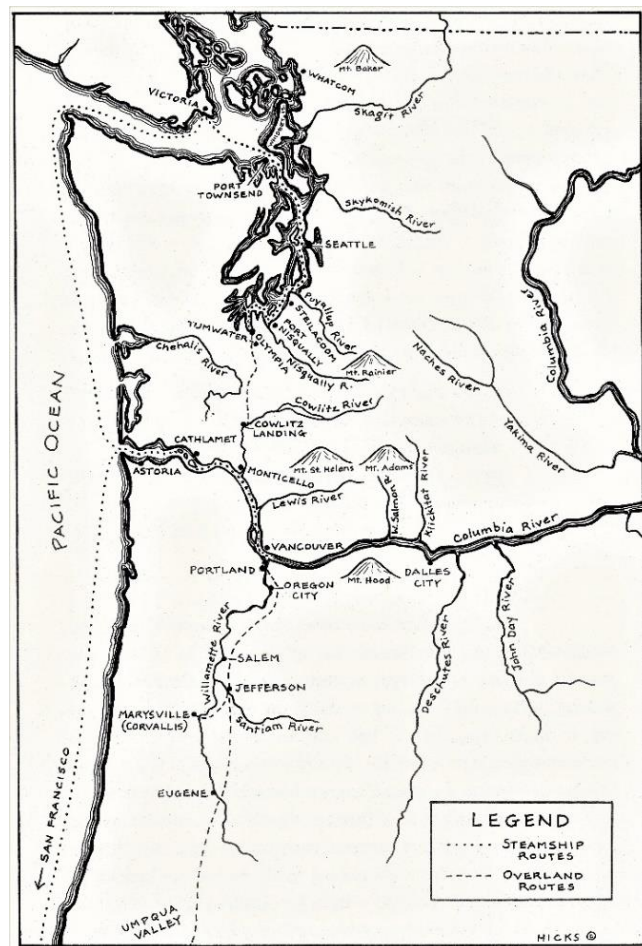


Figure 1.1. Population Centres in Oregon Country. From William Lang, *Confederacy of Ambition* page 24. (Copyright holder could not be contacted.)

²⁸ The Dalles, on the south side of the Columbia River marked the end of the Oregon Trail and was an HBC site.

American Settlement North of the Columbia River

In the spring of 1845, Simmons settled the group just south of Puget Sound. By October, five families and six single men had made provisional land claims near a waterfall of the Deschutes River, just south of what later became Olympia. They named the settlement 'New Market', signifying it, ungratefully, as competitor to the HBC at nearby Nisqually. Simmons constructed a sawmill and a grist mill, later naming it Tumwater, combining 'Tum' (Chinook Jargon) and 'water' (English), meaning waterfall.²⁹

Poe learned that the Bush-Simmons party had gone north when his own Walden-Lemmon party reached Dalles in October 1845.³⁰ In view of the impending winter, Poe stayed in an established community (possibly with his cousins) which could provide food, lodging and some capacity to work for his living in a barter economy. Poe may have had some specific understanding or relationship with Simmons, but a reunion would have to wait until the spring. The winter gave Poe time to mull over his plans, suggesting his decision to move was well-considered.³¹

Early on, Poe became involved with community desire to prevent Indians from receiving alcohol by either gift or purchase. The Provisional Governor saw Oregon's prohibition law (1844) as a 'high stand', reflecting public sentiment influenced by the MEC and HBC, but the bill had stalled over whether it would be valid to make provisions for non-citizens prior to Oregon becoming an American territory. This was the context for a petition which Poe signed soon after arriving in the Willamette

²⁹ 'Chinook Jargon' was the pidgin language of the region, linking Indigenous groups to one another and settler groups. The fur trade helped disseminate it into the wider PNW. See 'Chinook Jargon (Chinuk Wawa)', *The Oregon Encyclopedia* (Oregon Historical Society) accessed 21 October 2020 https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/chinook_jargon/#.X4_jbdAzZPY; Gordon R. Newell, *So Fair A Dwelling Place: A History of Olympia and Thurston County*, Washington (Olympia: The Olympia News Publishing Co., 1950): 2-7.

³⁰ Cummins, *Autobiography*, 55. Poe, Alonzo Marion, 'Donation Land Claim File 193', Records of the Bureau of Land Management, Oregon & Washington Donation Land Files: 1851-1903, Olympia Land Office.

³¹ Bush served in the 1812 War in the Battle of New Orleans as waiter to officers of the East Tennessee Militia, Byron and Samuel Sistler, *Tennesseans in the War of 1812*, (Nashville, TN, Byron Sistler and Associates, 1992): 104. Poe's father was in the same Battle which may have been a point of connection.

Valley, urging the Government to ban the sale of liquor to Indians.³² Those who signed were concerned with public safety and access to Indian labour. Most were community leaders and Poe's ready engagement shows his inclinations had been shaped by his background. The December 1845 Government session prohibited gifts of liquor to Indians.³³

In the meantime, in August 1845 Simmons was elected a Territorial judge by the Provisional Government and a democratic system was established in the Tumwater community, which ideally suited Poe's ambitions.³⁴ The next documented appearance of Poe is in June 1846, where he signed election returns as County Clerk for the huge Lewis County north of the Columbia, though the only distinctly American settlement was Tumwater.³⁵ As an elected official, Poe required some standing in the community, and in this case Simmons' support.³⁶ Poe's education would have suggested him for the role, and he must have expressed a desire to accept it. While Simmons was recognised for his leadership and organisational skills, the master recognised his apprentice's better education and superior abilities when it came to record keeping.

About the same time, the US and Britain signed the *Oregon Treaty* defining the northern US border as 49 degrees north, excluding Vancouver Island.³⁷ The treaty allowed the US to impose import regulations on HBC vessels in Puget Sound.³⁸ Poe filed a preemptory land claim in the expectation that

³² Papers of the provisional and territorial government of Oregon, 1841-1859; Washington State Library NW Micro 353.9795 OREGON 1951 1620. Information on other settlers comes from the US Federal Census of 1850. His signature is between others living in Yamhill County where his cousins (who did not sign the petition) lived.

³³ Oregon, and La Fayette Grover. *The Oregon Archives: Including the Journals, Governors' Messages and Public Papers of Oregon, from the Earliest Attempt on the Part of the People to Form a Government, down to, and Inclusive of the Session of the Territorial Legislature, Held in the Year 1849*, (Salem, Oregon: A. Bush, Public Printer, 1853), 146; John E. Caswell, 'The Prohibition Movement in Oregon: Part 1, 1836-1904,' *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 39 no 3 (Sep., 1938), 240-142.

³⁴ Poe may have assisted in this process. Oregon, and La Fayette Grover. *The Oregon Archives* (Salem, Oregon: A. Bush, Public Printer, 1853), 119.

³⁵ Under the Provisional Government the clerk served the courts. See Oregon Secretary of State, accessed 5 November 2020 <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/records/county/Pages/offices-duties.aspx>.

³⁶ See Clinton A. Snowden. *History of Washington* (New York: Century History Company, 1909) V3: 61-2.

³⁷ Concluded 15 June and proclaimed by the President 5 August. 'Oregon Treaty', HST 325 - U.S. Foreign Relations to 1914 (MSU), accessed 27 November 2020, <http://projects.leadr.msu.edu/usforeignrelations/items/show/42>.

³⁸ Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 55.

Congress would retrospectively legitimise the Provisional Government's law through Indian treaties and grant title once the area became an American territory.³⁹ To gain title, claimants would have to reside on and farm the land for four years. Poe and his contemporaries' general lack of engagement with Indians suggests he was not just complicit, but active in the dispossessive structures of settler colonialism. The mindset is an example of Wolfe's 'logic of elimination', focussed on access to land, where the settler colonial process destroys indigenous societies to the extent required for settler possession of the land.⁴⁰ The land claims enjoyed a robust speculative trade in which Poe engaged.⁴¹

Poe built a cabin after February 1847, like most men determined to make a home in the area.⁴² The confirming Oregon *Donation Land Act* of 1850 indicated the scheme would end 1 December 1853. Eligibility was granted to 'white settlers ... American half-breed Indians included, above the age of 18 years, being a citizen of the United States...'. Territorial Delegate Samuel Thurston told Congress that extinguishing Indian title was the first step to settling Oregon's land question.⁴³ His lobbying led Congress to act as if Indian treaties were a mere formality. However, the process would be drawn out after several Indian groups proved to be tough negotiators.⁴⁴ So, although dispossession was seen as inevitable, the negotiating process was contingent and would soon become forced. Both the Provisional and Territorial Government Law excluded blacks and Hawai'ians from obtaining land under the Act, reflecting the Oregonian view that neither slavery nor blacks had a place in their America. It

³⁹ County Record, Lewis Co OR Vol 4 Page 099, Dec. 2nd, 1846. The land is about 16 miles south of Tumwater. A second claim northeast of that is referred to as adjacent to a claim by Andrew Moses recorded Sept. 24, 1852. Thurston County First Record Book, 1852-1857: 17. Washington State Archives, Digital Archives, accessed 12 November 2021, <http://digitalarchives.wa.gov>.

⁴⁰ Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," (2006), 388; Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London; Verso, 2016), 33-37.

⁴¹ Gray H. Whaley, "Oregon, Illahee, and the Empire Republic: A Case Study of American Colonialism, 1843-1858," *Western Historical Quarterly* 36 no. 2 (Summer, 2005), 159-160.

⁴² He bought shingles cut by Simmons and sold by the HBC. Ezra Meeker, *Pioneer Reminiscences of Puget Sound* (Lowman & Hanford Stationery and Printing Co., 1905), 537. The location was probably Johnson Point, known as Poe's Point until 1853.

⁴³ 'Oregon Donation Land Act', The Oregon Encyclopedia (Portland State University and the Oregon Historical Society), Accessed 8 November 2020, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_donation_land_act/#.X6kagWgzZPZ.

⁴⁴ Whaley, 'Oregon, Illahee, and the Empire Republic', 165.

was 1850 before Congress adopted the *Oregon Donation Land Act*, recognising only one provisional land claim per person subject to agricultural improvements being made.⁴⁵

A tidy scenario – for white settlers – might have been that the American Government acquired land by treaty (albeit unequal) or conquest, removed the Indian inhabitants to reserves and then made the land available to American citizens, but the settler-scramble had proceeded ahead of government action. Apart from claims being registered prior to possession, the government might wait until the balance of power was in their favour, and in the meantime a ‘middle ground’ of mutual accommodation was the only way to proceed. The middle ground consisted of ‘creative misunderstandings’ where Indians and whites attempted to build mutually understandable practices, often at a local level. Diverse people accommodated their differences through ‘a process of creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings ... by appealing to what they perceive to be the values and the practices of those others’. While these efforts are often based on misunderstandings, ‘new meanings and through them new practices’ emerge. Both sides then engage in practices that the other side might find intelligible, such as European leaders consciously taking on the role of a patriarch.⁴⁶ The concept is an apt understanding of the environment in which Poe found himself.

During this early phase of settlement, large-scale pre-emptive possession was not practical; cabins or small farming plots hardly disturbed Indian life and early settlers welcomed ready access to Indian labour. Settlers and Indians made arrangements for areas of town settlement or mills. Problems arose (as the HBC warned) from alcohol use where Indian consumption moved quickly from a ‘naïve period of grace’ to one where some of the worst aspects of white drinking culture were adopted. Violence, usually between Indians, in the towns created growing apprehension.⁴⁷ Impatience grew

⁴⁵ Cameron Addis, ‘The Whitman Massacre: 221-258 and David Alan Johnson, *Founding the Far West: California, Oregon, and Nevada, 1840-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 44.

⁴⁶ Often ‘informed’ by the mutual misunderstanding, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), x, 50-53.

⁴⁷ J. W. Frank, J. W., R. S. Moore, and G. M. Ames, “Historical and Cultural Roots of Drinking Problems among American Indians,” *American Journal of Public Health* 90, no. 3 (2000): 344-51.

amongst settlers and Indian communities, who both anticipated the solution as a treaty (with compensation), but the federal government prioritised the larger community in the Willamette Valley.

Settlers could also obtain land through military service. After the War of 1812, the US Government rewarded veterans with public domain lands. Acquiring the land was a two-step process; veterans first applied for a 'bounty land warrant', and if approved, then applied for ownership of a particular piece of land. With no improvement conditions on such grants, veterans could easily sell their warrants.⁴⁸

Poe's own militia service came after the 'Whitman Massacre' of November 1847. The Cayuse resented the increasing number of immigrants on their land, but the breaking point came during a measles epidemic in 1847. Medical missionary Whitman tried to cure stricken Indians, who lacked immunity. More than half the Cayuse died, while most white patients recovered. Believing that Whitman had infected them, some Cayuse attacked the mission and killed fourteen Americans, including the Whitmans. Settler outrage led to a war of retaliation while some Cayuse continued to raid settlements. The Provisional Government called on US troops and militiamen, and skirmishes continued into 1855 when the Cayuse were defeated. Poe enlisted as a private in the Oregon Volunteers for the relatively quiet period 18 April to 5 July 1848, traveling 500 miles to do so.⁴⁹ He later received 160 acres for his service, which he sold, and claimed reimbursement of \$5 for goods given to Cayuse for information. He was elected second sergeant by men who had no previous contact with him, suggesting both his inclination for such a role and that his qualities of leadership were recognised.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Jerry A. O'Callaghan, 'The War Veteran and the Public Lands', *Agricultural History*, 28: 4 (Oct. 1954): 163-168.

⁴⁹ Poe's actions seem voluntary as undertaken some months after the Provisional Government's call.

⁵⁰ Oregon Secretary of State Archives Division, document 417512, Poe, A M, 1848, Enlistment, no county, Military, Box 187. Bureau of Land Management, 'Land Patent Search,' digital images, General Land Office Records, accessed 7 December 2020, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/PatentSearch> ; Alonzo Marion Poe (Thurston Co, Washington), military warrant no. 71021 which transferred title to Patrick Fowler. For

The Cayuse War stretched and divided the Provisional Government and highlighted tensions between some settlers and Indians. The violence associated with the response to the Whitman event is an example of 'inherently eliminatory' nature of settler colonialism and, in facilitating the involvement of the Federal Government, foreshadowed how the 'middle ground' accommodation between settlers and Indians that generally operated in Puget Sound would come to an end.⁵¹ The Cayuse War also ended the idea of the 'mission network', where missionaries lived in Indian country, as newer colonists were impatient to control the entire landscape.⁵² Apart from his obvious interest in land acquisition, Poe's actions demonstrate an assumption of the otherness of Indians and the perceived inevitability of their dispossession.

The Provisional Government was weakened by debts in pursuing the war. In order to provide assistance, Congress brought forward Territorial Government in August 1848 bringing both Federal troops and authority to negotiations with Indian groups.⁵³ In May 1850, five Cayuse men were tried for the murder of the Whitmans, found guilty and executed.⁵⁴ By this time, disease, dispossession and rolling revenge attacks had considerably weakened the Cayuse and as such are a stark example of the genocidal tendencies of settler colonialism.⁵⁵ After the HBC's John McLoughlin testified for the defence, legislators stripped him of his land, signalling a belligerence which Poe and other northern

reimbursements see Frances Fuller Victor, *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, Salem Oregon (Frank C Baker, State Printer, 1894), 213, 517 and Virgil F. Field, *The official history of the Washington National Guard*, (Camp Murray, Wash: Washington State Military Department, Office of the Adjutant General 2012), 25.

⁵¹ Lorenzo Veracini, 'Introducing Settler Colonial Studies', *Settler Colonial Studies* 1 no. 1 (2011), 2; 'a determination to exploit sustains a drive to sustain the permanent subordination of the colonised.'

⁵² Oregon farmers began to imagine the interior as more like the Willamette Valley making it safe for domestication, but the fighting also triggered fears about Oregon's distance from the metropole. MacKenzie Katherine Lee Moore, *Making Place and Nation: Geographic Meaning and the Americanization of Oregon: 1834-1859.* (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2012), 50-51.

⁵³ Oregon was the only free state admitted to the Union with a slavery exclusion clause in its constitution.

⁵⁴ Victor, *Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, 263. Addis 'The Whitman Massacre', 221-258.

⁵⁵ Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native', *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006), 397-8.

Oregonians saw as a point of difference between themselves and both the Oregon and federal governments.⁵⁶

Tumwater and other scattered American ‘nodes’ of Puget Sound beyond the States constituted ‘borderlands’: spaces and relationships that were more multifaceted than later settler tales suggest. Although borderlands ‘laid the foundations’ for settler colonialism, they could be the location of roads not taken. According to the historian Samuel Truett, borderlands ‘require us to take a more multidirectional, open-ended view’.⁵⁷ It was by no means certain how things would play out; the intentions of the metropole were not explicit and the British and Indians remained in the physical and economic landscape.⁵⁸ Greg Dening’s *Islands and Beaches* is helpful in developing the borderlands concept, with beaches as a metaphor for contact zones with existing Native cultures not fully visible from the shoreline.⁵⁹ In this space, as Richard White argues, ‘human populations construct their cultures in interaction with one another, not in isolation.’⁶⁰ This is applicable to the PNW of Poe’s time, modified to the extent that Britain was still on the beach as well. On the edge of Poe’s American Empire, the future was full of possibilities. The eventual arrival of the metropole would reduce the range of possibilities and replace any idealism with imposed will.

Lisa Ford’s concept of ‘legal pluralism’ provides a refinement of the concept and characterises a combination of Indian notions of justice and Western definitions of sovereignty and jurisdiction. Ford contends that scholars have underestimated the extent to which American settlers and colonial

⁵⁶ Addis, ‘The Whitman Massacre’, 249.

⁵⁷ Samuel Truett, ‘Settler Colonialism and the Borderlands of Early America.’ *The William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2019): 438.

⁵⁸ Truett, ‘Settler Colonialism’, 441, elaborated in Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, ‘On Borderlands,’ *Journal of American History* 98 no. 2 (September 2011): 338–61.

⁵⁹ Richard White, *The Middle Ground* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), xx-xxi. Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land, Marquesas 1774-1880* (Honolulu, Hawaii: The University Press of Hawaii, 1980).

⁶⁰ White, *Middle Ground*, xxiii, 1.

Britons established plural legal systems in settler colonial contexts.⁶¹ However, at much the same time, American and British influence overlapped in ways that produced unsustainable tensions.

A recent reassessment of the events of the Whitman Massacre and the subsequent events of 1848-50 shows the period as a 'complex tale of arrogance, fortitude, naïveté, and misunderstandings.'⁶² The tragedy is an extreme example of relationships in the liminal space of borderlands where two cultures meet. American settlers' visions for the PNW were characterised by Whig ideas of the legal framework of 'discovery'. While Poe may have been aware of these concepts, popular sentiment may have held the less precise belief that the Indian population were like the Canaanites who were displaced by the more civilised tribes of Israel, providing some Biblical justification of dispossession.⁶³

Gold Rush Inspiration

The discovery and lure of gold in California encouraged Poe and nineteen of his colleagues to try their luck. The 'Rush' began in January 1848 when James W. Marshall found gold at Sutter's Mill in Coloma, just before American annexation.⁶⁴ Oregonians heard of the strike in August and about 3,000 men departed for the goldfields.⁶⁵ The decision by Poe's group was not so hurried; they arrived in the Sacramento Valley in July 1849. Poe kept in contact with Isaac Ebey and some others during this

⁶¹ Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788-1836* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2010), 20, 24.

⁶² Cassandra Tate, *Unsettled ground: the Whitman Massacre and its shifting legacy in the American West* (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2021), xx.

⁶³ Alfred A. Cave 'Canaanites in a Promised Land: The American Indian and the Providential Theory of Empire', *American Indian Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (Autumn, 1988), 277-297. The story itself is one of settler colonialism; Pekka Pitkänen, "Settler Colonialism in Ancient Israel," in Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini, *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism* (London, Routledge, 2017).

⁶⁴ Analysed by Elliott West, 'California, Coincidence, and Empire' in Benjamin Mountford and Tuffnell, Stephen, eds., *A Global History of Gold Rushes*, Oakland, California (University of California Press, 2018).

⁶⁵ 'California', *Oregon Spectator*, August 10, 1848: 2 and [Editorial] *Oregon Spectator*, October 12, 1848, 2.

venture.⁶⁶ The situation for miners has been described as a 'gendered reality' in which 'freedom' was a place of violence, mobility and action dominated by men. The tenor, though not the intensity, was familiar to Poe and his colleagues, as Puget Sound was predominantly male.⁶⁷ However, harsh living conditions and modest finds encouraged them to return home in autumn 1849.⁶⁸

While southern Oregonians returned home from California, eager to resume their agrarian way of life, Poe and his northern colleagues returned with a plan to build Puget Sound into a trading centre to emulate what 'gold fever' had brought to San Francisco.⁶⁹ There the human influx as much as the gold itself had created 'an expansive and ... sophisticated economy'.⁷⁰ San Francisco's population had grown from 500 in 1847 to around 20,000 in 1850.⁷¹ Miners needed food and provisions which boosted farming and manufacturing. San Francisco's demand for timber and produce could be met by northern Oregon. In 1850, 469 ships arrived at San Francisco from Hawai'i, their trade valued at \$380,000; after 1851, Oregon supplied California's agricultural imports at less cost.⁷² The process also generated productive investment that was sustained after mining output declined.⁷³

Poe's friend and fellow gold-seeker, Isaac Ebey, talked up the economic prospects of the Sound in a letter to his parents: 'I met with an opportunity of taking an interest in a vessel ... [and] supposed I could make my trip to Oregon profitable instead of expensive.' Poe, Ebey and others bought an old brig, the *Orbit*, aiming to use it to export goods to San Francisco. However, when Ebey

⁶⁶ 'Edmund Sylvester's Narrative of the Founding of Olympia', *PNQ* 36, no. 4, (December 1945): 336-7. 'I sold out my interest in the saw-mill to old Bush, taking in exchange partly a team and wagon. I then heard of the goldmines in California. I went to the mines in the Spring of 1849.' Rabbeson, 'Growth of Towns', 2-3.

⁶⁷ Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy the California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 197.

⁶⁸ Sylvester wrote, 'we would all have died there if we had not come North', 'Sylvester's Narrative,' 337.

⁶⁹ Johnson, *Founding the Far West*, 45-46.

⁷⁰ West, 'California, Coincidence, and Empire', 46-49. James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth, the Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 313 points out that the real estate boom and commercial prosperity began before the Gold Rush.

⁷¹ Lionel Frost, "'Metallic Nerves': San Francisco and Its Hinterland During and after the Gold Rush." *Australian Economic History Review*, 50, no. 2 (2010): 132.

⁷² A. C. W. Bethel, "The Golden Skein: California's Gold-Rush Transportation Network," *California History* 77 no. 4 (Winter, 1998/1999): 254.

⁷³ Frost, "Metallic Nerves," 134, 138, 144. Mountford and Tuffnell, *A Global History of Gold Rushes*, 7.

arrived in Puget Sound in January 1850, he faced an unexpected problem: 'My partner Mr Poe who had left Cal[ifornia] in Sept[ember] to proceed on with funds to the Sound to procure a cargo had not been heard of at least he had not been at the Sound. He had become sick on the way but pushed on, only to become 'delirious.'⁷⁴ The *Orbit* was the first American vessel owned at Puget Sound and began the development of the Sound. Poe's exhaustion illustrates his trustworthiness, commitment to his partners and his determination to make the venture a success.

The group saw a way to make money through their enterprise and the *Orbit* was the means to bring this about, so they started 'boosting' the region to their families and potential buyers of timber and food in San Francisco.⁷⁵ The *Orbit* made at least one more trip to San Francisco under these owners. Simmons saw its potential and by late 1851 owned the *Orbit*.⁷⁶ Their gold rush experience was a source of inspiration for building a new commercial and trading centre – a northern San Francisco - and convincing others to share their vision.

Establishing Olympia

While Poe was recuperating, a group which included Simmons and Ebey met near Budd Inlet on 12 January 1850. The group agreed to create a town on Edmund Sylvester's claim, making him town proprietor, and named it Olympia.⁷⁷ The town was 'platted' (surveyed and mapped) during 1850

⁷⁴ Isaac N. Ebey letter to Jacob and Sarah Ebey, University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Ebey family papers. Accession no. 0127-001, Box 3/6; Drew W. Crooks, "Voyages of the Brig Orbit/Recovery: 1845-1852, Part 1," *Occurrences: The Journal of Northwest History* (Summer 2004), 4-11. Certificate of Registration #32 issued October 25, 1849, Record Group: 041 Marine Inspection and Navigation, National Archives, Washington DC, quoted in Crooks. The *Orbit* was purchased for \$2,500 and goods purchased from Simmons who later claimed he had not been paid; Michael J. Simmons Plaintiff versus Isaac N. Ebey, Alonzo M. Poe and Benjamin F. Shaw. Civil File Date: 1855 Jefferson County. Case Number: JEF-30 Collection, Debt.

⁷⁵ Elaine Naylor, *Frontier Boosters: Port Townsend and the Culture of Development in the American West, 1850-1895* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 200-201.

⁷⁶ M.T Simmons to A. Bush, September 18, 1851, *Oregon Statesman*, October 14, 1851:2, calls it 'my brig.'

⁷⁷ John Swan, 'Olympia, The Pioneer Town of Washington', n.d., University of Washington Libraries, Seattle Washington, quoted in Crooks, 'Voyages': 10.

by Sylvester, who employed Poe and Hugh A. Goldsborough, compensating them with land.⁷⁸ As the only American port in the Sound, in February 1851 Congress authorised the establishment of a customs house at the village, making it the first port-of-entry on Puget Sound (despite not having a wharf). Customs officer, William W. Miller, arrived six months later and was followed by his supervisor Simpson P. Moses, collector for the new district. Both were political appointments by the Whig establishment. Moses set up in Simmons' store, the largest building in town.⁷⁹ Poe and Ebey were early employees and forged a friendship with Miller (see Figure 1.2) built from an enthusiasm for development and a shared antipathy of Moses' confrontational methods and corruption.⁸⁰ The customs house confirmed Olympia as the focus of American development north of the Columbia.



Figure 1.2. (l to r) Alonzo M. Poe, W. W. Miller and Isaac Ebey, Puget Sound's first Federal Customs Service, circa 1852 in Olympia. Courtesy Washington State Digital Archives (Image No. AR-07809001-ph004223). The image is 'reversed' as it was taken from a daguerreotype original.

⁷⁸ Poe and Goldsborough ran regular advertisements for town lots in the *Columbian* from its first edition.

⁷⁹ Harvey Steel and Rand Careaga, [U.S. Customs Service. Pacific Region], *Northern approaches: The United States Customs Service in Washington, 1851-1997*, (Washington, D.C., Dept. of the Treasury, U.S. Customs Service, 1998), 5-7, 47.

⁸⁰ Lang, *Confederacy of Ambition*: 64-67,

The 1850 *Donation Land Claim Act* promoted settlements in the Oregon Territory and provided free land to white settlers and 'half breed Indians'.⁸¹ The inclusion of Indians of mixed descent was designed to ensure that trappers in the region, many of whom were British and who had taken Indian wives, would support American control. However, the legislation challenged George Bush's right to own the farm he had established; Bush thought that 'if he could not have a free man's rights, he would seek the protection of the Mexican Government in California or New Mexico'.⁸² A petition to the Oregon Territorial Government tested the issue. George Washington, also black, arrived in Oregon Territory and, like Bush, turned north hoping the Oregon Legislature would repeal the *Black Exclusion Act* (1844) or agree to an exemption.⁸³ The legislature took the latter course, allowing him to remain in the region in December 1852.⁸⁴ A petition, signed by Poe, described Washington as a 'citizen' and as such sought approval for him to claim donation land. However, the legislature did not regard Washington as a citizen, making access to donation land irrelevant. He had not actually submitted a claim, so no precedent was set. Washington purchased someone else's claim in 1853 when new Washington Territory laws did not bar black ownership.⁸⁵ Bush's supporters let the matter rest for the moment.

Poe's view of Bush's equality, most marked in taking him to be a citizen, is consistent with the abolitionist perspective of the MEC and reflected the Tumwater community's gratefulness for Bush's generosity in providing for the material needs of poorer neighbours.⁸⁶ The contrast to Poe's

⁸¹ Carlos A. Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest, An Interpretive History* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 95-111.

⁸² John Minto, 'Reminiscences of Experiences on the Oregon Trail in 1844 - II', *OHQ*, 2:3 (September 1901): 212.

⁸³ Quintard Taylor, 'Slaves and Free Men: Blacks in the Oregon Country, 1840-1860', *OHQ*, 83:2 (Summer 1982): 162.

⁸⁴ 'A Petition for the Benefit of George Washington', Papers of the provisional and territorial government of Oregon, 1841-1859; Washington State Library NW Micro 353.9795 OREGON 1951 4530. The petition was sponsored by Isaac N. Ebey. Taylor, "Slaves and Free Men", 163 fn 36. Simmons did *not* sign the petition.

⁸⁵ Taylor, 'Slaves and Free Men': 163. Charles Michael later came as a child slave but escaped to Victoria.

⁸⁶ Douglas M. Strong, "American Methodism in the Nineteenth Century: Expansion and Fragmentation," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Methodism*, ed. Jason E. Vickers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 64, 71-76. Richard Carwardine, "Methodists, Politics, and the Coming of the American Civil War" *Church History* 69, no. 3 (2000): 578-609.

assumption of the otherness of Indians and the inevitability of their dispossession was an inherited assumption reinforced in the militia tradition. Bush's desire to acquire a donation claim was itself based on a tacit support for Indian dispossession, but Poe did not carry the assumptions of otherness which the militia tradition (and the British experience) encouraged. Both Poe and Bush shared friendly engagement with the Indian population, though it was different in nature. Bush named his son Lewis Nisqually Bush, the first non-Indian born in the region, after the County (Lewis) and Leschi's tribe (Nisqually), in honour of his friendship with Leschi, the Nisqually leader, which implied a sense of mutuality. Poe criticised what he saw as the exploitation of Indians and had productive transactional relationships with Indian neighbours or militia informants, but there are no indications of equal friendships.

As more white Americans populated Puget Sound, discontent arose over poor mail delivery, inadequate roads, military protection, and law enforcement. Some settlers complained that the HBC held valuable agricultural land and let livestock roam onto settler farms. During Independence Day celebrations in Olympia in 1851, lawyer John Chapman delivered a speech on 'the future state of Columbia.' After lunch, participants reconvened with Clanrick Crosby presiding and Poe as secretary. They agreed to hold a convention at Cowlitz in August, 'to be composed of [elected] representatives from all of the election precincts north of the Columbia ... to take into careful consideration the present peculiar position of the northern portion of the Territory, its wants, the best method of supplying these wants, and the propriety of an early appeal to Congress for a division of the Territory'. A group drafted resolutions, with much of the drive coming from Crosby and Poe.⁸⁷ Thomas Prosch wrote that the idea 'fired the patriotism of Simmons, Poe, Crosby, Maynard, Ebey, Goldsborough,

⁸⁷ Thomas W. Prosch, 'The Political Beginning of Washington Territory, *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, 6: 2 (June 1905), 151.

Brownfield and others.⁸⁸ Prosch's placement of Poe after Simmons suggests a prominent role and is consistent with a pattern where Poe provided support for Simmons' initiatives.

The Convention produced a detailed vision for the future territory, but it was politically naïve. Twenty-six delegates attended with Seth Catlin, a former Illinois legislator, presiding. Poe and Lafayette Balch were elected secretaries.⁸⁹ They wrote a formal recommendation which requested that a new territorial government be formed. Economic development and infrastructure were the priority for 'Columbia.' Delegates confidently agreed to meet the following May to approve a territorial constitution.⁹⁰ The proposal was published in the *Oregonian* and the *Oregon Spectator* a few weeks later, but there was no newspaper north of the Columbia River.⁹¹ While Joseph Lane, Territorial delegate to Congress, saw these reports, the Provisional Government did not contact him. As a non-voting delegate in the US Congress, he had limited ability to sell the proposal, but allies also warned him that Chapman (who had built some reputation after his July 4th speech) might become a political rival, so Lane buried the proposal in committee.⁹²

The group had documented a prescient vision of how the new territory would look, which continued to motivate community leaders. Borders of the five proposed counties largely came to pass and reflected the logic of a surveyor. The designation of one boundary as 'Poe's Point' suggests both his desire to leave his mark and that his colleagues thought he deserved recognition.⁹³ However, with the American population of northern Oregon less than 1,000, territorial status was an audacious idea.

⁸⁸ Thomas Wickham Prosch, *David S. Maynard and Catherine T. Maynard* (Seattle: Lowman & Hanford Stationery, 1906), 25.

⁸⁹ Prosch, 'Political Beginnings', 152.

⁹⁰ Edmond Meany, "The Cowlitz Convention: Inception of Washington Territory," *WHQ* 13, no. 1 (1922), 3-19.

⁹¹The *Oregonian*, September 20, 1851, and *Oregon Spectator*, September 23, 1851.

⁹² Isaac N. Ebey to Lane, January 1852 quoted in John M. McClelland Jr., "Almost Columbia, Triumphantly Washington: Prelude to statehood - the remarkable beginnings of Washington Territory...", *Columbia Magazine* 2: 2 (Summer 1988): 3-11. Edmond S. Meany, "The Cowlitz Convention: Inception of Washington Territory," *WHQ* 13 no. 1 (1922): 3-19.

⁹³ Edmond S. Meany, 'The Cowlitz Convention: Inception of Washington Territory', *WHQ* 13, no. 1 (1922): 11, which they hoped to name Simmons County, 12. The location is today called Johnsons Point.

Developing Olympia and a New Territory

The Lewis County leadership understood the need to increase the number of new settlers and marshal the population to support the development of the region. In the autumn of 1851, Poe and Simmons helped start a gold rush on the Queen Charlotte Islands, in British Territory. They knew that traffic through Olympia would help boost the economy. Poe wrote to the *Oregon Spectator*, a Whig paper, reporting the arrival of the sloop *Georgiana* in Olympia. He described the captain as having 'beautiful specimens of virgin gold and gold bearing quartz,' the latter being 'of the richest quality that I ever saw'.⁹⁴ Simmons wrote to the *Oregon Statesman*, a Democratic paper, indicating that the *Orbit* could take miners from Olympia to the new gold field.⁹⁵ Their testimony encouraged twenty-seven men to embark from Olympia for the Queen Charlottes aboard the *Georgiana* in November 1851.

Unfortunately, storms drove the *Georgiana* onto rocks near Vancouver Island and Haida Indians imprisoned the passengers in hopes of gaining a ransom. Neither the HBC nor Captain Balch, who was nearby, was able to rescue the group. Balch informed Moses, the only federal representative in the Sound, who provided soldiers and others, including Poe who, as a customs agent, may have secured items on credit from the HBC to use as ransom.⁹⁶ Poe became unwell after the goods were secured and returned to Olympia. The Haida, noting the ship's cannons were in range, agreed to exchange the prisoners for blankets, muslin and tobacco and the group returned to Steilacoom on 31 January 1852 without any gold or serious injury.⁹⁷ At a public hearing in Olympia in February, Daniel Bigelow and Poe were elected to raise money for survivors.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Alonzo M. Poe, [Letter], *Oregon Spectator*, October 14, 1851. Robert Galois, 'Gold on Haida Gwaii: The First Prospects, 1849-53,' *British Columbia Studies* 196 (2018), 15-173, quotes Poe's letter.

⁹⁵ M.T Simmons to A[sahel]. Bush, September 18, 1851, *Oregon Statesman*, October 14, 1851, 2.

⁹⁶ The Federal Government refused to reimburse the local government for the \$15,000 ransom until Poe and others took it up through the Washington Territorial Legislature and Congress.

⁹⁷ Drew W. Crooks, "Shipwreck and Captivity," *Columbia Magazine*, 8 no. 2 (1994): 17-23.

⁹⁸ Charles H. Sheldon, 'Simpson P. Moses and the Georgianna Incident', *Pacific Northwest Forum*. Second Series. V (Summer-Fall 1992): 3-16.

In December 1851, Poe signed a petition asking the Oregon Territorial Government to excise a new county from Lewis County, to be named after Simmons (as agreed at Cowlitz). The Assembly agreed but named it after Samuel Thurston, Oregon Territory’s Congressional representative who died in 1851.⁹⁹ In June 1852, Poe signed election returns for the new County and was elected as County Clerk with 83 out of 86 votes.¹⁰⁰ Poe’s place amongst the county’s public officers is outlined in Figure 1.3. This successful push followed an unsuccessful petition filed in October to make Olympia the county seat of Lewis County on the basis that it was the effective centre of Puget Sound’s population and the town proprietors had ‘generously donated’ land on which public buildings could be built.¹⁰¹ Simmons, Poe and their associates wanted to build the region with Olympia as its centre.

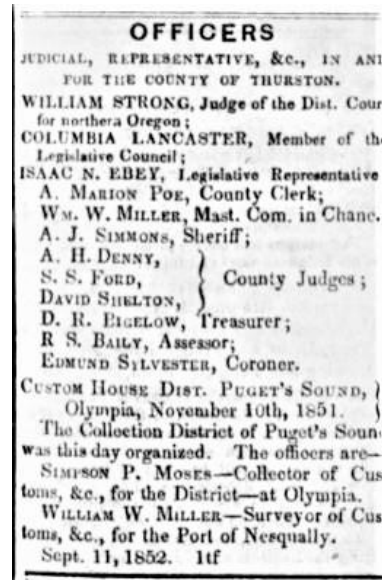


Figure 1.3. Officers of Thurston County, *The Columbian*, November 6, 1852, 3.

⁹⁹ ‘Petition to create Simmons County’, Papers of the provisional and territorial government of Oregon, 1841-1859; Washington State Library NW Micro 353.9795 OREGON 1951 4235. Two signatories named Bush signed but their names were crossed out as they were not regarded as citizens. Ironically, Thurston had advocated to keep blacks out of Oregon Territory, the policy which led Simmons to establish the Tumwater settlement.

¹⁰⁰ “First Election at Olympia,” *WHQ* 13 no. 2 (April 1922): 156-158; Georgiana Mitchell Blankenship, *Early History of Thurston County, Olympia* (Washington, 1914), 13-14; Papers of the provisional and territorial government of Oregon, 1841-1859; Washington State Library NW Micro 353.9795 OREGON 1951 1896; ‘Letter from A.M. Poe regarding the division of funds to Thurston County (Sept. 4 1852)’, Washington State Archives, Lewis County Government Record Group, Subgroup: Clerk, Series: Miscellaneous Territorial Filings 1849-1889.

¹⁰¹ ‘Petition to move county seat to Olympia (7 Oct. 1851)’, Washington State Archives, Lewis County Government Record Group, Subgroup: Clerk, Series: Miscellaneous Territorial Filings 1849-1889.

Poe's standing and personality are also illustrated in a notice he placed as secretary-organiser announcing the regular meeting time of the 'Ancient Oriental Order of the 1001', apparently akin to Freemasonry or the International Order of Oddfellows (IOOF). However, it was a humorous mocking of the rituals of these groups. Inductees only learned of its true nature at the end of their initiation ceremony, when *most* enjoyed the prank and stayed on to socialise.¹⁰²

Meanwhile, Moses aimed to demonstrate the federal government's determination to make things difficult for the HBC. In late 1852, the HBC's steamer *Beaver* towed the company's brig *Mary Dare* to the customs house at Budd Inlet. Both vessels anchored north of Olympia and were boarded by deputy collector Elwood Evans, accompanied by inspectors Ebey and Simmons. Ebey found Indian trading goods not listed on the manifest and discovered that both vessels had first anchored at Fort Nisqually for fifteen hours, landing passengers and goods without a permit. Simmons reported that *Mary Dare* held a package of refined sugar weighing 230 pounds, in violation of section 103 of the Act of Congress approved 3 March 1799. The vessels had followed customary practice but ignored American revenue laws. Both vessels were seized, necessitating a special term of the court of the third judicial district of Oregon Territory. Judge William Strong appointed Poe as Deputy US Marshal, who accepted a bond of \$13,000 for the *Mary Dare* and the sugar, showing him again in a position of trust.¹⁰³ Those acting at Moses' direction did not protest openly, though Goldsborough described him as 'petty' and refused to take part. Within a few months Miller advocated a softer approach.¹⁰⁴ Two points of tension were evident: the imposition of federal policy without regard for local practices, and second, the differences among the settlers over how to deal with the British.

¹⁰² Meetings were held in his office, *Columbian*, September 25, 1852, 3; James S. Buck, *Pioneer History of Milwaukee, from 1840 to 1846, Inclusive*. Volume 2 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Symes, Swain & Co., Book and Job Printers. 1881), 282-3 is the only account of its activities, though meeting notices are found in four states/territories in the period.

¹⁰³ Evans, *Pacific Northwest*, 346-7, Steel and Careaga, *North Approaches*, 9-11.

¹⁰⁴ See Lang, *Confederacy*, 31-45.

In spite of Moses' emphasis on the federal government's ambition to assert its authority in the region, Olympians had heard nothing more of the Territorial recommendation to Congress. As 4 July 1852 approached, Daniel Bigelow, another eloquent lawyer with deeper roots in the community, delivered the Independence Day oration in Olympia to rekindle patriotic enthusiasm. The lack of a newspaper to promote the interests of Puget Sound was identified as a problem, and on 6 July 1852 leading residents signed a document calling for a newspaper to be 'devoted to the interests of Northern Oregon' and pledging donations totalling \$572:

The undersigned believing that the interests of that portion of Oregon Territory north of the Columbia River demand the establishment of a Newspaper in that part of the Country, do agree to donate the several sums of money set opposite our respective names for the purpose of establishing a Newspaper at some prominent point on Puget's Sound, to be called the "Columbian," such that sums of money to be due and payable - issuing of the first number of said Newspapers and we have hereby authorized and appointed Alonzo M. Poe to receive and collect the said several sums of money: the said Newspaper to be neutral in politics and religion, and devoted to the interests of Northern Oregon. Olympia July 8, 1852.¹⁰⁵

Subscribers identified the need to build popular support for statehood and again entrusted Poe with the role of organiser.¹⁰⁶ Poe set about obtaining a printing press and type which he sourced in San Francisco for the publication. Poe might have hoped to be selected as editor, but two more experienced editors with Democratic political connections were appointed. Poe's letter to Miller of late 1852 makes it clear that he was working closely with the new editors to promote the paper, later becoming an agent.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ University of Washington Libraries. Special Collections Division. McElroy Family papers. Accession no. 0027-001, Box 1/49. Twenty-one settlers signed it, including Poe, Moses, Bigelow, Simmons and Miller.

¹⁰⁶ Ebey had successfully claimed 640 acres on Whidbey Island at the northern end of Puget Sound.

¹⁰⁷ Powe to Miller, [about September] 1852, Yale Series: 1 Box: 4 Folder: 242. Agents included Balch, Ebey, Miller and Judge Strong. See *Columbian*, June 10, 1853, 1.

At this time, three rival Oregon newspaper editors indulged in unrestrained attacks on one another. Each served the interests of his political party: Democratic, Whig/Republican, and old Whig respectively (see Table 1-1).¹⁰⁸ The *Oregon Spectator* aimed to be different; its motto ‘Westward the Star of Empire Takes its way’ captured what it hoped was the majority sentiment and aimed to avoid party politics - a view which the *Columbian* echoed but found difficult to maintain.

Newspaper	Affiliation	First edition	Editors
<i>Oregon Spectator</i>	‘Non-political’, seen as Whig	5 February 1846 (Closed 1855)	W. G. T’Vault then H. A. G. Lee
<i>Portland Oregonian</i>	Whig/Republican	4 December 1850	Thomas Jefferson Dryer
<i>Salem Statesman</i>	Democratic	28 March 1851	Asahel Bush
<i>Columbian</i>	‘Non-political’, most backers were Whigs	11 September 1852	James Wiley, Thornton F McElroy

Table 1.1. Oregon newspapers prior to the creation of Washington Territory.

The *Spectator* promoted the region to the American states, anticipating that it would, ‘with the intelligent and enterprising Anglo-Saxons’, become a prosperous American state.¹⁰⁹ The non-party-political stance could be seen as *de facto* support for the Whig administration. However, popular desire for free speech in the engaging ‘Oregon style’ meant that the dry *Spectator* lost its readership and failed to become Oregon’s Public Printer (appointed by the Legislature to print its laws and record

¹⁰⁸ George H. Himes, ‘History of the Press of Oregon, 1839-1850,’ *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 3 no. 4 (December 1902): 358, Harvey Steele, U. S. Customs Service, and Region Pacific. *Hyas Tyee: The United States Customs Service in Oregon, 1848-1989* (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of the Treasury, U.S. Customs Service, 1990), 58-72, suggests it was also a career path for senior customs officials.

¹⁰⁹ ‘To the Public’, *Spectator*, 5 February 1846, 2 and ‘Articles of Compact’ 4.

of decisions), making it financially unviable.¹¹⁰ The lesson was not lost on *Columbian* backers or editors.¹¹¹

The *Columbian* had two audiences in mind: the settler population of Puget Sound and Oregon Territory politicians, including Congressional delegate Lane. The name of the paper reflected, fuelled and channelled the popular desires of the settlers, as it called for the 'Territory of Columbia'. 'Columbia' idealised America as a land of liberty and tapped into American patriotism.¹¹² The first edition published Bigelow's oration and the third proposed that a meeting of elected delegates be held at Monticello in November.¹¹³ Subsequent issues promoted the Monticello convention and ensured it was better attended than Cowlitz. The aim was to awaken a sense of American identity in the wider community rather than claim to act as a representative body of the region (as the Cowlitz convention had been). Poe's absence is not unexpected as attendees were not delegate elected by resident groups; it was a promotional exercise.

In mid-October 1852, Lane promised to introduce a bill seeking separation of Columbia from Oregon and sought a document he could introduce during the debate. The *Columbian* provided a concise statement that met Lane's requirement to avoid mention of the low population around Puget Sound. The Oregon Legislature convened ten days after the Monticello Convention with the two northern representatives, F. A. Chenoweth, and Isaac Ebey, and agreed to forward the pithy proposal to Congress. While the memorial was traveling across the continent, Lane acted on the Cowlitz document and the editorials in the *Columbian* before he knew the outcome of Monticello. He now

¹¹⁰ Warren J. Brier, 'Political Censorship in the Oregon Spectator,' *Pacific Historical Review* 31, no. 3 (Aug. 1962): 240.

¹¹¹ Yale Series: 1 Box: 4 Folder: 242. Written late August and referring to plans being made by Dryer as owner and co-published James Wiley, Thornton F McElroy would join them soon. On Dryer see also W. A. Katz, "'The Columbian': Washington Territory's First Newspaper," *OHQ*, 64, no. 1 (March 1963):34.

¹¹² For that reason, it was also the name of the Federal district formalised in 1871. Columbia Historical Society, *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, (Washington, D.C., The Society, 1895) 2:53. The song 'Hail Columbia' was *de facto* national anthem and presumably sung on 4th July celebrations in Olympia.

¹¹³ 'Oration', *Columbian*, September, 11 1852, 4; September, 25 1852.

saw an opportunity for his place in history and requested the Committee on Territories to report via a bill to create Columbia Territory which came up for debate in the House of Representatives on 8 February 1853.¹¹⁴

Lane accepted an amendment proposed by Richard H. Stanton of Kentucky to change the name from Columbia to Washington as an honour for the 'Father of His Country', avoiding potential opposition from southerners opposed to the possibility of a new non-slave territory in the north.¹¹⁵ Lane's allies supported the division because northern Oregon was gaining population, which had the potential to shift the electoral balance of power. Lane received the Monticello memorial in mid-January, which was read into the Congressional Record during February. The Bill passed the House of Representatives on 10 February 1853 and Washington Territory came into existence on 2 March 1853, with news reaching its citizens at the end of April.¹¹⁶

On 12 February 1853, the *Columbian* contained three items about the Memorial to Congress endorsed by the Legislature. The editorial reprinted an item from the Honolulu *Polynesian* characterising manifest destiny as a *fait accompli* in the Sound. It reflected community views and described what Poe and his colleagues aimed for:

But "manifest destiny", or rather the progressive providence of God, is at work; the western coast is to be peopled; the treasures of her forests, her rivers, her rich soil, her various mines, are to be developed for the benefit of man – for the expansion of civilization – for the extension of true religion. Her quiet forests are to resound to the pioneer's axe; her placid

¹¹⁴ John M. McClelland, "Almost Columbia, Triumphantly Washington," *Columbia Magazine* 2 (Summer 1988): 3–11.

¹¹⁵ Dennis P. Weber, "The Creation of Washington: Securing Democracy North of the Columbia," *Columbia Magazine* 17 no. 3 (Fall 2003): [unpaginated reprint].

¹¹⁶ 'Washington Territory – "All's well that ends well"', *Columbian*, April 30, 1853, 2.

harbors are to be rippled by the paddle-wheel of the steamer, and to the glisten with the white wings of commerce.¹¹⁷

The use of the popular phrase ‘Westward the Star of Empire Takes its Way’ by Poe’s network was derived from Jefferson’s idea of the ‘Empire of Liberty’. It encompassed the phrase ‘Manifest Destiny’ coined in 1845 by newspaper editor John O’Sullivan to describe the widely held belief that American settlers were destined to expand across North America. For Poe and his contemporaries, it seemed to be about the spread of a shared Whig notion of liberty, American economy, trade and culture, but for others it was a more literal and possibly divinely destined empire.¹¹⁸

Democratic Isaac Stevens of Massachusetts received President Franklin Pierce’s nod as Washington Territory’s first governor mid-March and arrived in November 1853.¹¹⁹ The following April, Stevens wrote to incoming Territory engineer George B. McClellan with remarks about leading Territory characters. He suggested that most Whigs were suspect, but he could ‘confide freely’ with Democrats. Stevens described Poe as ‘a moderate Whig but a very trustworthy gent’, a rare compliment to a political opponent. Poe, he said, ‘will aid any body he can’ and ‘feels interest in Ter[r]i[toria]l progress’. Simmons, a fellow Democrat, was ‘a kind, frank, confiding man, of excellent judgment & strong [good] sense’ and Simpson Moses, although a Whig, ‘shows no favour to the [HBC].’¹²⁰ Poe’s position as ‘a moderate’ meant he worked across the emerging political divides and judged people on their character and issues on their merits as he saw them. The ‘non-partisan’ ideal

¹¹⁷ “Westward the Star of Empire Takes its Way,” *Columbian*, February 12, 1853 :2. Note the use of the *Spectator* motto.

¹¹⁸ Whigs hoped to establish an American empire of commerce by ‘expanding trade and Christian missions.’ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: Transformation of America, 1815-1848*: 705-706; Mark S. Joy, *American Expansionism, 1783-1860: A Manifest Destiny?* (London: Routledge, 2013), 62.

¹¹⁹ Kent D. Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens: Young Man in a Hurry* (Revised edition. Pullman, Washington: Washington State University Press, 2016), 145-150.

¹²⁰ Stevens to McClellan, April 24, 1853, George Brinton McClellan, *George Brinton McClellan Papers: Correspondence I, -1888, 1852, Aug. 17-1853, June 29*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss318980004/>. See also Philip Henry Overmeyer, ‘George B. McClellan and the Pacific Northwest’, *PNQ* 32 no. 1 (Jan. 1941): 13.

was challenged during this period as newspaper readers in the PNW preferred editors with strong opinions. Poe, the 'moderate gent', was comfortable in more civilised exchanges.

Poe had quickly taken an active role in the developing American community centred on Olympia. His background suited him for such a role and suggests that the militia tradition provided the framework for a particular kind of anti-aristocratic democratic system which was also infused with an implicit assumption of Indian dispossession.

Conclusion

Poe's family background and early life equipped him for civic service which was evident by the time of his arrival in the Oregon Country. His election as County Clerk on joining the Simmons-Bush party illustrates his desire and the recognition of his skills. After taking part in the California Gold Rush, Poe redoubled his efforts to build the region's infrastructure, focussing on Olympia, and supporting the creation of a separate territory north of the Columbia River. His thorough approach is evident in the detailed proposals produced by the Cowlitz Convention, which he had a hand in drafting. The issues, however, failed to gain traction either with the wider population or Oregon Territory's observer in Congress. The solution was to create the *Columbian* newspaper to promote the objectives of the Convention and Poe was appointed to arrange this.

Poe's choice to become a settler was a legitimate and popular one at the time and consistent with his family background. His civic involvement in creating an American space was not as common, yet was equally a recurrent theme in his family history. The establishment of the Tumwater community disrupted the HBC's accommodation with the Indians, subsequently attracting more Americans to Puget Sound. Americans replicated their system of governance, registered land claims,

built cabins and encouraged others to join them, and Poe had the skills to help each of these. By mid-1853 a census found 3,965 Americans in the region. While this was a rapid rise from a population of less than one percent of that in 1845, it still only represented about a tenth of the region's Indian population.

Poe may have felt that Olympia had no more challenges for him as 1853 proceeded; he had obtained the most senior elected position of the largest county in the new territory he helped create. In January he had been appointed Public Notary for Thurston County, which allowed him to charge fees set by the Legislature, representing some security and a respectable quasi-legal position.¹²¹ He acquired an Olympia town lot from his friend Bigelow for his brother Alexander who had just turned twenty-one, but had not secured a donation land claim for himself. He decided to resign as Clerk and recommended that his deputy, Urban Hicks, be appointed in his place. The County Commissioners accepted both recommendations and noted that Poe had resigned as 'Clerk, Auditor *etcetera etcetera*' suggesting a wide role in the community.¹²² Perhaps not all were unhappy to see him go, as 'Poe's Point' soon became 'Johnson's Point'.¹²³ Poe had finished his apprenticeship. He was ready to begin a new life in a new location.

¹²¹ 'An Act to provide for the election of Notaries Public and define their duties', *General Laws passed by the Legislative Assembly of The Territory of Oregon*, [Session of] December 6, 1852: 47-49. Papers of the provisional and territorial government of Oregon, 1841-1859, Washington State Library NW Micro 353.9795 OREGON 1951 4673.

¹²² *Thurston County First Record Book, 1852-1857 I*: 100 (renumbered 22), 12 September 1853; 105 (renumbered 27); 'October Term 1853': 444 (renumbered 5).

¹²³ Edmond S. Meany, *Origin of Washington Geographic Names* (University of Washington Press: Seattle, 1923), 125, suggests that the new name followed Ezra Meeker's visit in 1853.

Chapter Two: Boosting Town and Territory 1853-1859

Poe arrived on his claim on the promontory southwest of Bellingham Bay, at the northeast end of Puget Sound, late in the afternoon of Saturday, 17 September 1853. He arrived 'just in time to save my claim' (the deadline was 1 December) and urged his friend William W. Miller to 'visit or write'. Poe hired two Indians and wrote to Miller: 'with them and a canoe I will be able to cruise all I wish.'¹ The promontory became known as 'Poe's Point', the same name he had used for his earlier home near Olympia.²

This chapter examines the competing approaches to colonisation and 'boosting' adopted in Washington Territory during the period 1853-1859 when Poe was at Bellingham Bay. Governor Isaac Stevens' approach was top-down and brash, while Poe and the older settlers advocated a more organic, bottom-up approach that started with settlers and worked up to government. Stevens and newer settlers wanted the Indians and the British gone. Poe and many (though not all) older settlers who had benefitted from engagement with both groups still saw the Territory's future as American but were in less of a hurry and were more comfortable with ambiguity. Poe platted (surveyed and mapped) Whatcom town and was paid in land which he then needed to sell. This period was a high point in his public career with his election to the Territorial Legislative Council, a result of the town's expansion and a vehicle for him to make his own impact on Territory policy. Stevens sought to boost the Territory by imposing unequal treaties on Indian groups, many of whom resisted. Poe and other settlers objected to Stevens' methods, though not the objective. After Poe's term expired, he focussed on his own approach to boosting Whatcom.

This chapter sets out to examine different ideas of boosterism at play in the region. While Poe supported the development of infrastructure and migration through Whatcom, he opposed Stevens'

¹ Poe to Miller, 21 September 1853, Yale Series: 1 Box: 4 Folder: 240.

² Lelah Jackson Edson, *The Fourth Corner: Highlights from the Early Northwest* (Bellingham: Cox Brothers, 1951), 138.

autocratic rule to force Indian Treaties and declaration of martial law against some Territorians who objected. This chapter will analyse Poe's part in the boosting of Olympia and Whatcom, and his impact on the issues he took up in the Legislative Council.

Boosterism

The founders of several Washington Territory towns – Whatcom and Port Townsend near the British Columbia border, along with Olympia, Seattle, Steilacoom, and Tacoma – competed to become the PNW's next great city and to secure their personal fortunes. To regulate and encourage the settlements, the *Federal Townsites Act 1844* allowed towns or an organised company of town developers the same pre-emption rights on 320 acres as was granted to individual squatters in 1841, subject to the land being surveyed.³ Newspaper editors promoted this as a boosting tool.⁴ A study of Port Townsend proposes a 'more inclusive definition of boosters' to consider the actions of the community – not just the traditional focus on printed material.⁵ Boosting promoted a way of life, not simply economic development. Beyond spruiking economic opportunity, newspapers championed civic duty and moral uprightness as a magnet for families.

More broadly, James Belich argues that 'explosive' colonisation blended capital, communications, optimism, migration and literacy to encourage 'Anglo' growth. The flow of communication about economic prospects are important in his account, which also suggests that after initial euphoria dissipated it was followed by economic bust. Whatcom fits this model and (well after

³ Roy M. Robbins, *Our landed heritage: the public domain, 1776-1970* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 153; *Statutes at Large*, Vol. V: 657.

⁴ David Dary, *Red Blood & Black Ink: Journalism in the Old West* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 79.

⁵ Elaine Naylor, *Frontier boosters: Port Townsend and the culture of development in the American West, 1850-1895* (Montréal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), xii.

Poe) matches Belich's notion of 'recolonization', where through trial and error, settlers reconstitute their community to build something more sustainable.⁶

While American boosters displayed confidence in their ultimate success, it was far from assured. The Puget Sound region was a place of 'cultural mixing, and political contestation at the edges of empires.'⁷ Although this thesis focuses on one man's quest to make his community a thoroughly American place, there were differing ideas about what that meant in practice. Poe's story illustrates the complexity of this space, where different visions of America were brought into dialogue and where a range of transnational accommodations were adapted to regional dynamics. Booster visions and methods could be different, and such was the case in comparing the approaches of the Territory's new governor and earlier residents. Poe was part of these tensions as a member of the Legislature and a Whatcom booster. Boosters were united in the view that 'expansion westward was inevitable, and that the development of the frontier West's resources would naturally provide economic opportunity and social mobility unavailable in more settled regions, to those willing to participate in that development.'⁸ Gathering representatives of booster communities in the Legislature magnified their common goal: to make the Territory attractive to new settlers and markets. The vision coexisted with a borderland dynamic as the communities stumbled towards their sometimes-differing visions of America.

While the means of boosting the Territory differed, there was broad agreement on the objectives. Soon after Stevens' arrival, Secretary of the Territory Charles Mason formally recorded Washington's Territorial Seal with no apparent objections. At the centre is the 'Goddess of Hope' who points to 'Alki', Chinook for 'by and by'. On the right is the present (1854) represented by a homestead cabin, covered wagon, and virgin forests and on the left is a prosperous city of the future.⁹ Although

⁶ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth, the Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 80.

⁷ Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, 'On Borderlands', *Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (2011): 338.

⁸ Naylor, *Port Townsend*, 11 and footnote 59, 200-201.

⁹ "Secretary of the Territory Charles Mason adopted and recorded Washington's Territorial Seal," Washington State Archives, Accessed 15 December 2021, <https://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/timeline/detail.aspx?id=244> .

the most prominent part of the image is 'Alki' there is no hint of any Indians in the hoped-for future where not even the original landscape survives. The image reflects a widespread view of the Territory but also suggests what Phil Deloria describes as the 'complex lineaments of ... cultural identities that can never be captured by dichotomies.'¹⁰ Behind this complexity of settlers constructing their own native identity, however, is a pattern of non-Indians simultaneously using Indian ideas, imagery and words in pursuit of national, or at least Territorial, identity, while simultaneously making Indians invisible.¹¹ The settlers, who were overwhelmingly born in America, imagined they were inheriting Indian culture and transforming its landscape before treaty discussions had even begun.



Figure 2.1. Territorial Seal for Washington Territory recorded by Secretary of the Territory Charles Mason in 1854. Courtesy Washington Secretary of State.

¹⁰ Philip Joseph Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence, Kan.: Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2004) 14,

¹¹ Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) 64–8, 91, 101.

Poe's Land Claim and Life in Whatcom

Land acquisition was essential to the American vision of nation-building. Through the 1850 *Donation Land Claim Act*, Congress acknowledged claims made under the Oregon Country Provisional Government and encouraged new claimants. Any white or 'half Indian' male settler who was a citizen, or declared his intention to become one by 1 December 1851, who was over eighteen years of age, and residing in Oregon Territory on or before 1 December 1850, and who would cultivate and live on it for four years, would receive 320 acres. If married, he could receive another 320 acres. The provisions allowed the mixed descent children of Indian wives and prospective citizens to claim land. This encouraged HBC employees to stay in the territory and sparked some discussion on qualifications for citizenship in the Territorial Legislature. The claim deadline was subsequently extended into 1855.¹² Settlers who arrived after 1850 could claim only 160 acres. Poe submitted his claim on 31 October 1853.¹³

The federal government honoured claims before treaties or other 'legal' instruments to dispossess Indians were in place. Poe sold the right to his earlier registered claim and in August was looking for a new claim near Olympia, though this did not eventuate.¹⁴ He took the Whatcom claim and also the opportunity to be sole surveyor for the town with an option to sell town lots without the competition he had from Simmons and Goldsborough in Olympia.¹⁵ Poe's move allowed him to get in first on a newly developing town built around a mill, and he expected that his land claim would contain commercially viable quantities of coal.

¹² Frederick Jay Yonce, "Public Land Disposal in Washington," (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1969), 102–129., Carlos Arnaldo Schwantes, *Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History*, (Revised and enlarged, Lincoln, UNP - Nebraska 2014), 121.

¹³ Poe, Alonzo Marion, 'Donation Land Claim File 193', Records of the Bureau of Land Management, Oregon & Washington Donation Land Files: 1851-1903, Olympia Land Office.

¹⁴ Poe to Miller, 8 August 1853, Yale Series: 1 Box: 4 Folder: 240. He asks Miller to find a claim for him so they could be neighbours.

¹⁵ All three ran regular advertisements in Olympia, for example *Columbian* September 11 1852, 3.

Poe's Olympia experience was an asset to the new town. Henry Roeder and his business partner Russell Peabody learned about the waterfall on Whatcom Creek while visiting Olympia, so may have met Poe and come to some understanding with him there. Roeder imagined the falls would power a mill to supply timber to California following the Olympia model. According to Roeder's daughter, 'Chief Chowitzit [of the Lummi] not only gave [Roeder and Peabody] the Falls and the land surrounding it, but promised to send some of his men to help raise the mill', which was operational in 1853.¹⁶ The bland statement that Chief Chowitzit 'gave' Roeder the waterfall and land is not corroborated by any Lummi source and it is doubtful that this is what the chief imagined he was doing. However, the arrangement demonstrates the importance of land to the settler community and some (limited) recognition of Indigenous agency in negotiating the terms of its use.¹⁷ Although there is no evidence that Poe was involved in these discussions, they justified Roeder engaging Poe to survey the site ahead of settlement. There is no reason to doubt that some arrangement was made, but the Lummi may have simply welcomed the settlers into their home. The arrangement was not referred to in the Treaty of Point Elliott made two years later by Stevens and the Chief of the Lummi (amongst others), but there is also no record of the Lummi chief being upset with the new town. This seems to exemplify Phil Deloria's interpretation of the middle ground, which he described as 'diverse peoples adjust their differences through ... a process of creative, and often expedient misunderstandings' which assumes the existence of good will in the process.¹⁸ Poe used his civil engineering skills to survey and create the first map of Whatcom County and Roeder hired him to survey the town and paid him in town lots.¹⁹

¹⁶ Lottie Roeder Roth, *History of Whatcom County* (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Pub. Co., 1926) Vol 1, 18. In the event Victoria was a better market.

¹⁷ Indian identity was not only determined by disease transfer and frontier violence but also 'delicate diplomatic relations between Europeans and Indians, and the agency of Native Americans to tie their identities consciously to individualized and group-centred connections to the land...' Gregory D. Smithers, and Brooke N. Newman, *Native Diasporas: Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas* (Lincoln: UNP - Nebraska Paperback, 2014) 18 and fn 27.

¹⁸ Philip J. Deloria, "What Is the Middle Ground, Anyway?" *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (Jan., 2006): 16 quoting Richard White approvingly.

¹⁹ Brian L. Griffin, *Fairhaven: A history* (Bellingham, WA, Knox Cellars Publishing Company, 2015, 21, the arrangement included 1/12th interest in a number of blocks.

Poe's money problems in Whatcom illustrate the difficulties of the essentially barter economy, though his work with the customs service meant he could seek funds from his supervisor and friend William Miller. On 3 November 1853 Poe complained to Miller that he had not heard from anyone and that he was living a 'lonely life'. He asked Miller to 'elevate' funds for him as he had 'no boat or money'. He asked Miller again to 'visit or write' and told him he could obtain a donation claim for \$150 (an offer Miller did not take up).²⁰

A month later, Poe was in a better mood; his food order had arrived, so he lived 'in luxury'. Poe disregarded Miller's advice, offered in response to his loneliness, that he 'marry a Siwash' (a not uncommon solution to loneliness) and asked Miller to do a number of things for him, including making a request for traveling entertainer 'General Rag' to visit. Poe evidently missed the trappings of a larger town and the friends he and Miller had in common. He concluded with a request that Miller send him a book by Gordon on how to be 'an hispector', advance him \$100 and consider visiting to estimate the value of coal on his claim as his 'best chance to make money'.²¹ In December 1853, Poe followed up with a request for 'stationary and a flag'. Ebey had appointed him as Customs Inspector for Bellingham Bay, a position which he held until his election to the Legislative Council of the Territory.²² He had been offered \$12,000 for the coal on his claim but considered the offer too low. However, there is no record that he sold the coal, and while demand was high, many mines proved unviable.²³

Poe's oft expressed loneliness on moving to Whatcom seems to have been partly met with the arrival of his brother Americus, who is likely to have done the farming which the *Donation Act* required.²⁴ Poe discussed life with his Indian neighbour, 'Mr Touzer... a very valuable friend', who supplied him with potatoes, salmon and clams when he was unable obtain the 'luxury' of salted pork

²⁰ Poe to Miller, 3 November 1853, Yale Series: 1 Box: 4 Folder: 240.

²¹ Poe to Miller, 8 December 1853, Yale Series: 1 Box: 4 Folder: 240. 'Siwash' from the French for 'savage' referred to Indians in general.

²² 'Corrections', *Pioneer and Democrat*, 14 October 1854, 2.

²³ Poe to Miller, 12 December 1853, Yale Series: 1 Box: 4 Folder: 240; George Mustoe [Geology Department, Western Washington University] Correspondent, email message to author 18 July 2021.

²⁴ Americus lived a solitary farmer's life, marrying a widow in 1879.

or flour. Relations were friendly and more than purely transactional, and though the tone in his letters seems condescending (as with most people he discussed), it was also intended to entertain Miller:

Although by birth he ranks among the principal aristocracy of his tribe he is nevertheless very democratic in his general deportment and remarkably plain and unassuming in his dress, never wearing more than a Hickory shirt which is always too short by fully one half the length of his [penis] which gives him an appearance almost plainly picturesque.²⁵

Relations between the settlers and local Indians seem to have been good, building on Roeder's initial engagement and common cause in defence against raiding parties by northern Indians. As with other places on the Sound, where Indians outnumbered settlers by a significant margin, settlers relied on Indian labour and assistance in obtaining local food. Thus, friendly engagement with a convivial Poe would have been as natural as it was necessary – a perfect example of the middle ground.²⁶ Such close engagement had been part of Poe's life in Missouri and was reinforced for him in the PNW as the small Tumwater community made connections through HBC officials and lone white trappers (English, French and American) already in the region. Later settlers did not have the same experience and were less likely to engage with Indians.

Poe's move to Bellingham Bay was the opportunity for him to obtain a donation claim in a new town where he had the prospect of playing a more significant role than in Olympia, and with less competition. Without the relatively civilised trappings of Olympia and with no interest in farming, he would focus on boosting Whatcom and visiting his friends Ebey, Miller and the 'better' civilisation of the British fort-town of Victoria when he could. Poe, and those with whom he associated, did not conform to Frederick Turner's later popular 'Frontier Thesis'; he liked getting there and leading but

²⁵ Poe to Miller, Dec 8 1853, Yale Series:1 Box:3 Folder:240, 2. Poe had drawn the item for which the word is provided.

²⁶ Edson, *Fourth Quarter*: 6, quotes Edmund Fitzhugh, Indian Agent of the Bellingham Bay Agency to the Secretary of the Interior, June 18, 1857, who estimated that about 1,250 Indians lived in Whatcom County.

not farming, he was at home with influence, governance, culture, comradery and gentlemanliness but not land clearing.²⁷

The First Session of the Washington Legislature

The first session of the new Legislature was the chance for representatives to implement their Cowlitz vision, but the new governor brought his own ideas. Isaac I. Stevens, Washington Territory's first governor, was a former army officer and engineer who sought the appointment as political payback for supporting Democratic President Franklin Pierce in the 1852 election. Stevens arrived in Olympia, the territorial capital, in November 1853. He was a booster for the Puget Sound region and viewed it as an essential link in trade with Asia in competition with Britain. Stevens wanted a rapid increase of settlers to Washington and development of the territory's timber, mining, and agricultural potential. He was also Superintendent of Indian Affairs and quickly moved to make treaties to extinguish Indian title and to open land to settlers. The settlers were supportive of these aims but some older arrivals objected to his ruthlessness. Most treaties were signed during the winter of 1854–55, several of which the chiefs immediately challenged.²⁸ By 1860 some 5,000 Americans lived in Puget Sound, and although most settlers were focussed on farming for their own or local consumption, the wider economy was focused on selling timber to San Francisco, as Poe and the rest of the leadership group had anticipated.²⁹

Stevens detailed his intentions in provocative terms. He promised to serve 'with all the powers for which I am accountable to the great Director of Events'; a presidential appointment claiming accountability to divinity would not have been well received by (small-d) democrats. As a booster appealing to other boosters, Stevens described the 'great North-west' as made of 'elements of a great

²⁷ Discussed in the Introduction, 22-25.

²⁸ Kent D. Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens: Young Man in a Hurry* (originally published Utah, Brigham Young University Press, 1979, Washington, WSU Reprint series, 1993, revised 2016) 96, 103, 109.

²⁹ Naylor, *Port Townsend*, 25. The hope for coal exports did not eventuate due to the costs of extraction.

and varied development, commerce, manufactures, agriculture and the arts.' Americans had 'risen in their strength and are now reducing to subjection the vast wilderness between the two Oceans, and binding our people together with iron roads [the railroads yet to be built].' America's destiny reached further: the 'Eagle of our country's majesty has winged his course to the distant East, and Japan, China, Australia and Hindustan will be brought into fraternal and mutually beneficial communion with us.'³⁰ Stevens would direct greater energy into forcing treaties on designated Indian tribes without waiting for 'progressive providence.' This approach went against the judgement of 'old hands' such as Poe in forcing rapid colonial state-building.³¹ Stevens represented an impatient view of Manifest Destiny, which caused friction with many settlers who resented being ruled by an undemocratically appointed officer with no regard for local dynamics.

Stevens urged the legislature to ask Congress to fund a Surveyor General for the Territory to survey public lands and build roads to encourage migration and commerce. These surveys would also determine the amount of coal in the region, which Stevens believed was 'inexhaustible, of good quality and ... a vital element in our prosperity.'³² He reminded the legislature that the Territory's boundary line with Britain had been 'called in question'. The entrance to the Sound 'is in common with a foreign possession to the North, wielded by an almost despotic sway, and the abode of large bands of warlike aborigines.' However, American Indians, who numbered 'some ten thousand', were 'disposed to obey the laws and be good members of the State.'³³ Indians had no agency in Stevens' vision and were expected to sign treaties as presented.

Stevens noted that Indian title had not been extinguished, 'nor even a law passed to provide for its extinguishment.' His populist harangue in which all evils stemmed from Britain reflected the

³⁰ Australia was the source of the many woollen blankets used in land deals with Indian groups.

³¹ Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens*, 176.

³² *Journal of the Council of the Territory of Washington: together with the memorials and joint resolutions of the first session of Legislative Assembly, begun and held at Olympia, February 27th, 1854* (Olympia: G.B. Goudy, Public Printer, 1855), 13.

³³ *Journal 1854*, 15.

view of many settlers. He expected Congress to authorise him to 'provide for the extinguishment of the title to their lands' and provide reservations for them. He encouraged the development of new counties and sought to expand the judiciary – measures which would have been popular with those backing the *Columbian* and the Cowlitz Convention. The land titles of the HBC and the Puget Sound Agricultural Company needed to be extinguished also, but he also asserted that the HBC right to trade with Indians 'is not recognised, and will no longer be allowed.' A Territorial militia would be organised in conjunction with schools (including the proposed university) as 'especially necessary in this distant Territory' – marks of civilisation which Poe supported. Finally, Stevens urged immediate attention to be given to provisions for improved roads to support anticipated migration in the coming year.³⁴ These remarks would have been welcomed, but his aggressive approach to Indian treaties made him an easy target of 'detractors' as his sympathetic biographer identifies.³⁵

The Legislature, which met in Simmons' Olympia store, resumed on 1 March 1854 and had its own priorities to address. It considered a petition from Daniel Bigelow on behalf of Isaac Ebey and fifty-four other residents (including Poe) asking the legislature to recommend that Congress 'grant George Bush, a free mulatto, a donation of 640 acres of land, held and cultivated by him.' Following an agreed process, it was referred to the Memorial Committee and returned with their support on 16 March; the following day both houses supported the request.³⁶ Eleven months later, Congress approved the special exemption.³⁷ This unique recognition, a decade after Bush arrived in the region, allowed him to remain on Bush Prairie. Ebey's use of 'free mulatto' rather than 'citizen' recognised that prejudice remained as did the framing to emphasise Bush's unique, significant and generous work in assisting settlers, rather than a sense of equality by right.

³⁴ *Journal of the Council of the Territory of Washington: together with the memorials and joint resolutions of the first session of the Legislative Assembly, begun and held at Olympia, February 27th, 1854* (Washington Territory, Olympia: G.B. Goudy, 1855), 10-18.

³⁵ Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens*, xiv.

³⁶ *Journal of the Council of the Territory of Washington [First session]*, 20, 60. The full text at 187-188.

³⁷ *U.S. Congressional Globe*, 7 February 1855, 604.

The same session considered the issue of Bush's citizenship, perhaps knowing that separating them was a better move for Bush. Land ownership was essential for Bush to live in the region, where he provided food for poorer neighbours, whereas citizenship was symbolic. On 19 April 1854 a bill conferring the rights of citizenship upon George Bush was read a second time and the Legislature agreed to postpone it indefinitely. Legally they could not have agreed to the proposal because it contradicted the Constitution as interpreted by the US Supreme Court in *Dred Scott v. John F.A. Sandford* of 1857 which excluded blacks from citizenship.³⁸ It remained in this limbo until ratification of the fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution after the Civil War, which made all those born on US soil citizens regardless of race. Not rejecting the bill indicated that this was unfinished business and the most that a Territorial government could do to flag its discontent.³⁹ It was the strongest legislative option open to them to show support for Bush being made a citizen and went beyond the acknowledgement of his community service.

Soon after Poe left Olympia, new owners of the *Columbian* changed its name to the *Washington Pioneer* (reflecting the new name of the Territory) and as a Democratic journal it soon became the *Pioneer and Democrat* and won the contract for Public Printer. The paper reported Stevens' speeches and provided full accounts of the Legislative Assembly's deliberations by employing the clerks of each body, B. F. Kendall and Elwood Evans.⁴⁰ Poe at this time chaired the press committee of the Legislative Council. When the legislature proposed the purchase of ten copies of the *Pioneer and Democrat* for each member and officer of the Council, Poe successfully moved an amendment to purchase the same number of copies of the *Puget Sound Courier*, which was the voice of the minority Whig Party.⁴¹

³⁸ "14th Amendment US Constitution," Govinfo.gov. [1565-7] accessed 13 March 2022
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CONAN-1992/pdf/GPO-CONAN-1992-10-15.pdf>

³⁹ *Journal of the Council [First session]*, 100, 108.

⁴⁰ 'The Legislature', *Pioneer and Democrat*, March 4 1854, 2.

⁴¹ Washington, *Journal of the Council of the Territory of Washington: Being the Third Session of the Legislative Assembly, Begun and Held at Olympia, December 3d, 1855* (Olympia: Geo. B. Goudy, Public Printer, 1856), 24.

Transitional Borderland Ambiguity

Stevens' impatience to move things along on behalf of the president could not ignore the reality of Puget Sound as a liminal space. Americans might want the British gone and Indians removed, but they needed HBC goods, employment and protection as well as Indian labour, goodwill and food. Stevens' determination to consolidate American settlement as quickly as possible created unnecessary conflict which was resisted by older hands like Poe who were content that their locally developed consensus with its ambiguities, was more democratic – more American – than the impositions of a distant metropole. Careful management of Indian affairs, in particular Indian access to alcohol, and access to Indian land were priorities for Poe and the older settlers, whereas newer settlers liked Stevens' urgency in acquiring land.

Stevens organised four treaty councils in Puget Sound between December 1854 and February 1855 then invited tribal representatives to affix their marks to the treaties. Few understood the implications of the treaties, in which Indigenous groups lost most of their land in exchange for goods remote reservations and fishing rights (which later proved useful). Two treaties with councils east of the Cascades soon resulted in violence, and the Whig *Puget Sound Courier* blamed 'King Stevens' comparing him unfavourably to Andrew Jackson. The Army's Pacific Commander General John Wool 'urged calm', effectively opposing Stevens.⁴² Poe and other older settlers supported Wool, however, Stevens complained to Washington City about the general who then had to defend himself.

Indian tribes could not have understood the treaty terms as they were translated verbally into Chinook, a trading language which had no words for the concepts involved. There is credible evidence that some tribes signed the treaties out of a sense of powerlessness. Chief Leschi left the meetings without signing the treaty because he objected to what was proposed.⁴³ His protest was particularly

⁴² *Puget Sound Courier*, September 28 October 19, November 23, 1855; *Pioneer and Democrat*, October 19, 26, 1855; Richards, *Stevens*, 225-229.

⁴³ Cecelia Svinth Carpenter, *They Walked Before: The Indians of Washington State*. (Washington: Washington State American Revolution Bicentennial Commission), 29, which takes into account Indians oral histories. Her conclusions run counter Richards, *Stevens*, 396, fn 21 who, writing in 1979, asserted that 'there is no evidence

wounding for Stevens and made Leschi a target of the governor's anger because Leschi and his half-brother Quiemuth were influential. The tradition that Leschi did not 'sign' (and was not present on the day concerned) begs the question of who added the 'X' next to his name. Nisqually oral history holds that Simmons (Indian Agent who translated at the meetings) signed for Leschi. Simmons himself did not claim this, however he made humorous mileage out of being an 'illiterate Post Master', perhaps in an indirect reference to his action.⁴⁴

In 1855, Leschi travelled to Olympia to seek modifications to the terms of the treaty, which he would have seen as an imposition rather than an agreement, but was unsuccessful. Acting Governor Charles Mason believed (correctly) that Leschi might try to convince other tribal leaders to express similar dissatisfaction and dispatched the Olympia-based Puget Sound Rangers headed by Captain Charles Eaton to take Leschi and Quiemuth into custody. In October 1855, some of Eaton's Rangers caught up with a Nisqually group, and a fight ensued in which militiaman Abram Moses were killed. Though Leschi was not present during the fighting, Stevens blamed him for the killing and dispatched more troops to apprehend him. Poe was a 2nd Lieutenant in the unit between 20 October 1855 and 21 January 1856. He purchased horses for the unit and recruited members from Olympia, and the day after Moses' death warned settlers of impending danger.⁴⁵ This conflict was one of several with Indian groups collectively referred to as 'The Indian Wars' and were a consequence of Indian resistance to the treaties forced upon them.⁴⁶

to support this view' and that no chief present objected to the treaties at the time. However, the fact that Stevens was expecting discontent might come from Leschi suggests that he did not see imagine that everything had been settled with the treaties.

⁴⁴ Robert E. Ficken, *Washington Territory*, (Washington: Pullman, 2002): 46. Simmons was not illiterate; his signature appears in several places and he wrote lengthy reports in his role in Indian Affairs.

⁴⁵ AR82-1-12-5265, AR82-1-12-5264 and AR82-1-12-5263, Military Department, Indian War Muster Rolls, 1855-1856, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives, accessed 3 November 2021. <http://digitalarchives.wa.gov> . Coincidentally B. F. Kendall audited his accounts. Meeker, *Pioneer Reminiscences*, 281; Virgil F. Field, *The official history of the Washington National Guard, Volume 2 Washington Territorial Militia in the Indian Wars of 1855-56* (Camp Murray, Wash: Washington State Military Department, Office of the Adjutant General, 2012), 87. His own horse was borrowed. U. E. Hicks, *Yakima and Klickitat Indian wars, 1855 and 1856: personal recollections of Captain U. E. Hicks* (Portland: [George] Himes the Printer, [1886]), 3.

⁴⁶ Richards, *Stevens*, 241-256.

Stevens then undertook a campaign against the mixed-race HBC settlers, seizing their property and declaring martial law in Pierce County on 2 April 1856. When Territorial Judge Edward Lander declared this illegal, Stevens arrested the judge. Lander may also have been a target as part of a Whig stronghold in Pierce County. Lander and the settlers were ultimately released and Lander fined Stevens \$50 for contempt. Stevens pardoned himself but was subsequently rebuked by the Legislature.⁴⁷ Poe was on the forefront of pressing the governor for copies of all correspondence relating to the war and martial law. Poe's objections show that he saw the governor's action was an undemocratic power-play rather than an effort to protect settlers from the Indians.⁴⁸ Stevens represented arbitrary action on the part of the distant metropole, for which the Legislature mildly censured him.

Poe's silence on the issue of fairness to Indians needs to be considered with two other factors. After his term as governor ended, Stevens was elected as the Territory's representative to Congress (a term which ended with his death in the Civil War), suggesting that the voting population supported his actions. Council members were no doubt aware of public opinion which, with their belief in democratic compromise, may explain their cautious approach to fairness towards Indians and Stevens' manner. Poe, Simmons and the HBC all showed genuine concern for Indian welfare, albeit paternalistically.

The complexity and nature of frontier violence is illustrated in the death of Poe's friend Isaac Ebey. In August 1857, a party of Kake Indians (a Tingit group whose home was in south-eastern Alaska) travelled by canoe from Vancouver Island into Puget Sound to avenge the deaths of one of their chiefs and other tribal members in an attack by the *USS Massachusetts* the previous year. They were searching for a *Hyas Tyee* (great chief): someone of equivalent status. Not finding their intended victim, they asked white settlers whom they regarded as a *Hyas Tyee* and were told of Isaac Ebey at

⁴⁷ Richard Kluger, *The Bitter Waters of Medicine Creek: A Tragic Clash Between White and Native America* (Vintage Books, 2012): 174–175; Richards, *Stevens*, 262-6.

⁴⁸ *Journal* 1856, 13-14, 26, 44; Richards, *Stevens*, 269-271.

Whidbey Island. They sought him out and beheaded him, though his family escaped. The group then crossed the Sound landing at Poe's Point and beheaded two sentries who had fallen asleep drunk. The group fired on Poe's cabin, though he was apparently unharmed and then proceeded (presumably on horseback) to warn other residents of the danger. While the incident fed into a fear of unexpected attack, the Kake (who were known to be on bad terms with local Indians) had been able to interact with settlers in order to identify Ebey and find where he lived without apparently raising a general alarm.⁴⁹

The skirmishes of the 'Indian Wars' often lacked clear objectives and involved the mixed motives of many players. If taken together they are best understood as wars of resistance by Indigenous populations against what they regarded as unfair treaties and land incursions. Stevens successfully pressed for Leschi to be hanged in 1858 over the death of Abram Moses in combat. Citizens such as Ezra Meeker spoke against Stevens and believed Leschi was not guilty because he was somewhere else at the time. At a second trial the defence was essentially that as a matter of law the charge was invalid because the parties were at war, but the court dismissed this view.⁵⁰

Ezra Meeker, Poe and others critical of Stevens insisted that Indians had legitimate complaints while those supportive of Stevens claimed that HBC employees 'tampered with' their Indigenous customers in a conspiracy to push Americans out of the region.⁵¹ This was clearly an example of the dominant American metropole forcing its will on the original inhabitants while older settlers often remained conflicted about such moves. This scenario illustrates Lisa Ford's view that these relations were sometimes clarified, and sometimes muddied by criminal cases. Ford uses two case studies to make observations which are also evident in the PNW. Initially a legal pluralism operated, represented by Poe and Meeker, which presumed settler autonomy from the metropole. Stevens represented the

⁴⁹ Harry N. M. Winton, and Geo W. Corliss "The death of Colonel Isaac N. Ebey, 1857." *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 33 no. 3 (July 1942): 325-347.

⁵⁰ In 2004 a historical court in Pierce County, ruled that 'as a legal combatant of the Indian War... Leschi should not have been held accountable under law for the death of an enemy soldier'. Lisa Blee, *Framing Chief Leschi: Narratives and the Politics of Historical Justice* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

⁵¹ Blee, *Framing Chief Leschi*, 211.

imposition of a more precisely-defined territorial sovereignty on what had previously been plurally-governed borderlands, and did so by imposing legal jurisdiction on Indians which not surprisingly led to conflict. Related to that pluralism is settlers use of Indian motifs to assert their new identity. Miranda Johnson observes that settler societies needed new stories of foundation to locate them more convincingly in their own regions. The appropriation of indigenous motifs permitted settlers to construct an autonomous relationship to their metropole that emphasised their identity in the settler dominions. It also enabled settlers to differentiate themselves from later non-white immigrants.⁵² The ‘Indian Wars’ wound down with tribes being relegated to their reservations. Stevens was elected Territorial delegate to Congress in 1857 and 1858, suggesting that a majority of settlers supported his actions – though Poe was not one of them.

Poe’s Political Profile

Poe continued to build his own civic role in both Whatcom and Olympia, maintaining a Whig view even as the party was waning in popularity. He aimed to boost the Territory through supporting economic and social developments. His position brought him into contact with Governor Stevens but his careful determination not to be confrontational earned Stevens’ respect. In March 1854, following the creation of Whatcom County, Poe was appointed County Auditor, a role similar to County Clerk in Oregon. In about September, he was elected to the second session of the Territorial Legislative Council as a Whig candidate for Whatcom and served a three-year term. Through this period Democrats were

⁵² Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788-1836* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 20, 24, 30, 208., Miranda C. L. Johnson *The Land Is Our History: Indigeneity, Law, and the Settler State* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5, fn 17. This scenario was described earlier in, Alexandra Harmon, “Treaties and War” in, *Indians in the making: ethnic relations and Indian identities around Puget Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 72-102.

a growing majority, reflecting a nation-wide trend.⁵³ The only known portrait of Poe (Figure 2.2) came from his time in Whatcom.⁵⁴

During the October 1854 session of the District Court held on Whidby Island, Judge Edward Lander appointed Attorneys Elwood Evans, William H. Wallace and J. Patten Anderson to examine Poe, who had applied for admission to practice law, and on Wallace's nomination he was admitted.⁵⁵ Lander, like Poe, was one of the few Whigs not to join the Republican Party or the Democrats. Poe stayed with Ebey during this examination process and despite his appointments needed Miller to advance him money to live on.⁵⁶ Once elected, and with the need to attend Legislative Council meetings in Olympia over the winter, Poe could maintain his networks there as it continued to grow and was often there when the Council was not meeting.

Poe took up his work on the Council with dedication. His familiarity with procedure and eagerness to progress Council business expeditiously are evident in the Council journals. He is mentioned over 400 times during his term, often moving procedural motions. There were fifteen committees and Poe was appointed to:

- Ways and Means' (finance and budget)
- Education (provisions for schools, including universities which at this stage were largely about allocation of land some of which could be sold to fund capital works)
- Engrossed Bills (to examine the language and format of proposed bills)
- Printing (to ensure that records and laws of the Legislature were promoted and disseminated)
- Memorials (drafting recommendations to Congress).

⁵³ *Statutes of the Territory of Washington*, 488. William Cullen, II. C. Page, R. V. Peabody were appointed to the board of county commissioners and Ellis Barnes as sheriff, to hold office until elections took place.

⁵⁴ Photographed from an unknown original in Whatcom by local historian Percival R. Jeffcott circa 1940.

⁵⁵ Arthur S. Beardsley, and Donald A. McDonald, 'The Courts and Early Bar of the Washington Territory', *Washington Law Review & State Bar Journal*, 14:2, 57 (1942): 70.

⁵⁶ Ebey to Miller, 15 November 1854, Yale Series: 1 Box: 2 Folder: 88.

While the nature of and appointment to committees shows a rotational pattern, Poe maintained an interest in the work of these initial committees alongside his subsequent appointments.⁵⁷

For the Legislature's fourth session Poe was appointed to two new committees: Military Affairs and Indian Affairs; these issues were the most troublesome for the young Territory, with several councillors opposing the governor. Poe was not shy about being a lone dissenter on some issues, and while the details of defeated propositions were not recorded, the broad substance can be determined: the Legislature expected the governor to be accountable to it, not the reverse. A focus became the governor's actions in declaring martial law in early 1856. Stevens felt obliged to proceed with treaties as instructed by Washington City, and there was no alternative way of acquiring Indian lands open to him. Either way, Stevens' messages to the 1854 and 1855 legislature were uncompromising.⁵⁸

An examination of the issues Poe took up helps to clarify how his views compared to the rest of the legislature. Many of his interests stemmed from personal experience and networks rather than a political position, though he maintained Whig views while most of his colleagues became Republican. By staying the same he moved from representing a majority position to holding an individual one. He was elected to the legislature as Whig and his successor ran on a Democratic ticket, reflecting national changes in party fortunes. His friend William W. Miller, whose initial appointment as Deputy Collector of Customs was a political appointment, adapted to the times and became a Democrat. Poe supported Miller's efforts and worked with the *Pioneer and Democrat* editors. Some editors, notably McElroy, original co-editor of the *Columbian*, were happy to change their stripes for political patronage to acquire government work. Elwood Evans made the change from Whig to Republican and claimed to have convinced many including Poe to make the same transition.⁵⁹ Poe,

⁵⁷ *Journal 1854*, 8 – 12.

⁵⁸ Richards, *Stevens*, 184-9.

⁵⁹ Elwood Evans and Oregon North Pacific History Company of Portland, *History of the Pacific Northwest : Washington and Oregon : Embracing an Account of the Original Discoveries on the Pacific Coast of North America : And a Description of the Conquest, Settlement and Subjugation of the Vast Country Included in the*

however, was comfortable as an 'Old Whig' making decisions based on his assessment of the merits of each issue, with one eye on supporting individuals and issues he identified, along with some apparent horse-trading skills while also looking for ways to improve his economic circumstances.

In 1854 the *Kansas-Nebraska Act* overturned the Missouri Compromise, which since 1820 provided that the number of slave and non-slave states should be kept in balance. In 1857, the Supreme Court ruled that a slave (Dred Scott) who had resided in a free state and territory was not entitled to freedom; that African Americans were not citizens; and that the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had declared free all territories west of Missouri and north of latitude 36°30', was unconstitutional. The decision added fuel to the slavery controversy and pushed the country closer to civil war.⁶⁰ Poe had helped draft the 1855 Territorial Whig statement which supported the Missouri Compromise on the basis that it guaranteed slavery 'was forever banished' from Washington Territory and preserved the Union, whereas Democrats agreed with it being unconstitutional (See Table 2.1).⁶¹ For Territorians, the main issue was whether Democratic President Franklin Pierce was trustworthy, as they both believed that the federal government should support infrastructure and not impose unelected officers. The point at issue was whether the metropole should simply impose its will through the unelected governor.

Original Territory of Oregon : Also Interesting Biographies of the Earliest Settlers and More Prominent Men and Women of the Pacific Northwest, 2 Vols. (Portland, Or.: North Pacific History Co., 1889), 505-6.

⁶⁰ John Craig Hammons, (March 2019) 'President, Planter, Politician: James Monroe, the Missouri Crisis, and the Politics of Slavery' *Journal of American History* 105 (4 March 2019): 843–867.

⁶¹ 'Whig Territorial Convention', *Puget Sound Courier*, May 19, 1855:3.

Comparative position of the Washington Territory political parties shows major differences in the Territory around presidential character and appointments.

Democrat convention, 1855

Whig response, 14 May 1855

"WHEREAS—As a political organization is the union of individuals, to establish principles of action and carry out measures of policy;

Therefore, the democratic party of the Territory of Washington, in Convention assembled, do hereby proclaim their principles and measures, in the following resolutions:

1. *Resolved*—That we adhere with inflexible constancy to the great cardinal principles of the democratic faith—a strict construction of delegated power, and a strict observance of the principles of the distribution of Power. The general government has limited powers for certain general purposes, and the remaining powers are with the States and Territories, distributed in precinct, town, county, state or territorial organizations. The object of government is to protect individuals in the exercise of their natural rights. The best government is that which governs least. Public affairs should be managed with economy and a single eye to the public good, and public officers should be selected for their integrity, ability, and sound political faith.

2. *Resolved*—That the powers of Congress over the Territories, should be exerted, mainly, for the management of the government domain, and the protection of the Indian tribes, and that it is the duty of the general government to facilitate the settlement of the Territories, by the construction of roads, the establishment of post routes, the erection of public buildings, and the defence of the Territories against the encroachment of foreign powers.

3. *Resolved*—That the principles establishing the distribution of power, as between the general government and the states, should govern the action of Congress upon the territories. The territories as well as the states, should regulate their own domestic affairs, firmly resisting any encroachments in violation of this right.—The repeal of the Missouri Compromise was right, for it was undoing a wrong. Congress has not power to grant or withhold rights by latitudinal lines.

4. *Resolved*—That the democratic party of the Territory, desire that this country should pursue a liberal policy towards foreign emigrants, and it reprobates as dangerous to liberty and fraught with mischief a spirit of intolerance and proscription towards its foreign citizens, or the member of any religious faith.

Our country is the asylum of liberty, the home and refuge of the oppressed. It is the duty of the democratic party to see that such continues to be the fair record of our country's fame, and to sternly oppose all associations having different object in view, and the principles of Know-Nothingism have our determined opposition.

5. *Resolved*—That this Convention most earnestly protest against the policy of foreign importations for the purpose of filling political positions within the Territory.

6. *Resolved*—That we have entire confidence in the ability and integrity of President Pierce. His steady foreign policy, his judicious exercise of the veto power, and his general course commands our respect and confidence."

Convention met pursuant to adjournment, the Committee on resolutions reported the following, *seriatim*, which were adopted.

Resolved, That as Whigs, we advocate the doctrines of the American system, especially favoring liberal appropriations by the General Government for the improvement of rivers and harbors.

Resolved, That there is urgent necessity for the early construction of the Pacific railroad, and that the policy of the Whig party, in relation to internal improvements, contemplates that the same shall be done at the expense of the General Government.

Resolved, That we are in favor of the acquisition of the Sandwich Islands.

Resolved, That the Missouri Compromise was enacted to secure the safety, well being and integrity of our national union; that thirty-four years acquiescence in its provisions, proved its practical utility and that it fully met the end for which it was designed, that the great popular verdict of the country in favor of the adjustment measures of 1850 re-asserted the confidence of the nation, is the principles of that great measure, and that its repeal by the enactment of the Nebraska-Kansas bill, was inexpedient and wrong; that the quiet condition of the country in 1854, warranted no such violation of the plighted faith then existing between the various sections of the Union.

Resolved, That we are jealous of the rights of sovereignty to which we as a Territory, are entitled. That when Washington Territory becomes a State we held that we, can adopt our own constitution regulating our own local and municipal affairs; and that we came here with the knowledge that the principles of the Ordinance of '87 were extended by Congress over this Territory—that by the Missouri Compromise, this part of the national domain, was consecrated to freedom, that by the adjustment measures of 1850 slavery was forever banished from this Territory, and we cannot conceive that with such solemn, and oft repeated notice as to this Territory being free, that Congress should insist upon its being kept free, that our rights of sovereignty are at all invaded.

Resolved, That we protest most earnestly against this, or any succeeding Administration, exporting to this Territory any more talent in the shape of officers: We have the means within ourselves for self-government, and the material of which to constitute every officer required in the administration of the Territory.

Resolved, That we have no confidence in the ability of President Pierce. His unsteady foreign policy, his injudicious exercise of the veto power, and his general course demands our disrespect and condemnation.

Table 2.1. Comparative position of the Washington Territory political parties, *Puget Sound Courier* May 19, 1855, 3. Poe was a member of the drafting committee which produced the Whig statement.

During the 1855 session of the Legislature, Poe introduced a bill to incorporate the 'Olympia Lodge, No. 1, of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows', which was approved without opposition. Leading members included Judge Christopher C. Hewitt, Miller and Poe. The organisation provided Poe with a means of maintaining his Olympia networks and an opportunity for regular educated comradery. Poe's membership entry describes him as a 'surveyor' and 'resident in Olympia'. Oddfellows and Freemasons were mutual aid societies but the former, to which Poe gravitated, was more socially progressive, admitting women earlier the same year and supporting social movements such as temperance, providing further clues about Poe's view.

Poe continued to press the need to control Indian access to alcohol, with the two parts of the problem being greed on the part of some white settlers in selling liquor to Indians, and the Indians' alleged inability to control their use of alcohol being a major cause of violence. This reflected the earlier influential experience of the HBC. Simmons was Indian Agent for the Puget Sound District from 1854 to 1861 and in July 1858 conducted a meeting on the beach at Whatcom attended by '200 Indians and an equal number of whites' where he set out a mutually respectful but paternalistic approach for both parties to help local Indians resist the misuse of alcohol.⁶²

The same concern for political and social stability that motivated Poe's views about Indians and alcohol also extended to his concern for gentlemanliness in his own conduct and other politicians. Poe's propriety with the use of confidential information is evident in his decision to contest William Strickler's eligibility to sit on the Council without offering a specific reason, apparently giving Strickler the opportunity to resign. Not surprisingly, no other members supported Poe.⁶³ The only connection between the two men is that they worked for the Customs Service as surveyors under Tilton. Poe was aware of Strickler's proposed employment arrangements but did not raise it again in Council. On 18 February 1856, the *Pioneer and Democrat* published an item that 'having received the appointment

⁶² 'A "Talk" to the Indians', *Northern Light*, July 24, 1858, 3.

⁶³ *Journal 1855*, 23, 55.

as Register of the Land Office of this territory, W.A. Strickler has resigned his Council seat. All that we could hope for, or wish, is, that as good and true a democrat may be elected in his place.’⁶⁴ Strickler’s earlier resignation may have changed the outcome of some votes particularly in relation to Stevens, whom he supported. Poe gave Strickler an opportunity honourably without breaking a confidence.

The other position Poe took on a matter of principle was to support women in divorce. During this period, divorce could only be granted by the Legislature. In three of the four cases considered by the Council during his term, Poe and Bigelow were appointed to the committee with oversight to understand the issues behind each case. In *Easterbrook verses Easterbrook* Poe attempted to establish a legal framework which would remove the need to consider each case individually (which eventually occurred). In the same case he and Daniel Bigelow presented a minority report suggesting that evidence had been fabricated.⁶⁵ Poe’s actions effectively supported the wife who could be left without sufficient financial support after a divorce – something he was made aware of in the case of his own mother only five years before. In the case of *White verses White*, the case was indefinitely postponed on his recommendation after speaking to witnesses.⁶⁶ Poe and Bigelow often took the same view on issues in the legislature and on divorce cases. Like Poe, Bigelow helped found the Methodist Episcopal Church in Olympia, promoted public education in the Territory and advocated for the improved status of women in divorce proceedings.⁶⁷

Poe sought to repeal of the Territory’s ‘Exemption law’ but got no support.⁶⁸ He submitted a minority report asserting that it was unnecessary but also unfair to particular groups such as unmarried women over twenty-one or the poor who might be left without credit as a result.⁶⁹ The law itself included provisions which preserved necessities of life, so it is unusual that Poe sought repeal

⁶⁴ *Pioneer and Democrat*, 18 February, 1856, 2.

⁶⁵ *Journal 1854*, 23, 64, 157.

⁶⁶ *Journal 1856*, 63, 70

⁶⁷ Dennis Weber, ‘The Creation of Washington: Securing Democracy North of the Columbia’, *Columbia The Magazine of Northwest History* 17, Fall 2003.

⁶⁸ *Journal 1856*, 21, 28.

⁶⁹ *Journal 1856*, 33.

rather than amendment.⁷⁰ The editor of the *Pioneer and Democrat*, J. W. Wiley, a founding editor of the *Columbian* and fellow Council member, took the opportunity to lambast Poe; claiming Poe's proposal was 'outraging humanity' and 'pandering to the interest of the Shylock'. Wiley admonished his readers to 'remember' and 'deal out to that party a merited rebuke at the ballot box at the next election'.⁷¹ The Whigs, as Wiley knew, were waning, so it was a peremptory blow for a Democratic candidate in Whatcom at the next election, but Poe's intentions, which may have come from some personal experience, remain opaque. When the proposal finally came for a vote, the result was to leave the proposal on the table indefinitely by a vote of 6/2.⁷² This seemed like a more polite option than voting it down. Poe however sought to propose an amendment to the *Act* following which a petition was received from Urban Hicks and 44 others asking that further consideration be postponed indefinitely.⁷³

Education was a concern for Poe as a Methodist, an Odd Fellow, and a surveyor, and he often took a leading role in Council discussions. Land law provided for a defined amount to be set aside for educational purposes with some of it sold to provide funds for institution building. To facilitate this the designated areas had to be surveyed and blocs for sale identified. Poe presented a minority report on this issue.⁷⁴ He was an enthusiastic supporter of efforts to create a Territorial University to boost the culture of the Territory and also involved surveying the designated lands, parts of which could be then sold to raise funds for the institution. He recognised that the location of the university would also support the development of the town in which it was located and actively tested Council support for various locations. These efforts demonstrated that Council members all wished the university to be in their own county.⁷⁵ Poe worked with Daniel Bagley (appointed university regent by the Legislature), and took the same interest in public schools. His interests in both cases were two-fold: to encourage

⁷⁰ *Laws of Washington* 178-9

⁷¹ 'A View of the Political Battlefield,' *Pioneer and Democrat*, January 18, 1856, 2.

⁷² *Journal* 1854, 47.

⁷³ *Journal* 1856 49, 52 and 97. His term finished before the issue was finalised.

⁷⁴ *Journal* 1854, 24.

⁷⁵ *Journal* 1854, 30 ff, 67,

education as a boosting activity, a place for officer training and to provide professional services in surveying which were necessary before such land could be sold to finance institutions concerned.⁷⁶

Poe took an interest in the role of the press and Public Printer (the position authorised to print the records of the Legislature) while on Council. Given his role in establishing the *Columbian* this is not a surprise, and others on the Council accepted that he was interested in these roles. Poe introduced a motion 'that members be provided with copies of the *Pioneer and Democrat* and *Puget Sound Herald*, that the *Pioneer and Democrat* be provided with a desk and chair at Council meetings'; the reporters were effectively to record the minutes and print them in the paper, which they did with rare comments in editorials.⁷⁷

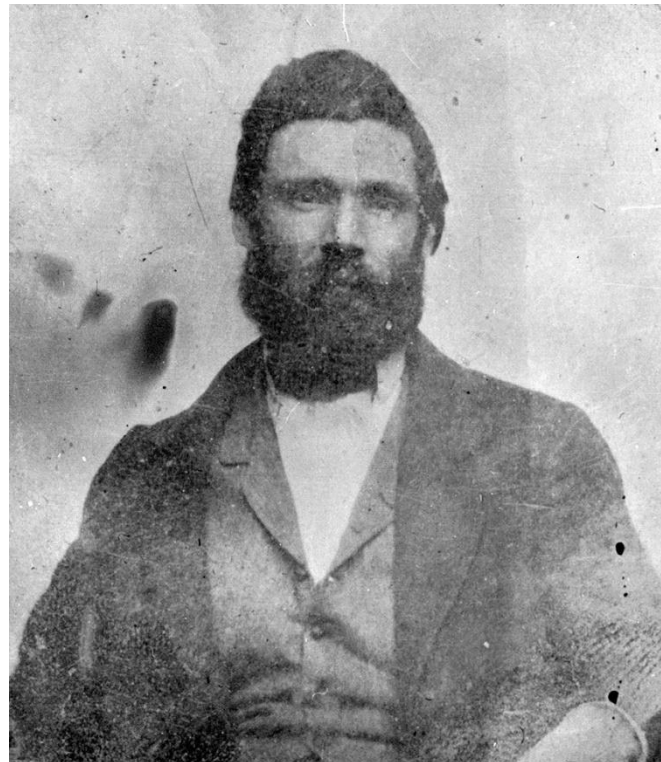


Figure 2.2. Poe in Whatcom circa 1855. Image from P. R Jeffcott Papers and Photographs #658, Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Western Libraries Heritage Resources, Western Washington University, used and reversed with permission.

⁷⁶ *Journal 1854*, 144, 157; Alonzo M. Poe, "Letter to Superintendent of Common Schools, Winfield Scott Ebey, regarding land plats in Island County and a claim by a Catholic mission," September 29, 1860, University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Digital ID Number PNW00096.

⁷⁷ *Journal 1854*, 18.

Whatcom Boom and Bust

The beach at Whatcom when Poe arrived is reminiscent of Greg Dening's metaphorical beach where cultures meet. The thick forest above the shoreline was so dense that settlers pitched their tents on the beach. The timber seemed to call out to be cut, dressed and exported, but that would take time, and only after that could a settlement be built and farmland opened up. At the same time, Poe was part of a group which saw a solution in creating a massive wharf which would be the place to load the timber onto ships but would also become the heart of the town. The E Street Wharf company 'created' their own land on top of the swampy shoreline. Poe also became a prominent leader in Whatcom's business community; he sold land, conducted surveys and was secretary to the Wharf Company. Boosting, while often conducted through the press, was more than simply promoting the economic benefits of a town; it also involved developing a 'good reputation' and projecting the image of a desirable location, ideal for families, supported by community institutions. The aim was to attract settlers as well as speculators and investors.⁷⁸

In 1858, the high point of Whatcom's success, a town dinner began with formal toasts which illustrate what the mostly male settlers considered important in their lives. After toasting the guests of honour, the president and the governor were: 'The Press. First in the order of civilizing and enlightening pioneer communities', followed by 'The Pioneers of Washington Territory' (which Simmons responded to in Chinook), then 'The Ladies. Always in our hearts, at home or abroad' and finally 'American soil, first, last, and all the time.' Poe was invited to respond to this toast, though none of the responses were recorded.⁷⁹

An important skill for Poe in town boosting was land surveying, a profession which developed between 1800 and 1850. Many, including Poe, described themselves as 'civil engineer' but those who mastered it had other careers, such as shopkeeping or farming. Between 1830 and 1841, there were

⁷⁸ Naylor, *Frontier Boosters*, 200-201

⁷⁹ *Northern Light*, August 28, 1858:2.

at least fifteen American schools of civil engineering, yet the profession consisted mainly of men without formal training as engineers in an apprentice system.⁸⁰ The first Washington Territory Surveyor General, James Tilton, would name Poe a U.S. Deputy Surveyor and Examiner of Surveys in 1855, indicating that he had already acquired recognised skills.⁸¹

In 1858, San Francisco newspaperman William Bausman heard of the discovery of gold on the Fraser River in British Columbia and thought providing miners with a newspaper might be a profitable venture, so he boarded a steamer for Bellingham Bay, taking a printing press with him. Enroute, he influenced others to join him rather than go to Victoria because they imagined he had some sort of inside knowledge.⁸² Roeder welcomed Bausman and gave him space to locate his newspaper, promising the first edition of the *Northern Light* by 3 July would help make Whatcom 'THE [sic] American town of the north.'⁸³ Poe's precise involvement is not known, but he had connections in San Francisco and may have met Bausman before he came to Whatcom. Poe would have encouraged Bausman, whose Whatcom office faced Poe's on the Wharf and would have been involved in the rental arrangements.⁸⁴

Poe's interest in the press remained and he combined his surveying skills, his boosting efforts and his links with San Francisco by sending an item to the *Daily Alta California*, which was published on 10 July 1858 (Figure 2.3). He was aiming to start another gold rush, this time to boost traffic through Whatcom. The *Alta California* carried further success stories of miners. Poe also responded to an anonymous letter to another newspaper in California questioning the veracity of his map. Poe's entertaining response described the writer as 'a liar for the Hudson's Bay Company.' He continued: 'I never hired myself to misrepresent facts to the great disadvantage of the many for the pecuniary

⁸⁰ Carole Zellie, 'An Investigation of Nineteenth Century Surveyors and Land Planners in Massachusetts: 1830-1860', *Landscape Journal*, 1, no. 2 (Fall 1982): 97, referring to Daniel Hovey Calhoun, *The American Civil Engineer: Origins and Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass: Technology Press, 1960).

⁸¹ Jerry C Olson, *Surveying North of the River, The Surveyors Associated with the Washington Survey General's Office in the Contract Era, 1851-1910* (Winter Creek Ranch, Ariel Washington, 2018), Vol 2: 390.

⁸² Roth, *History of Whatcom* I, 573, 94.

⁸³ *Northern Light*, 3 July 1858, 1.

⁸⁴ Wharf company records seem not to have survived but references in *Northern Light* give a broad picture.

benefit of the few, or vice versa. ... I never knew, or felt a necessity to do wrong for the sake of pay ... I have [no money] to spare to buy his opinions with, and if I had, I have no doubt, I could apply it to a more useful purpose. The map was made for the benefit of miners.⁸⁵ Poe also assumed that mainland British Columbia was freely open to Americans and its omission of Vancouver Island implied it was irrelevant to the issue. Poe's aim was to attract miners from California to travel through Puget Sound and spend their money there on the way through.

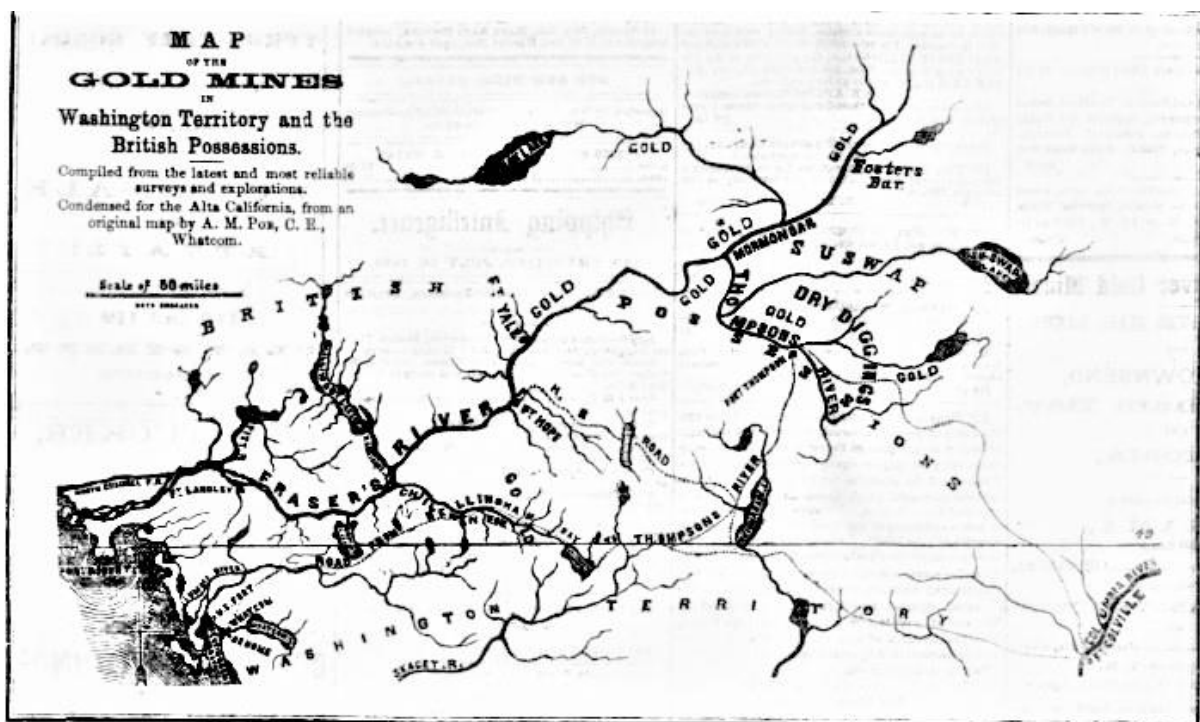


Figure 2.3. 'Map of the Gold Mines in Washington Territory and the British Possessions', *Daily Alta California*, 10 July 1858, page one under the banner. The map does not show Victoria (which would be in the lower left of the map) but the text shows the distance from Whatcom to Fraser River as 40 miles compared to 70 miles from Victoria.

The *Northern Light* marks the high point of Bellingham Bay's development and published twelve editions between July and September 1858. Poe appeared in advertisements for two businesses: Poe & Pettibone (Real Estate Agents) and Poe, Gillette & Gift (Surveyors, Civil Engineers and Draughtsman). He was also secretary of the Whatcom E Street Wharf Company, whose mission

⁸⁵ 'The Alta Map of Fraser River', *Daily Alta California*, 10 July 1858, 2.

was 'to make Whatcom the starting point of the miners for Frazer and Thompson rivers'. All these activities depended on land acquisition to support the development of American civilisation in the region. In the same edition Poe announced his intention to stand as a candidate for the position of county surveyor, for which he was well qualified and ultimately successful.⁸⁶

The British were aware that Bellingham Bay was promoting itself on the back of the Fraser River Gold Rush. Poe and others countered early efforts by Victorian authorities to require miners to obtain a licence, as they wrote that such an imposition was not legal.⁸⁷ This was evidently true; however, it was also easily corrected and the governor issued a notice advising that a licence could only be obtained in Victoria on Vancouver Island, making a Whatcom stopover an expensive diversion for the increasing number of people coming from San Francisco by steamer rather than attempting the final leg by track from Whatcom. The efforts of Whatcom residents to build a road from the town to the British Columbian border were of little use; although a shorter distance, it was slower than the steamer and intending miners soon stopped coming. By September 1858 Whatcom had reverted to being a sawmill village and Bausman 'suspended' his newspaper returning to San Francisco: 'Whatcom has gone in and the Light has gone out'.⁸⁸ Bausman's assessment was accurate and most businesses collapsed. Poe was involved as a defendant when investors in the Whatcom Wharf Company sued. The defendants launched a counter claim apparently led by Poe for double the amount sought by complainants, but a jury found for plaintiffs.⁸⁹

Poe was particularly vulnerable because his land holdings were his most significant asset and their value had plummeted. Assessing that there was no way to recover, Poe sold most of his land in

⁸⁶ *Northern Light*, 3 July 1858, 1-4, and *Northern Light*, 14 August 1858, 3, where Poe's advertisement for surveying shows him also as County Surveyor.

⁸⁷ 'Form of Miner's Licence,' *Northern Light* July 3, 1858, 1, the first edition and frequently thereafter.

⁸⁷ *Puget Sound Herald*, September 24, 1858, 2.

⁸⁸ *Puget Sound Herald*, September 24, 1858, 2.

⁸⁹ Ethridge, Cortland; Miller, Andrew J.; Cortland Ethridge and Company -vs- Young, Nelson; Baxter, Daniel K.; Whatcom Wharf Company; Utter, William; Page, H. C.; Poe, A. M.; Peabody, Russell V.; Williams, S. D.; Hibbard, A.; Jones, Thomas; Giddings, E., Jr.; Pettibone, W. C.; Wallace, W. H. Re: building Bellingham Wharf. Civil File Date: 1859 Thurston County File #: 222 Cause: Collection, Contract. 73 pages.

Whatcom County before then end of the year, the largest being his donation claim which he sold to his brother Americus on 26 October 1858.⁹⁰ Americus left Whatcom once it was clear that his farming skills were no longer required and later sold the land to a neighbour.⁹¹ Poe now had to find a way to start again.

Conclusion

When Poe settled on Bellingham Bay in 1853, he aimed to play a role in building the new town of Whatcom, in a way to replicate what had begun in Olympia. His approach however was different to that adopted for the Territory by the new governor, Isaac Stevens. Stevens and more recent settlers wanted the Indians and the British gone, while Poe represented a more accommodating view. This period was a high point in Poe's career with his election to the Territorial Legislative Council as a Whig candidate. After his term ended, he was central to Whatcom's brief time as the fastest growing town in the Territory.

This chapter has explored different ideas of boosterism at play in the region. While Poe supported the development of infrastructure and migration through Whatcom, he opposed Stevens' autocratic rule to force Indian Treaties and declare martial law against some Territorians who objected. His approach polarised American settlers, the British and Indigenous groups, resulting in friction and violence. While settlers were happy with the outcome in terms of secure land titles, many, like Poe, also resisted the anti-democratic imposition of Federal policies. This theme was integral to the Whig position on governance and remained an important principle for Poe.

⁹⁰ Griffin, *Fairhaven*, 21 and Whatcom County Deed Books Volume D, p 157-8. As a 'quit-claim' he may have simply transferred it to his brother without payment.

⁹¹ See Griffin, *Fairhaven*, 26 and Ralph W. Thacker, 'Dan Harris Stakes his Claim: Biographical, Geographical and Legal Details from Daniel J. Harris's Donation Land Claim File and from Government Surveys of His Claim Including Five Maps. Published online by the author, September 30, 2008, and expanded March 30, 2012, accessed 9 June 2020 <http://dan-harris.info/stakes1.html> .

Poe's participation in Whatcom boosting was a short-term success but relying on the continuing passing trade into British Columbian goldfields was bound to fail without more substantial local economic activity. Hope for selling coal proved unrealistic as extracting it was not financially viable on a commercial scale. Plans to sell timber to San Francisco were also not successful, though a steady trade with Victoria, which was much closer, did develop. While Poe's vision of the end-game was similar to Stevens, their preferred methods were different. Stevens represented the dominating metropole and Poe, while proudly American, was comfortable with a more ambiguous borderland, where it might take longer to consolidate American control. His next challenge was to recover financially and to find a new way to maintain some kind of civic role.

Chapter Three: The *Overland Press*: Platform for a Party of One

On 28 November 1859, Poe sat in his room at Clifton House, a modest hotel on Board Street, Victoria.¹ He had been there since the Whatcom collapse of 1858, reducing his debts and importing fruit trees from Olympia for the growing populace of the British colony.² Poe wrote to William Miller, informing him that ‘the scalp of our lamented friend Col[onel Isaac] Ebey has been recovered, and is now in my possession’. He wanted to pass the scalp to Ebey’s family and asked Miller to seek a resolution of thanks from the Washington Legislative Assembly to British ships’ captain Charles Dodd for his two-year quest to obtain the scalp, which they adopted.³ By April 1860, Poe was ready to return to Olympia and to reengage with its development. He left Victoria and, after passing Ebey’s scalp to his brother Winfred Ebey on Whidbey Island, arrived back in Olympia. There he boarded with William Cock, with whom he had previously worked in the legislature, and resumed work as a land surveyor and real estate agent.⁴ Most importantly, Poe established a newspaper - *The Overland Press* - which became his new vehicle for ‘boosting’ the Territory, articulating his political views on local and national issues, and promoting his vision of American settler society in the Pacific Northwest.

This chapter is the first of two concentrating on Poe’s editorials in the *Overland Press*. It focuses on how he came to start the paper and analyses his editorials most concerned with boosting the Territory and making it attractive to new settlers. At the same time, it considers the importance of the *Press* in documenting and shaping the local political climate around a series of prominent economic and social issues, and offering spirited commentary on the key players and party

¹ Dorothy Blakey Smith, ed., ‘The Journal of Arthur Thomas Bushby, 1858-1859’, *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* XXI (1957-1958): 195-196. The owner, P. B. Whannell arrived in Victoria in 1858. Patrons preferred less frugal accommodation and he closed the hotel in 1860 and made a land claim in Washington Territory.

² He ran advertisements in the *British Colonist* between January and April 1860.

³ Poe to Miller, 28 November 1859, Yale Series: 1 Box: 4 Folder: 240; ‘The Scalp of Col. Ebey Returned’, *Pioneer and Democrat*, December 9, 1859; Washington. ‘Journal of the Proceedings of the Council, of Washington Territory, During The...Regular Session.’ (1859-61), 20 January 1860, 166.

⁴ US Census 1860, Thurston Co, Washington Territory. Poe is described as an ‘artist’ owning land worth \$1,000 and a personal estate of \$250. Poe to Winfield Ebey; August 20, 1860, and September 29, 1860, University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Winfield Scott Ebey papers, Accession no. 0127-001, Box 3/46 show he had regular work with Edwin Marsh, land office registrar, and continued to offer his services privately.

developments shaping local politics. Along with the Chapter Four, which explores Poe's views on the Civil War and what it meant to be American, this chapter sets out to account for Poe's dual role as a newspaperman – as a writer, editor, publisher and printer, but also as an influential political commentator and actor - reporting on, but also shaping, the vibrant political discourse of Olympia and its environs.⁵ Poe entered into the theatrics of controversy which was the newspaperman's 'role' and good for circulation. Observers seemed unsure about his party affiliation. His criticism of Republicans led some to assume he was a Democrat, but his role in closing the *Pioneer and Democrat* convinced others he was a Republican. While changing political coats was not uncommon for some editors in the Territory, Poe was intentionally 'all things' to his readers while maintaining a consistent Old Whig perspective.

The Frontier Newspaperman

By the time Poe began the *Overland Press*, he had considerable experience working with the press and grasped its potential for furthering his civic and personal ambitions. He had helped found and promote the *Columbian* to advance the aims of the Cowlitz Convention, acted as an agent and correspondent for the *Pioneer and Democrat* and California's *Daily Alta*, taken active interest in the press as a legislator and boosted Whatcom through the *Northern Light*. His unsuccessful effort to be elected Territorial Auditor and Librarian by the Legislative Assembly in January 1861 demonstrated his continuing wish to play some civic role. He retained a good reputation with legislators who elected the Auditor at a joint session. Poe survived until the final of four rounds and attracted votes from both Democrats and Republicans.⁶ Having narrowly missed the opportunity to be elected Auditor,

⁵ References to the *Overland Press* will all be shown as *OP* followed by the date. Unless otherwise indicated, quotes are editorial items on page 2.

⁶ *Journal* 1859, 198-201.

establishing a newspaper would provide an opportunity to develop and boost the Territory, and his own situation.

Poe's case suggests a refinement to existing models of frontier newspapermen. As mentioned in the introduction, Barbara Cloud initially judged Poe as 'more comfortable with politics than printing', as if the two were mutually exclusive.⁷ Cloud's assessment of Poe asserts that he was principally motivated by a desire to influence the political process and that his business interests were secondary to his political motivations. Despite this characterisation, Poe also fits Cloud's attributes for a financially successful newspaperman: attracting advertising, commercial printing and reprinting articles from other newspapers.⁸ This chapter argues instead that Poe's comfort in politics was central to what made him a successful newspaperman. Jeff Pasley provides a model for understanding this aspect of Poe's life when he argues that American newspapers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were the 'linchpin' which 'embodied the parties in a quite literal sense,' with the caveat in Poe's case that he was a party of one.⁹ Poe was significant in doing this successfully as earlier non-aligned papers in Oregon failed by not offering opinions on topics of concern. What made Poe's paper distinct was that as a former legislator he offered opinions in an engaging style (as well as often being first with War news) which made the *Overland Press* essential reading and unique in having a readership in British as well as American territory.

Poe emerged as a successful political commentator and a financially viable publisher, assuming the role of a prominent and influential Yankee gentleman. While Cloud judged that the frontier pressmen's concerns were focused on business and town boosting (the booster press),¹⁰ Poe

⁷ Barbara Cloud, "Start the Presses: The Birth of Journalism in Washington Territory" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1979): 101. Elsewhere she describes how editor Clarence Bagley (who may have been influenced by Poe's example) although *not* interested in elected office was interested in politics, Cloud, *The Coming of the Frontier Press*, 198-121.

⁸ Described with other attributes in Barbara Cloud, *The Business of Newspapers on the Western Frontier* (Wilbur S. Shepperson Series in History and Humanities, University of Nevada, 1992).

⁹ Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 3, 12.

¹⁰ Barbara Cloud, *The Coming of the Frontier Press: 67-83*. Though her discussion is framed as the press helping to fulfill manifest destiny, she also argues that most people moved for economic reasons.

is best understood when his political aims are reintegrated with his editorial, news and boosting activities. Poe was *both* a politician and a booster and, without the backing of a party, his editorial and reporting skills supported these aims. Poe's creation of the *Overland Press* and quest to seek the role of Public Printer were intertwined and motivated by his desire to influence political discussions in the Territory.

The Overland Press

The Civil War began in April 1861 and provided the opportunity for Poe to capitalise on his experience, interests, and networks to enter the fourth estate. At the time, he was the Olympia agent for the Victoria-based *Daily Press*, a rival to the *British Colonist*. Both papers were published in the British Colony of Vancouver Island and were interested in news of the Civil War. Their readership included a large expatriate American community, including Territory businessmen, free Blacks seeking a less-prejudiced environment under a mixed-race British governor and some slaves seeking freedom.¹¹ The steamer *Eliza Anderson* left Olympia for Victoria every Monday morning. The *Colonist* hired a reporter who collated the war news received in Olympia during the week and edited the items on the voyage to Victoria, thus scooping the *Daily Press*. To overcome this advantage, Poe arranged with John Miller Murphy, editor of the *Washington Standard*, to print the war news, which went on the same steamer and was quickly inserted as a supplement into the *Daily Press* as soon as the steamer arrived in Victoria.

The arrangement was successful, but Poe took it a step further in conceiving the idea of a newspaper featuring the war news which would appeal to audiences on both sides of the border. Poe bought the plant of the *Pioneer and Democrat*, including the Ramage press used to publish the

¹¹ Margaret A. Ormsby, "DOUGLAS, Sir JAMES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 23, 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/douglas_james_10E.html.

Columbian, and so began the *Overland Press*.¹² On 29 July 1861, the first edition of the *Overland Press* featured President Lincoln's address to Congress on the War (see figure 3.1). As with other newspapers, the *Overland Press* was four pages printed on one sheet. Initially the paper was four columns per page and sold for 12.5 cents per issue or \$6 a year and was issued once a week. This compared to \$3 per year for Murphy's Republican backed *Washington Standard*, which was a physically larger five-column, four-page paper. The war news reached readers only three weeks old, an improvement on the previous six or more. Charles Prosch, another editorial sparring partner at the time, recalled later: 'Poe was wide awake and enterprising and succeeded in making his paper popular both on Puget Sound and in Victoria, obtaining in the latter place a larger patronage than any journal on this side of the boundary ever before or since that period acquired'.¹³ As a result of Poe's ingenuity, the *Overland Press* scooped the *Colonist* by arriving as a complete paper on the Monday steamer.

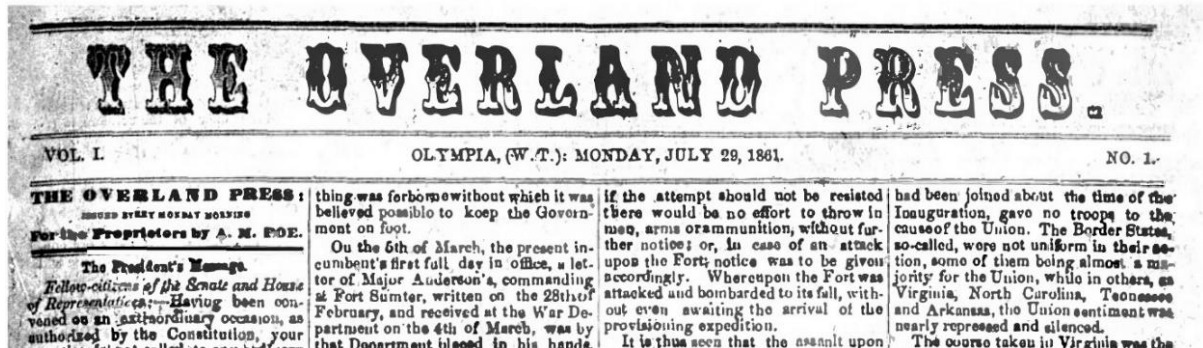


Figure 3.1. The first edition of the *Overland Press*.

¹² The name was a nod to the pony express which ran an overland mail service between the Missouri River and Sacramento, reducing the time of transporting news to ten or twelve days.

¹³ Washington Press Association Proceedings, 1887-1890, 24. Clarence B. Bagley, 'Pioneer Papers of Puget Sound', *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, IV: 373-374; J. C. Rathbun, *History of Thurston County*, 115-116; *WHQ*, X: 236; Clinton A. Snowden, *History of Washington*, Volume IV, 189-190.) Edmond S. Meany, 'Newspapers of Washington Territory (Continued)' *WHQ* 13: 4 (Oct. 1922), 261-262.

Poe's introductory editorial made clear his intentions about readership, speedy delivery of news, quality production and independence:

For a long time past it has been our opinion that another newspaper was needed at this place to accommodate the wants of the people residing in Washington Territory, Vancouver Island and British Columbia. In order to supply these wants, the *Overland Press* will be issued every Monday morning in time to go north on the mail steamer, and south by stage coach. By this means, the people north of Olympia will always get the latest overland news several days earlier than they can through any other paper published in the Territory, while the people living south will have the local news from two to four days in advance of other papers published on the Sound. The publication of this paper being purely a business enterprise, neither claiming nor desiring any political patronage, it will be our aim and object to be the disseminator of everything new and interesting without any partisan proclivities or engagements. Knowing that success will depend upon the intrinsic value of the paper, no labor or expense will be spared to render it a good newspaper, in every sense of the term.¹⁴

Advertisers were evenly split between Olympia and Victoria, with a few from San Francisco. From September 1861, the *Press* became a bi-weekly and continued to claim the largest circulation of any newspaper covering Washington Territory and Vancouver Island. The model was dependant on a reliable steamer service and in March 1862 reverted to a weekly 'in view of steamer problems.'¹⁵ 'Independent' newspapers (whether that independence was genuine) were part of the political process in nineteenth century America - which interested readers as much as entertainment or news from faraway places. By Poe's time in the PNW, editors were not necessarily gentlemanly as they were

¹⁴ 'Salutatory', *OP*, July 29, 1861.

¹⁵ *OP*, Sept 20, 1861; *OP* March 24, 1862.

in a previous era, while some more well-to-do players, such as B. F. Kendall or Thornton F. McElroy, were often content to earn a good income as printers.

Poe's endeavour recalls Pasley's observation about an earlier era where newspapermen 'embodied' their party; Poe certainly continued to promote a Whig perspective.¹⁶ With the Whig Party 'utterly broken down' and the political contest in the Territory consisting of only 'the DEMOCRACY [sic] and the so-called REPUBLICAN', Poe's move to establish an independent paper was a logical one.¹⁷ While the Civil War was naturally a prominent topic, he wrote about infrastructure for the Territory, corruption in government and management of Indian Affairs. His views followed those he had expressed in the Legislature, but Poe was unique amongst Territory editors. He was a party of one promoting free trade and democracy and thus embodied a spirit of Anglo-American settler individualism and desire for 'civil society'.¹⁸

Newspapermen were the linchpin of settler development in the Territory and Poe's role brought him into regular (often spirited) dialogue with four key local players (see Figure 3.2 below): Amor De Cosmos, editor of the *British Colonist*, founded in 1858; B. F. Kendall, a lawyer and surveyor whom Poe had known since 1854; John Miller Murphy, editor of the Republican backed *Washington Standard* and a regular sparring partner (most notably regarding the alleged corruption of the fourth individual); and Dr Anson Henry, who was appointed Surveyor General of the Territory in March 1861 by his friend President Lincoln.¹⁹ Kendall reported to Henry when he worked in Indian Affairs in 1861-2, but the two became bitter enemies. De Cosmos opposed Governor James Douglas and argued for free enterprise, public education, an elected Legislative Assembly, and an end to economic and

¹⁶ Jeffrey L. Pasley, "The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early United States Republic (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 3, 12.

¹⁷ 'The Presidential Election', *Pioneer and Democrat*, January 2, 1857, 2 emphases in the original.

¹⁸ For 'civil society', see Alan Macfarlane, *The making of the modern world: visions from the West and East* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 106-7. Most Whigs followed Elwood Evans to join the Republican Party.

¹⁹ Pratt, Harry E., *Dr. Anson G. Henry: Lincoln's physician and friend*, (Harrogate, Tenn.: Lincoln Memorial University, Dept. of Lincolniana, 1944): 14-16.

political privileges – all issues which resonated with Poe.²⁰ Kendall had come to the Territory as a surveyor with Governor Stevens, who appointed him as Territorial Librarian. Kendall was a merciless litigator, but he and Poe had common interests as far back as 1854, when Poe was a member of the legislature. In 1860 Poe appointed Kendall as his attorney to defend him in a case bought by creditors, after Poe had been a defendant in a case Kendall prosecuted.²¹

Becoming Public Printer

To ensure the viability of the *Overland Press*, Poe needed investors and listed himself as editor acting ‘for the [unnamed] proprietors.’ Once, in September 1861, he indicated that the publisher was the Victoria-based *Daily Press*.²² However, a month later he told readers that the *Overland Press* ‘has no connection whatever with a paper called the “Press” published in Victoria’, indicating an end to that relationship. His advertising base in Victoria suggests the support of one of his advertisers there and possibly De Cosmos.²³ Territory based investors might have included Whig Judge Edward Lander (1816-1907), who had clashed with Governor Stevens and later lent Kendall funds to buy the paper from Poe.²⁴ By March 1862, Poe was the sole proprietor, an indication of the paper’s success.²⁵

²⁰ De Cosmos knew Poe and saw Ebey’s scalp; ‘The Scalp of Colonel Ebey Recovered’, *British Colonist*, November 29, 1859, 2. Robert A. J. McDonald and H. Keith Ralston, “DE COSMOS, AMOR,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed 9 July 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/de_cosmos_amor_12E.html.

²¹ Miller and Ethridge-vs-Poe, Civil File Date: 1860 Thurston County File #: 807 Cause: Collection, Promissory Note. 2 pages; Ethridge, Cortland; Miller, Andrew J.; Cortland Ethridge and Company -vs- Young, Nelson; Baxter, Daniel K.; Whatcom Wharf Company; Utter, William; Page, H. C.; Poe, A. M.; Peabody, Russell V.; Williams, S. D.; Hibbard, A.; Jones, Thomas; Giddings, E., Jr.; Pettibone, W. C.; Wallace, W. H. Re: building Bellingham Wharf. The defendants made a counter claim, led by Poe, for double the amount sought by complainants. The jury found for plaintiffs.

²² *OP*, September 16, 1861.

²³ *OP*, October 3, 1861. Poe’s link with the *Daily Press* matches the time of John Jessop’s partnership who may have remained a supporter of the *Overland Press*. Patrick A. Dunae, ‘Jessop, John,’ *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed May 29, 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/jessop_john_13E.html.

²⁴ Kendall, B. F., Thurston County Territorial Probate File; Date: 1863, Thurston County File #: 120, Washington State Archives Southwest Regional Branch.

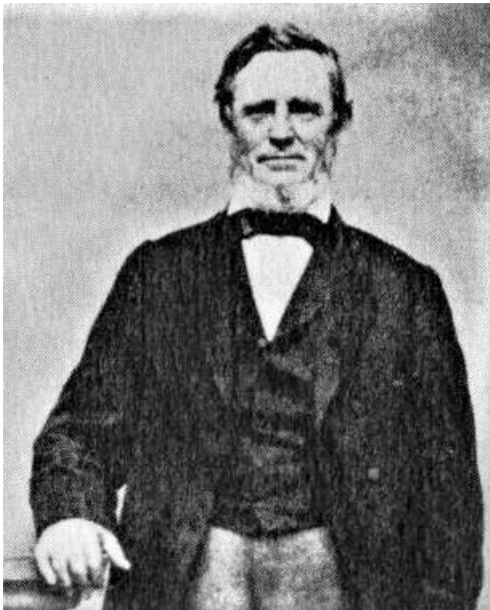
²⁵ *OP*, March 31, 1862, 1.



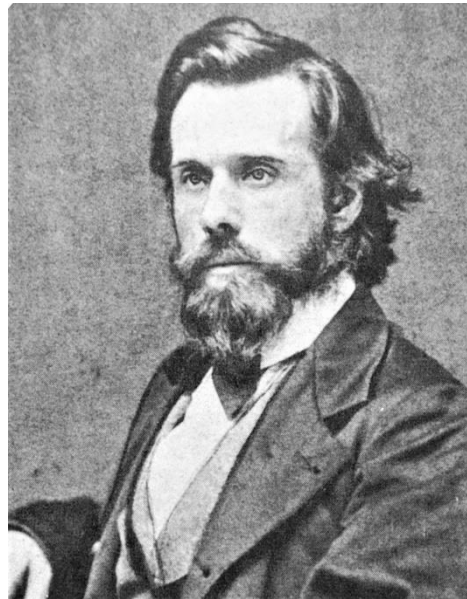
John Miller Murphy, 1839-1916.



Amor De Cosmos, 1825-1897.



Dr Anson G. Henry, 1804-1865.



Bion Freeman Kendall, 1837-1863.

Figure 3.2. People featured in Poe's life while editor of the *Overland Press*. Murphy image courtesy of University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW5969. Other images public domain.

Poe also had an eye on every newspaperman's financial prize – appointment as the Territory's Public Printer. The position came with an exclusive contract for government printing and the obligation to include Legislative Assembly minutes in the appointee's newspaper, which ensured the business viability of the selected publisher.²⁶ By 1861, the role had become an established form of political patronage in the Territory, with an annual election conducted by the combined Assembly.²⁷ It followed a tradition dating from Colonial America where the 'public printer to the colony' carried government patronage in the form of 'some compensation, commitment to purchase printed works, or at least the exclusive right to print some governmental documents, usually the laws of the colony.'²⁸ In January 1862, Poe was appointed Public Printer and the paid circulation for the *Overland Press* reached 1,100. The *Overland Press* was now essential reading for anyone wanting news of the legislature's decisions and its editorials could not be ignored. Poe often repeated, without contradiction, that his circulation in the Territory and British colonies was larger than 'all other papers combined'.²⁹

Poe's competitors were the *Pioneer and Democrat* and the *Washington Standard*.³⁰ The national rise of Republicans and their control over the appointment of officials during the Civil War, combined with the Democratic split into Unionists and Confederates, put pressure on the *Pioneer and Democrat*. Not expecting to remain secure in the role of Public Printer, its editor James Lodge closed the paper in June 1861. His assistant McElroy, who had been printer for the *Columbian* and associated himself with the Democrats when they were ascendant, was out of a job.³¹ McElroy persuaded the

²⁶ Barbara Lee Cloud, *The Business of Newspapers on the Western Frontier* (Wilbur S. Shepperson Series in History and Humanities). University of Nevada, 1992, 15, 79-82.

²⁷ W. A. Katz, 'Public Printers of Washington Territory 1853-1863', *PNQ* 51, 3, July 1960, 103, *Statutes of the Territory of Washington*, 1854, 445. The combined Assembly consisted of the Council and House.

²⁸ Oren Bracha, 'Early American Printing Privileges. The Ambivalent Origins of Authors' Copyright in America' in Ronan Deazley, Martin Kretschmer, and Lionel Bently (eds), *Privilege and Property Essays on the History of Copyright* (Cambridge: Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010): 95.

²⁹ *OP*, Feb 20, 1861.

³⁰ The *Standard* did not publicise its subscription numbers but was supported by Republicans with most of advertisements for Olympia based businesses.

³¹ Elizabeth M. Allison and W. A. Katz, 'Thornton Fleming McElroy — Printer, Politician, Businessman', *PNQ* 54: 2 (Apr. 1963), 57. Wages for a printer during this period averaged \$1,500 to \$2,000 per year. The Governor's salary was \$3,000, and the Secretary of the Territory received \$1,500. *Pioneer and Democrat*, April 29, 1854.

Republican Secretary of the Territory, Elwood Evans, that the *Pioneer and Democrat* was not closed for economic reasons, but by himself to aid the Republican Party. Evans believed that McElroy and 'one or two others' had given the party 'most efficient aid ... left the Democrats without a journal'. Apparently, the 'one or two others' was only one person: Poe.³²

McElroy helped finance the sale of the *Pioneer and Democrat* printing equipment to Poe and Evans apparently believed that Poe had become a Republican (although his editorials give no evidence of this).³³ Soon after, Acting Territory Governor Jay S. Turney appointed Murphy, editor of the *Washington Standard*, as Public Printer to complete Lodge's term. The *Standard* was already the voice of the Republican party so the appointment was not unexpected and appointment of the editor supporting the ascendant party had become the norm. Murphy was so confident of obtaining the position that he purchased the necessary material 'in advance.'³⁴ Considering McElroy's Democratic past as well as his financial interest in Poe's paper, his next move was a surprise: McElroy applied for a job on Murphy's *Standard*. Since there was lack of printers in the Territory, he was hired. 'You have sold yourself to John Miller Murphy', declared Urban Hicks, a friend of Poe and Democrat, 'because you wanted a fat take at the public work.'³⁵ However, the *Standard* was also the platform for Dr Henry, the most senior Republican official in the Territory but also a divisive figure within the party. Poe was prominent in attacking Henry for his mismanagement as Superintendent of Indian Affairs and turned dissatisfaction with Henry to his advantage. He characterised Henry as the real owner of the *Standard* and those who ignored that fact as 'saturated' Indians living on Henry's reservation away from civilisation.³⁶ However, on 6 January 1862, the legislature, influenced by Poe's campaign, decided to

³² *Territorial Republican* (Olympia), Jan. 4, 1869; affidavit signed by Evans, Sept. 13, 1871, USDS, quoted in Allison and Katz, 'Thornton Fleming McElroy': 57.

³³ Elwood Evans, *History of the Pacific Northwest: Washington and Oregon*, 2 Vols. (Portland, Or.: North Pacific History Co., 1889), 505.

³⁴ *Puget Sound Herald*, Jan. 16, 1862, 2.

³⁵ Urban Hicks to McElroy, Jan. 11, 1862, CY. Quoted in Elizabeth M. Allison and W. A. Katz, 'Thornton'. Poe had praised 'Bro Hicks' efforts with the *Vancouver Telegraph*, *OP* 23 Dec 1861.

³⁶ 'Water - Good for Navigation,' *OP*, Dec 2, 1861 where the satire is clear in a close reading of several smaller items. How Poe's literary effort operated and what it also shows about the culture of the day is worth further analysis.

override the governor and elected Poe, not Murphy, as Public Printer. Within days, McElroy was back at the *Overland Press* working for the new Public Printer.³⁷ While contemporaries and some scholars variously considered Poe to be a Democrat and a Republican, Poe's claim that he was neither is credible. Although he worked with McElroy, Poe was also concerned for what he considered the public good.³⁸

Murphy's problem was that he was supported by Henry. Democrats were united in their distrust of Henry as were many former Whig members of the Republican party, most of whom were Poe's friends. The foes of Henry together outnumbered Republican votes and Poe's nonpartisan newspaper gave voice to these grievances. Republicans would have been happy to have a non-Democratic newspaperman to consider. Poe was a persistent foe of Henry, whereas Murphy was restrained or defensive and announced he was a candidate the day before the election, weakening the chances of damaging pre-poll horse-trading but having laid out the groundwork in his satire. At the legislature, five ballots were taken, and on the fifth Poe was elected (in Prosch's words) to the 'sad disappointment of the managers and supporters of the Republican organ', which commented on Poe's celebration.³⁹

Alonzo M. Poe. Esq., received his friends in a very *cordial* manner on Monday evening last. The 'Invincibles' were in attendance, and seemed in excellent spirits. We think that one so well qualified to do the 'honors' as our friend Poesy should have a pull at the official pap, but we do hope that he will let others occupy the front seat when another Printer is elected. We suggest that after his term of office has expired, he accept some subordinate position – for

³⁷ *Journal of the House*, Ninth Annual Session, 1861 (Olympia, 1862), 65. McElroy also ran, but received two votes. Turney later refused to recognize the bills for printing Murphy had done. *Washington Standard*, February 8, 1862, 2.

³⁸ Elizabeth M. Allison and W. A. Katz, 'Thornton', 56-58.

³⁹ *Puget Sound Herald*, January 16, 1862, 2.

instance, a seat in Congress – and thus reestablish the Democratic precedent of “rotation” in office.⁴⁰

The ‘Invincibles’ were members of the Legislature who voted for Poe’s appointment. Murphy anticipated that a Republican, meaning himself, would win the next ballot and suggested that Poe should then accept a lesser position as the Territory’s delegate to Congress, implying that he would then be subjected to a Democratic principle of rotating office holders to avoid corruption. De Cosmos was quick to report the news with his support; it ‘could not have fallen into better hands’.⁴¹

Poe entered into the theatrics of controversy which was the newspaperman’s role. Observers seemed unsure about his party affiliation as he sometimes criticised Republicans and at others Democrats consistent with his maintaining an ‘Old Whig’ perspective. Poe’s apparently anti-Republican views suggested to H. H. Bancroft that he was ‘presumably’ a Democrat, but his opposition to Democratic Governor Stevens undermines this view. The truth is that Poe never declared himself during this period.⁴² The Democrats, who had previously controlled the Territory, were divided on the Civil War and lost momentum to the new Republicans. Poe’s editorial views reflect a Whig dislike of an ‘ultra-party spirit’ and he was comfortable as a party of one, albeit with political nous. While not overtly religious, his approach mirrored the quiet conviction which Methodist Episcopal Church members had in the self-evident strength of their cause – a soft version of manifest destiny. In doing so, he was following a tradition where the press sought not only to comment on but also to influence the direction of public policy. His experience as a legislator helped him to understand how things operated and to take a role in the fourth estate; he was intending to influence governance.

In December 1861, Poe reflected that ‘rapidly increasing patronage’ made it necessary to ‘enlarge the paper,’ as ‘a large share of our patronage comes from the colonies of Vancouver Island

⁴⁰ *Washington Standard*, February 1, 1862, 2, emphasis in the original.

⁴¹ ‘Public Printer’, *British Colonist* 16 February 1862, 3. He claimed the contract was for \$7,000.

⁴² H. H. Bancroft, *Washington*, 378; ‘The *Overland Press* was next started at Olympia by Alonzo M. Poe ... presumably to fill the place of the *Pioneer and Democrat* with the Democratic party.’

and British Columbia.’ More items would be ‘devoted to the special interests of the colonies, under the management of a resident editor ... as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made.’⁴³ The only new participant was Kendall, who ‘occasionally prepared articles’ with ‘a terseness and power of expression’ according to the lengthy obituary written later by those who worked with him. It hints at the basis of his professional partnership with Poe. It emphasised his personal and professional integrity, mental and physical stamina; a ‘generous friend who veiled his better nature under ... severity of bearing’.⁴⁴ He had paid for his own college education in his native Maine, an opportunity which Poe did not have but one he wished to make possible for young gentlemen in his new home.

Poe’s Independent Influence

Poe’s independent editorial commentary on Territorial affairs shows him regularly commenting on the issues which concerned him when he was a Whig member of the Legislature early in the previous decade. Most editorials related to the development of infrastructure for communication and transport and others aimed to make the region attractive to immigrants whose presence would secure development.⁴⁵ Such services would support trade and bring population either to settle in Puget Sound or to travel through it on their way to the British Columbian goldfields. For Poe, infrastructure included schools and a Territorial university which also overlapped with his professional interests in land surveying and sales, as land set aside for educational purposes needed to be registered with some of the allocation then made available for purchase to raise funds for the institutions. He remained an advocate of unrestricted trade, in particular with regard to interest rates, and continued to support temperance.

⁴³ [Untitled item], *OP*, December 16, 1861.

⁴⁴ ‘Death of B. F. Kendall Esq’, *OP*, January 12, 1863.

⁴⁵ Cloud, *Coming of the Frontier Press*, in particular 3-5, 155-167.

Regular steamer services and reliable roads had been a key priority identified by the Cowlitz Convention. Poe's fourth editorial, 'The New Mail Contract Welcomed', celebrated the possibility that reliable steamer services might finally be possible: 'From the summer of 1854, when carrying the mails by steamer in the Sound first commenced until within the last ten or twelve months, we have had the most irregular mails, probably that have ever been carried in any part of the civilised world.'⁴⁶ A sustained campaign in the *Overland Press*, as well as the *Standard*, called attention to the shortcomings of postmaster John Scranton, once lauded by the *Pioneer and Democrat*. But while Murphy launched a character assassination, Poe took a more thoughtful line.⁴⁷ 'Wanted', the *Press* argued, 'A Little Enterprise' - this time pressing for a wharf in Olympia. Enterprise, Poe reasoned, was the 'true spirit ... which characterises the universal Yankee People.'⁴⁸ Scranton, however, appeared to do the minimum work to gain a government contract – a criticism which Poe subsequently levelled more forcefully at Henry.

Recent scholarly literature sees this spirit of enterprise as an exercise of the imagination as much as a practical program for development. This image was built on a faith that westward expansion was inevitable, and that development of the west's resources would provide economic opportunity and social mobility for those willing to participate in that development.⁴⁹ Certainly this description matches Poe's faith. Later he remonstrated with the merchants of Olympia, urging them not to let the opportunity for development pass; they could sell more goods than the merchants of Victoria at cheaper rates if they became more active in the market. Poe invited investors from 'neighboring

⁴⁶ *OP*, Aug 19, 1861. He continued his campaign in 'Unsatisfactory Dispatches'. *OP*, Sept 9 1861, 'Puget Sound Mails' Sept 9, 1861 and 'Jack Diddler and the Mails', September 23, 1861.

⁴⁷ *OP* Sep 9, 1861, the editorial in the same edition was critical of mail delivery services not meeting contract requirements. Scranton's business partners included Poe's friends and he had begun the much-needed steamer service in the face of substantial difficulties. N. A. McDougall, 'Indomitable John: The Story of John Hart Scranton and His Puget Sound Steamers', *PNQ* 45, No. 3 (Jul. 1954): 73-84.

⁴⁸ *OP*, Oct 7, 1861. This is Poe's first use of the phrase which will be explored in Chapter Four.

⁴⁹ Naylor, *Frontier boosters*, 6.

towns' to consider investing \$8,000 to build an Olympia wharf as they would likely 'double the investment in one year'; something the Legislature was loath to do.⁵⁰

In this regard, the *Overland Press* commended Captain Henry Roeder, Poe's former employer and co-founder of Whatcom. Roeder operated a steamer which exported flour, meat and other foodstuffs to New Westminster (then-capital of British Columbia on the Fraser River). The significance of the arrangement was that freight costs and delivery times were halved by avoiding the need to dock first at Victoria. New Westminster on the mainland was also a growing town and the stopping off point for miners – familiar ideological territory for Poe.⁵¹ Poe urged traders to take advantage of this opportunity, pointing out that Olympia was the logical place to bring livestock from the region for export and was already the terminus point for the Overland Mail.⁵² Plank roads were a key piece of infrastructure which Poe urged the legislature to fund. Given the increasing desire for more efficient land-based travel for carts, in a landscape where timber supplies seemed endless, it was a logical idea – an improvement on dirt roads impassable when rain-soaked and cheaper than a railroad.⁵³ These issues were for the legislature to consider and fund but Poe used his editorial voice to promote them.

In the same way, as soon as Olympia was formally confirmed as the Thurston County seat, Poe urged the county commissioners to build fire-proof facilities, such as a courthouse and jail. He pointed out that in the years while the issue was being considered, funds had been wasted on renting private timber facilities which could have been spent in building solid community infrastructure. He mocked those who opposed this idea for wasting their energy on a lost cause but offered his sympathy 'and much good it may do them.' He stoked the urgency with the thought that the cost of labour for the building was only likely to increase, illustrating that he was still thinking like an elected official. 'A little exertion' in building roads and improving steamer routes, he argued would 'make Olympia one of the

⁵⁰ *OP*, Oct 7, 1861.

⁵¹ 'A New Trade – Olympia and New Westminster' *OP*, March 10, 1862.

⁵² The Overland Mail was a stagecoach line linking Memphis, St. Louis, and San Francisco. It closed when the transcontinental railroad opened in 1869.

⁵³ *OP* Oct 21, 1861.

great points of access for British Columbia.⁵⁴ He had been there for the beginning of Olympia and maintained a strong belief in its potential, continuing to advocate for building the infrastructure which would help realise this. As always, he was encouraging trade with the nearby British settlements, thinking like a legislator and was apparently also being read by the current legislators.⁵⁵

Poe also supported the proposal for the Territory to be divided on the basis that this would strengthen the impetus for self-development in the resultant new territory. This was the argument used at the Cowlitz Convention for northern Oregon to become a new Territory itself. Increased migration drawn to gold or other minerals and excellent grazing land was attracting settlers and the simpler and cheaper structure of territorial government was well suited to such development and could attract substantial federal funding.⁵⁶ A study of boosterism, settlement, and development in Port Townsend urges a 'more inclusive definition of boosters' by expanding the definition from newspapermen to include others in the community.⁵⁷ Poe had demonstrated his own understanding of this as secretary of the Whatcom Wharf Company, and as editor he understood the role that the press could play in focussing business and legislators on that project.

Poe continued to promote his familiar call that the Territory was the route to the British Columbia goldfields. Demand from miners would, he argued, be so strong that there was no need for the Territorial Government to support them through expensive exclusive contracts. He emphasised that miners from California and Oregon would make their way 'through Olympia to Victoria', recognising it as a 'miner's supply point'. The 'chief ... attraction to people of this coast' were the goldfields of Washington Territory and British Columbia, he claimed. While he promoted the Salmond River gold diggings, 'whatever the merits' Puget Sound would be well placed for visitors to either site.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *OP*, Oct 28, 1861, *OP* Nov 11, 1861.

⁵⁵ The microfilmed copies of *Overland Press* were taken from Elwood Evans papers.

⁵⁶ *OP*, Nov 21, 1861. Portions were later ceded to the Nebraska and Idaho Territories in 1861 and 1863

⁵⁷ Elaine Naylor, *Port Townsend and the Culture of Development in the American West, 1850-1895*, (Montréal, Québec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), ix.

⁵⁸ *OP*, Oct 10, 1861, Oct 14, 1861, 'The Road to Walla Walla,' *OP*, Dec 5, 1861, and 'Cariboo and Salmon River,' *OP*, Feb 3, 1862.

‘There can no longer be any doubt’, he declared, ‘of the great mineral wealth of Washington Territory and British Columbia.’⁵⁹ Mining in the Cariboo, he asserted, was better than in California or Australia: ‘this is an age of gold digging, and if men *will dig* [Poe’s emphasis], our advice is to go to Cariboo.’⁶⁰ He praised the British authorities for building roads into the ‘new El Dorado’, as this would support the Territory’s development.⁶¹

Despite the need for roads, Poe supported the legislature in not offering exclusive rights to build such infrastructure. His argument was that the attraction for travel in the Territory was access to gold and this being a matter of fact, he saw no reason for the public purse to fund such operations through exclusive contracts. Poe supported the legislature’s majority position to reject three such requests, so he was not acting as an opposition party.⁶² He was concerned that vested business interests might influence members of the legislature to grant an exclusive, and thereby expensive, contractual arrangement with the government, which would have worked against the financial interests of citizens and free trade.

An important relationship for Poe was Rev Daniel Bagley, the prominent anti-slavery campaigner in Seattle. Poe and Bagley worked together on two significant projects; Bagley was Poe’s Seattle agent for the *Overland Press* and Poe was a consultant to Bagley in developing the Territorial University, working on surveying and land sales.⁶³ After their meeting, Poe encouraged Territorial support for the university and Bagley’s work.⁶⁴ The institution would ‘prepare teachers and businessmen for the country’. In addition, he urged Bagley to consider ‘development of the military department’ in response to the ‘dreadful rebellion ... in the Atlantic States.’ A ‘State University’ was

⁵⁹ *OP*, Oct 12, 1861.

⁶⁰ *OP*, Nov 4, 1861.

⁶¹ *OP*, Nov 25, 1861

⁶² ‘Legislature and Exclusive Privileges,’ *OP*, Jan 12, 1862.

⁶³ See page two of every edition of the *Overland Press* and for Poe’s work for the University, see accounts published and ‘University Lands’, *Washington Standard*, March 23, 1861, 3.

⁶⁴ Asa Mercer, whose older brother migrated to the Territory with Bagley, also worked on this project. Asa’s half-sister Alice would marry Bagley’s only child, newspaperman and historian Clarence.

also the 'proper place for discipline and gentlemanly bearing' and while this is consistent with Poe's own background it was not advocated by others. This hint at the middle-class virtue of gentlemanliness is also consistent with Poe's Whig perspective.⁶⁵ Poe also described Methodist Episcopal Church Bishop Matthew Simpson as a 'gentleman' and his presentation 'the best' he had heard in a long time, concluding that Simpson believed that 'the mind is the standard of the man.'⁶⁶

Bagley benefitted from Poe's knowledge of land law and his surveying skills in acquiring land for the university project, but Poe was also interested in education as a social good and as a vehicle for American development. Poe subsequently made an objection to a statement by Acting Governor Turner questioning whether University lands could be sold. Poe pointed out, quoting legislative chapter and verse, that this was not only possible; it was the intention of the federal legislation to sell portions of the land set aside for universities in order to fund their construction.⁶⁷ Opposing the governor's position in the press was a political act, as well as a question of legal accuracy, and one which does not seem to have been taken up by the Democrats in the legislature. Here, Poe exercised his independent capacity to influence the political process to support Territorial development.

Poe also had a long-standing view against the regulation of interest rates and for free trade. He argued that legislation to limit interest on loans was 'limiting freedom of trade' but also impractical as merchants would still be prepared to pay an effective market rate. In such cases the legislation would only have the effect of making them criminals with less recourse to other lawful remedies. He observed that his example was not necessarily one of wise financial management and that he was certainly not arguing for high interest rates, only that it be seen as a matter of trade.⁶⁸ A correspondent took Poe to task on the issue and Poe responded with a robust rebuttal headed 'Lo the poor Shylocks',

⁶⁵ *OP*, Nov 18, 1861. Initially the 'Territorial University of Washington' now the University of Washington.

⁶⁶ [Untitled] *OP*, 21 July 1862; 'Letter from the Atlantic Side', *Washington Standard*, April 29, 1865, 2; Scott Kisker, 'Methodist Abroad: Matthew Simpson and the Emergence of American Methodism as a World Church', *Methodist History* 53 n. 1 (October 2014): 4-20.

⁶⁷ *OP*, Dec 30, 1861, the same applied to land set aside for schools, which provided Poe with income.

⁶⁸ 'Usury,' *OP*, Oct 31, 1861,

the argument being that to be consistent the legislature should be asked to limit the price of goods such as boots. Poe argued for 'maximum liberty' but asserted that 'the law of supply and demand' regulated the price of boots as much as money. That 'law cannot meddle in [a] private contract' was for Poe a matter of economic reality rather than law, which the legislature should acknowledge. Although the acting governor spoke in favour of laws against usury at the Legislative Council opening session, the Council referred such draft bills to committee which were not considered further.⁶⁹

Poe supported temperance, albeit without his usual passion, because it was important to produce and project a stable society attractive to families. He wrote one editorial on the topic and carried supportive news on temperance meetings. A ballot for the second session of the Territorial Legislature (Poe's first) included the question of prohibition on the ballot as a referendum to outlaw the sale and manufacture of liquor. The all-male voters defeated the issue 564 to 650 against.⁷⁰ While the Methodist Church supported temperance, Poe's support was for public order, particularly for Indians. Although Poe recorded the names of those who took a pledge, his name is not amongst them. Murphy suggested that Poe enjoyed a drink, which would have been expected for a politician or elected militia member.⁷¹ Nonetheless, the argument for temperance was another plank in the booster's argument, a matter of creating a peaceful community which would be attractive for the more civilising influences of women who were lacking in the Territory.

Poe's efforts to boost the Territory furthered the vision of the Cowlitz Convention. Through the *Overland Press*, he sought to influence the political process towards realising that vision. Poe praised the legislature at the close of 1861/2 session, when he reported that it had acted without any 'party strife' and by implication drew attention to his own influence on their success.⁷² The *Standard*

⁶⁹ *Journal of the Council of the Territory of Washington* [December 1861-January 1862], (Olympia, A. M. Poe, Public Printer, 1862): 21, 92.

⁷⁰ Norman H. Clark, *The Dry Years: Prohibition & Social Change in Washington*, revised edition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 22.

⁷¹ *OP*, Feb 27, 1862, *OP*, March 10, 1862.

⁷² 'Adjournment of the Legislature', *OP* Jan 30, 1862.

agreed that the session had done well, though with less enthusiasm, and reported that the only disturbing item was that the legislators refused to support the federal administration's efforts to 'put down the rebellion'. Murphy thought this would be an embarrassment to Poe's 'Democrat friends.'⁷³ Poe rejected the claim in 'Errata' on 10 February 1862 and defended himself by saying that he and the legislature had also consistently supported the Union and that he was elected as Public Printer by both Republican and Democratic members because he had a reputation for accurate reporting. Poe's tone (and Murphy's criticism) suggests he was influencing the legislature, not just reporting on it. Poe pressed the point of his credibility by referring to his unmatched circulation figures and challenging the *Standard* to contradict him. They never did.

Poe did not object to the *Standard* claiming in the masthead that they were 'U.S. official paper for the Territory', as they had that role *de facto* as the Republican Party's organ. Poe's non-party affiliation was the basis of both his election as Public Printer and his credibility and influence. Poe knew that Murphy was following his political masters (essentially Henry) and in an adjacent item thanked him personally for providing a copy of an out-of-town newspaper and in another item referred to him as 'inexperienced'.⁷⁴ Jousting with the *Standard* on 20 February 1862 continued, as Poe suggested that the editorials were written by a greedy 'Gorilla' - meaning Henry. Poe continued his defence in several editorials, including a charge that he attempted to falsify the legislature's records to make it appear disloyal, showing he was very much involved in the politics of the Territory through his editorials.⁷⁵ Murphy, meanwhile, made an unconvincing attempt to discredit Poe's non-partisan rhetoric accusing him of being a Democrat and a 'Know-Nothing'.⁷⁶

⁷³ *OP*, Jan 27, 1862, *Washington Standard*, Feb 1, 1862, 2; Feb 8, 1862, 2.

⁷⁴ *OP*, Feb 10, 1862.

⁷⁵ 'The Old Gorilla and the Griswold Resolution,' *OP*, Feb 20, 1862; 'In Time of War Prepare of Peace', *OP*, Feb 24, 1862; *OP* March 3, March 10, March 24, March 31, July 28, Aug 4, Aug 11, and Sept 1, 1862.

⁷⁶ For example, *OP* July 21, 1862, and *Washington Standard*, July 26, 1862, 2.

Indian Affairs and Poe's use of Humour

Poe regularly employed satire for divisive issues as a way of softening opposition and allowing his views to be aired. His most regular sensitive topic was the management of Indian Affairs. President Lincoln was, initially, not well known in the Pacific Northwest, but the region was well known to him. His network centred on Dr Henry located in the new state of Oregon.⁷⁷ One of Lincoln's first presidential appointments was to name Henry as Surveyor-General of Washington Territory in 1861. Henry soon made political enemies.⁷⁸ For Poe, Henry represented what was wrong with the American system: presidential patronage which meant local elected officials were ignored for the most senior positions. Such appointments were problematic when the appointee was incompetent or corrupt, and Poe saw Henry as both.

Poe's second editorial, 'Indian Affairs', asserted that it was his 'privilege and duty as a public journalist to speak of these things as we find them.' He was concerned about Indian welfare in the Territory but more critical of the administration of payments to Indian tribes promised in Governor Stevens' earlier treaties. Poe argued that corruption eroded their value to Indians and, by making reservations unattractive, encouraged drunken Indian brawls in towns which threatened public safety. His target was the arrangement whereby New York business houses sold goods to the government at inflated prices, along with unscrupulous locals who would prefer that the Indians were given cash so they could be enticed to buy liquor. The victims of this situation were Indians and 'honest local traders' who could provide the goods at less than the government paid to the New York merchants.⁷⁹

In 'Indian Morality', Poe declared: '[w]e have made them indolent and crafty', and while American policy was far superior to British, 'as anyone may see', he asserted, 'there is room enough

⁷⁷ Richard W Etulain, 'Lincoln and Pacific Northwest Politics, 1861-64', *Lincoln and Oregon Country Politics in the Civil War Era* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2013).

⁷⁸ H. C. Blair, *Dr Anson G. Henry: Physician, politician, friend of Abraham Lincoln* (Portland, Or. 1950):15.

⁷⁹ *OP* Aug 5, 1861 sets out the argument augmented in later editorials; Sept 16, 1861, Feb 10 1862. Unclear lines of authority resulted in increasing the power of the Presidential appointment; James R. Masterson, 'The Records of the Washington Superintendency of Indian Affairs, 1853-1874' *PNQ* 37, 1 (Jan. 1946), 31-57.

for improvement in both sections.⁸⁰ The following February, he criticised lazy officials responsible for annual disbursements to Indians aimed at developing reservation communities. The resultant lack of development encouraged ‘vagabond savages’ to leave their ‘neglected reservations’ to live in Olympia, where ‘unscrupulous scoundrels’ supplied them with ‘intoxicating drinks enough to keep them starving drunk nearly every night of the week’. The consequences were robbery and violence between them. For the first time, Poe urged civil authorities to ‘compel’ Indians to remain on their reservations to relieve a ‘great nuisance’ for the town and for their own ‘material benefit’.⁸¹ Implicit in his descriptions was that Indians had little agency but for Poe there was a moral obligation for the government to honour its treaties and take a paternalistic approach to Indian welfare. In the previous decade, most settlers saw the Indian treaties as a tool for extending American sovereignty over Indian land while claiming honourable intentions; American settlers imagined an inherent right to the land as a morally superior people. The treaties had provoked sporadic warfare between 1855 and 1858, and while tensions had softened violence had been replaced by paternalism. Poe’s independence is shown in his open identification of mismanagement of Indian affairs and highlighting the moral and treaty obligations of government and business in dealing fairly with Indians.

The HBC had a less confrontational relationship with Indians, which continued when Douglas became Governor of the British colonies. Many American settlers adopted a similar view, while also opposing the British presence, but the larger white population of Washington Territory was impatient to appropriate and own Indian land. Both approaches exemplify Patrick Wolfe’s notion that settler colonialism had a ‘logic of elimination.’ Settler colonialism in both British Columbia and Washington Territory drove colonisers to occupy Indian lands and relied on a combination of different methods of

⁸⁰ *OP*, September 16, 1861.

⁸¹ ‘Indian Affairs’, *OP*, February 10, 1862.

removal and compensation. Wolfe's statement that 'invasion is a structure not an event' emphasises the long-term objective that 'settler colonizers come to stay' and was common to both approaches.⁸²

Poe's use of satire was a political tool to influence majority opinion – and it enabled him to do so from his position of apparent weakness - as a non-partisan. Although Poe had freed himself from the constraints of needing other proprietors, he remained determined not to be a 'pen for hire'. By contrast, McElroy, in spite of his quality New England education, was content to sell his services as a printer to the highest bidder and did very well as a result. The fact that Poe chose a political path without a party platform underlines his interest in maintaining a principled and influential editorial line. Poe's satire made the difference by ensuring that people read his editorials, at the same time making his views palatable through his humour for readers who could understand his intentions. Poe's knack for finding a memorable, often satirical, phrase to disseminate his views is illustrated in the editorial 'The Tribe of Abraham' where he listed Lincoln's appointments including Henry – another example of appropriating Indian terminology, suggesting earthy authenticity.⁸³ Poe's trope became widespread and he regularly invoked it to highlight the undemocratic nature of the president's exercise of political patronage ahead of local democracy or competence.⁸⁴

This approach was an established tradition by Poe's time. The eighteenth century is regarded as the 'great age of English irony and satire' and as a 'shared Anglophone tradition' survived the American War of Independence.⁸⁵ To work, the audience had to read below the surface of the utterance; but the device could also allow those who did not wish to 'see' to remain unoffended.

⁸² Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,' *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 387–409, Wolfe's other major works include *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London, 1999); 'Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race,' *American Historical Review* 106, 3 (June 2001): 866–905.

⁸³ The phrase is not Biblical as might be assumed; 'tribes' are first used of Abraham's grandchildren.

⁸⁴ Robert W. Johannsen, 'The Tribe of Abraham: Lincoln and the Washington Territory' In Etulain, Richard W. 2010, *Lincoln Looks West from the Mississippi to the Pacific*, (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010). 152-173, examines the theme including Poe's comments without crediting him.

⁸⁵ Alan Macfarlane, *The Invention of the Modern World* (Les Brouzils, France: Odd Volumes, 2014) 220-222, Richard Scully, 'The Foundations of the Anglo-American Tradition of Political Satire and Comic Art: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *International Journal of Comic Art*, 17: 2, 2015, 98-132.

Literacy rates were high in frontier areas, suggesting, along with his circulation numbers, that Poe was not just targeting an elite.⁸⁶ While there are different views on whether satire has the effect of weakening the likelihood of readers taking action, it is disarming to the extent that it allows a reader attuned to the device to entertain, and be entertained by, a different point of view on an otherwise controversial topic.⁸⁷ Poe's aim with such humour was to provoke thought, a feature Murphy noted in attempting a laboured riposte:

Poesy has an idea that he is a wit – a decided wit. After reading a page of 'Doc-sticks,' he generally subsides into an editorial. If that famous gentleman Damphool could be resurrected, perhaps he could tell us where the laugh comes in; but from obliging us to solve that enigma 'Good Lord deliver us.'⁸⁸

Poe's response to criticism from Murphy was wittier:

The editor of the *Standard* gave several flattering notices of the *Overland Press* in his paper last week, for which we tender out acknowledgement &c. Friend Murphy is a young man of considerable talent for a local, party editor, and a hard worker – as the boy said of the castor oil.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Cloud, *Coming of the Frontier Press*, 8-11. Figures for Washington Territory are not given but Oregon had an illiteracy rate of less than 4% and Oregon Country settlers believed themselves to be better educated than those in California; Joyce Badgley Hunsaker, *Seeing the Elephant: the Many Voices of the Oregon Trail* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2003), 189. Thanks to Kendall, the Legislature had an impressive library with the latest in fiction and non-fiction. Male literacy was much higher than female and approximately 90% of the Territory's white population was male.

⁸⁷ Dannagal G. Young, 'Theories and Effects of Political Humor: Discounting Cues, Gateways, and the Impact of Incongruities', in K. Kenski and K. H. Jamieson (Eds.), *Handbook of Political Communication Theories*, Oxford University Press 2004.

⁸⁸ *Washington Standard*, Dec 14, 1861, 2.

⁸⁹ *OP*, Oct 10, 1861, Murphy's notices were not flattering. Poe once attacked Prosch as 'a dyspeptic old fossil of a newspaper editor' and concluded with his town Steilacoom being 'a buffalo chip in a dead eddy'. Steilacoom was trying to take Olympia's development thunder by building a wharf and having a newspaper; *OP* Nov 18, 1861, *OP* 25 Nov 1861.

Poe's editorials on Indian Affairs echoed Bion F. Kendall's acerbic views. Kendall's manner and actions offended Henry, who sent a lengthy recommendation to President Lincoln charging Kendall with being a Democrat and un-Christian.⁹⁰ Lincoln terminated Kendall's appointment in May 1862, although he had also appointed Kendall as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Territory in July 1861.⁹¹ However, Henry was mistaken if he expected that Kendall and Poe would cease their criticism of his management of Indian Affairs. Kendall now had more time to support the *Overland Press* and Poe's work as Public Printer. The Republican *Standard* shared such general concerns, and in response to Poe's editorial of 10 February 1862 the paper said, 'Poesy has a very sensible article'.⁹²

Poe's denunciation of Henry was not unique, but it was relentless and engaging and thus potentially the most damaging. Poe's criticisms resonated because he was not a Democrat. Kendall was known to be an enemy of Henry but Poe's ability to recast Kendall's criticism in satire demonstrated he was not beholden to the intense Kendall. Poe was speaking to a community where he had been known as a reliable public servant for almost two decades and so was likely to have had a strong personal following. Poe highlighted this by emphasising that the younger Murphy could do nothing to soften Henry's views; Henry in effect limited Murphy's editorial freedom. Poe was happy to play up Murphy's youth while offering him faint praise and at the same time annoyed Henry by implying he was deeply indebted to Murphy for treating him so kindly.⁹³

Poe's editorial criticisms of corruption and lack of enterprise were balanced by his refusal to be drawn into personal attacks against colleagues he believed to be well intentioned. Kendall's manner had not endeared him to others, but Poe declined the opportunity to entertain this when he

⁹⁰ Abraham Lincoln papers: Series 1. General Correspondence. -1916: Bion Freeman Kendall, September-December 1861 [Synopsis of] Charges against him as Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Washington Territory. [December], 1861. Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mal1186800/>.

⁹¹ W. A. Katz, 'Benjamin F. Kendall, Territorial Politician', *PNQ* 49, No. 1, (Jan. 1958), 34. Abraham Lincoln papers: Series 1. General Correspondence. 1833 to 1916: Winfield Scott to Abraham Lincoln, Monday, May 27, 1861, Recommendation; Endorsed by Abraham Lincoln and Caleb Smith. 1861. Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mal1009900/>.

⁹² 'The Press and Mr Kendall', *Washington Standard*, Feb 8, 1862, 2.

⁹³ *OP*, March 24 and 31, Poe 'predicted' Henry would give Murphy a job in the surveyor general's office on April 1st – April Fool's Day.

refused to publish a letter critical of Kendall. The *Overland Press* was, said Poe, 'an independent newspaper, and will not in any case be made use of as a means for dissatisfied politicians to fling mud at each other'.⁹⁴ He also published an entertaining defence of Chief Justice Christopher Hewitt, a Lincoln appointment, against 'vile calumnies' published by the Democratic editors of the *Puget Sound Herald* and *Vancouver Chronical* who, Poe asserted, were happy to be used by Hewitt's political and legal opponents. Poe mentioned that 'talented editors' of Republican journals, referring to Murphy, were in a better position to comment on Hewitt's 'partisan affairs.' He declared Hewitt 'high-minded [and] honorable' and the case against him filled with 'untruths' and refused to be used by an unnamed opponent of Hewitt 'too shrewd' to make the accusation openly.⁹⁵ In such cases Poe underlined what it meant to be independent: he would call issues as he saw them.

It is unclear whether Henry knew that Kendall had been working with Poe, but he certainly believed that the critiques were harming his reputation. Kendall had demonstrated his lack of political acumen when, after an inspection of Indian agencies in October 1861, he terminated the services of respected Methodist minister James H. Wilbur to cut costs and to remove a potential threat to his authority. On 6 March 1862, Kendall was attacked in the press (as part of Henry's ongoing campaign against him) and responded via Prosch's *Puget Sound Herald*, in an also anonymous article titled 'Have We a Swindler in Our Midst', in which Kendall charged Henry with theft of public funds. Poe dutifully copied the item in the *Overland Press* of 21 July with credit.

Perhaps because Poe had been conducting a sustained campaign against him, Henry believed that Poe wrote the editorial. According to 'Budge' in a letter to the editor published in the *Herald*, Henry sought out Poe at Sylvester's store and struck him with his cane. Poe 'returned blows with his lighter walking cane' and Sylvester separated them. Henry then 'drew his bowie knife ... with loud words of defiance'. Poe did not take Henry's threat seriously and Prosch thought the event looked

⁹⁴ 'Skin your own skunks', *OP*, August 26, 1861.

⁹⁵ 'Cat's Paws' *OP*, Oct 3, 1861, 2.

'staged', but the incident showed that a battle of words could move to violence, especially where honour demanded satisfaction in fisticuffs where an apology did not follow a personal insult.⁹⁶ Prosch added that Henry's cowardice was evidenced in him attacking an unwell man – referring to Poe. Although Poe's illness is not identified, he had commented on it himself in January.⁹⁷ Murphy ignored the incident however, perhaps pressured by Henry, and characterised Prosch as Poe's 'hireling' for supporting Kendall's 'unmitigated libels' against Henry.⁹⁸

Things became more tense in August 1862 when Kendall, as Poe's attorney, took over the *Overland Press* after Poe left for California to recover his health. Kendall now had his own newspaper and, as a subcontractor to Poe, the valuable public printing contract. A 'collision' was expected between Henry and Kendall.⁹⁹ Kendall took aim at Henry and other Republicans, some Democrats and the clergy: 'The people in due time will oppose their demagogues and poker playing preachers'.¹⁰⁰ Going further than Poe and with none of his humour, Kendall made it plain and personal: 'Henry's facility for lying is so daily demonstrated that all are satisfied he's a liar and the truth is not in him'.¹⁰¹ Anti-Henry articles and news items took most of the editorial page for several issues, alleging treachery. Kendall, although a beneficiary of both Democratic and Republican Federal administrations, had political connections but was like Poe apparently unaligned. Yet, unlike Poe, Kendall was unable to build a sympathetic audience. Murphy dedicated almost two columns to slander, and insult directed at Kendall, and a few softer jabs at Poe, in response.¹⁰²

Kendall and Poe shared a similar political outlook; had they not, differences would have made their editorial partnership unviable. Kendall's harsh editorial approach highlights the reason for Poe's

⁹⁶ *Puget Sound Herald*, July 17, July 31, 1862, 2. Such violence was often demonstrated in Congress, though not taken seriously in the West. Joanne Freeman, *The field of blood: violence in Congress and the road to Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018): 5, 61.

⁹⁷ 'Apologies', *OP*, Jan 23, 1862. Poe says he has been in poor health 'for some time'.

⁹⁸ 'Dr Henry's Slanderers', *Washington Standard*, July 26, 1862. The incident was the foundation of a later satire and nod to Poe by Murphy; 'First Book of Chronicles' *Washington Standard*, June 22, 1872, 2.

⁹⁹ *Portland Oregonian*, September, 1862, quoted in the *Washington Standard*, Sept. 20, 1862

¹⁰⁰ *OP*, Sept. 29, 1862.

¹⁰¹ *OP*, Nov. 3, 1862, recalled John 8:44 making Henry a child of the devil.

¹⁰² The first was 'Still At It', *Washington Standard*, August 30, 1863, 3.

success; Kendall had no humour or subtlety, and while his hard work, powerful intellect and forceful style as a litigator were acknowledged, his manner provoked negative feelings among readers. The contrast in their writing styles reflects their different personalities and highlights Poe's strength as an engaging editor sensitive to how an audience might react. Under Kendall's editorship the *Overland Press* became dour and humourless; poems, short jokes and satire disappeared. Kendall had worked his way through winning positions on the basis of merit and determination and unlike Poe had never been in a situation of needing to seek votes as a legislator or militia officer. Prosch, a relatively neutral observer, saw Kendall's personality as problematic: 'The present editor of the *Overland Press* is seemingly in painful affliction regarding a fancied insecurity of life ... If a man is determined to make a martyr of himself, righteously or otherwise, he can easily be accommodated, and especially in the business of publishing a newspaper.'¹⁰³ Whether intentionally or not, Prosch's remarks highlight that Poe discussed controversial topics with a keen eye on keeping his audience engaged. Here he made use of disarming satire and reflected the widespread disapproval of Henry amongst supporters of both major parties.

Conclusion

Poe was not a member of either major political party, but he used his role as editor successfully to affect a political outcome. Poe's story offers a refinement of Barbara Cloud's view that he was a politician *rather* than a press man; Poe was a newspaperman *because* he was a politician. Cloud notes that in the Pacific Northwest reader interest in politics often drove newspapers. Poe's main competitor, Murphy's *Washington Standard*, embodied the Republican Party in the way Pasley observed in earlier New England. Others were 'independent' for the purposes of maintaining a wide audience. Poe was independent of party affiliation and the benefits of partisan networks, but was

¹⁰³ *Puget Sound Herald*, April 2, 1863.

nonetheless politically influential. He embodied his own individualistic philosophy consistent with his earlier Whig membership. Political patronage was usually provided by the Territorial Government to the newspaper which represented the government's party in the form of appointment as Public Printer. Poe was able to exploit disagreements within the Republican ranks by appealing to the diversity of Republican views and by not being a Democrat. His only competitor was the *Washington Standard*, though it was heavily influenced by Dr Henry, who Poe criticised because of his character flaws which ran against his views of gentlemanly behaviour.

This chapter has explored how Poe came to start the *Overland Press* and analysed his focus on engaging editorials aimed at boosting the Territory and making it attractive to new settlers. At the same time, it has considered the importance of the *Overland Press* in documenting and shaping the local political climate, around a series of economic and social issues, and spirited commentary on the key players and party developments shaping local politics. In congratulating the legislature on behaving in a non-partisan manner Poe celebrated his own success in influencing their deliberations from a position of party-political weakness but in so doing demonstrated how he imagined American politics should work – grounded in local democratic politics and educated public discourse. At the peak of his press influence, Poe also took the opportunity to comment on national issues, which will be considered in the final chapter.

Chapter Four: “We are American” - Poe’s Polity

This chapter sets out to understand Poe’s imagined community and how he identified and promoted it as a politician-newspaperman. Historian Benedict Anderson first coined the concept of imagined communities to depict the nation as a social and cultural construct, imagined into existence by a community of individuals who might never meet – but nonetheless come to see themselves as part of a distinct national group.¹ As we saw in the previous chapter, Poe’s editorials were aimed at the American and British readership of the Pacific Northwest (PNW) and provided a forum for articulating his ideas about what it meant to be American. Poe’s imagined community was defined by an English instinct for democracy free from aristocratic control and was distinctly American, by virtue of being bound by the Constitution and a commitment to the Union.

The chapter examines Poe’s editorials on the Civil War and their reflections on competing ideas about the American polity. Poe’s reach was significant; the *Overland Press* had the highest circulation of all the newspapers in British Columbia and Washington Territory. In his editorials, he tempered his expression with humour designed to ensure that he maintained influence and a gentlemanly bearing. Poe defined his imagined Yankee-English community as an active, hardworking civil society. The cross-border region which was the background to Poe’s work exemplified the institutions James Belich identified in Anglophone settler societies: law, representative assemblies, a relatively wide (male) franchise and decentralised government.²

Poe wrote and published seventy-seven editorials between July 1861 and August 1862, as well as two which were published under B. F. Kendall’s editorship. The editorial page often carried more

¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6-7.

² James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed. (London, New York: Verso, 2006); Alan Macfarlane, ‘Fellowship and Trust’, *The Making of the Modern World: Visions from the West and East* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

than one opinion item, but of the lead items fifty-six were primarily about regional issues (boosting, Indian affairs, and the newspaper itself). The remaining twenty-three focused on national issues: the progress of the war and the distinctive essence of the US and American life. Most of these editorials appear in the latter part of Poe's editorship, after the Trent Affair, an event which provoked some of his thinking on English-American relations.

This examination reveals three underlying themes. First, that preserving the Union was the prime objective of the Civil War and basis of the American nation; second, that Americans and Englishmen were naturally democratic; and third, that the main opponent of democracy was aristocracy and inherited privilege, represented as much by the Confederacy as Queen Victoria. Poe assumed that American democracy would be built on Indian land, which he believed could be honourably ceded, and that neither slavery nor indentured labour could have a place in such a society because they removed the capacity for independent thought. Poe's editorials ended in September 1862 when he transferred the *Overland Press* to B. F. Kendall and when the outcome of the war was still far from clear.

The Trent Affair and Anglo-American Tension in the Pacific Northwest

The Trent Affair was a Civil War incident in 1861 involving the doctrine of freedom of the seas. It raised fears over the potential for war between Britain and the US and provided an engaging focus for Poe's editorials because of the Territory's proximity to British Columbia and existing anxieties regarding British intentions in the region. The Trent Affair provoked some of Poe's best satire and encouraged him to explore what America and Britain (or, more often in Poe's words, 'the English') had in common, as well as the nature of their political differences.

On 8 November 1861, Confederate envoys James Mason and John Slidell were aboard the *Trent*, a British mail steamer, when the *USS San Jacinto* intercepted the vessel. Mason and Slidell and

their secretaries, who were headed to England and France to lobby for recognition of the Confederate States of America, were arrested and imprisoned in Boston.³ Northerners hailed the ship's capture, but the British were outraged because they had not taken sides in the Civil War. The Confederate states hoped that the incident would rupture Anglo-American relations and lead to support from Britain and France. The British government demanded an apology and the release of the prisoners and took steps to strengthen its military forces in British North America and the North Atlantic.⁴

The Trent Affair provided an occasion for reflecting on the state of Anglo-American relations. Amor De Cosmos, editor of the *British Colonist*, argued that Britain was not likely to apologise for acting in accordance with its policy of neutrality.⁵ Poe discussed this in his own editorial, 'John Bull and His Colonial Calves', but noted that: 'Not one word is given by the last [overland] news concerning the Mason and Slidell affair.' The situation spoke to the difficulties of providing up-to-date reporting of national affairs and the importance of local perspectives and interpretations when it came to filling the resulting gaps. Here Poe wrote his editorial (like many others he penned) in an information vacuum - though not in an opinion vacuum. With little new information to report, Poe turned his attention to admonishing his 'contemporaries [including the unnamed De Cosmos] across the [Victoria] Strait, [who] appear to be intensely exercised about the recent arrest of two gallows-deserving scoundrels.'⁶

Poe found it strange that the 'most abused and neglected appendage of the British Empire should contain men most rabid in their asseverations of loyalty, for it is still true with certain men as with some dogs, — the more you smite them the better they like you.' Likewise, he found it hard to believe that 'the sympathies of genuine and intelligent Englishmen can be so strong for a pair of

³ A study of British and Australian reporting of the issues outlines the main events. Peter Putnis, "'War with America": The Trent Affair and the experience of news in Colonial Australia,' *Journal of Australian Studies*, 28:81 (2004), 93-106.

⁴ George L. Bernstein, 'Special Relationship and Appeasement: Liberal Policy Towards America in the Age of Palmerston' *The Historical Journal* 41, No. 3 (1998): 725-50.

⁵ 'War between England and the States,' *British Colonist*, 5 Dec 1861, 2.

⁶ 'John Bull and His Colonial Calves', *OP*, Dec 9, 1861.

southern rebellious blood-hounds as to make them desire a war with the United States.’ He continued, ‘it is only the stump-tail breed of politicians - Cosmo-politan [sic] adventurers, and runaway “Sidney [sic] Ducks” ... who have no principles nor country ... their vagabond wanderings have led them [to] “Victoria Queen of Great Britain and Ireland” [always ready] to avenge any imaginary insult.’⁷ The description when considered with Poe’s insertion of the hyphen in ‘cosmopolitan’ and beginning it with a capital C was clearly a caricature of De Cosmos, who was unusually measured on this topic. Poe followed this with a paragraph against the British Government and concluded that as the British steamer had also carried munitions to the ‘rebels in Georgia’, his ‘only regret is that Captain Wilkes did not blow her [*Trent*] out of the water.’⁸ Poe’s exaggeration was to make the point that war with ‘England’ on this issue was absurd.

Across the Strait, the *Colonist* responded to Poe’s editorialising and adopted his characterisation of the Trent Affair as ‘The Mason and Slidell Affair’. De Cosmos restated his view in moderate terms: because Britain was neutral in the Civil War, the US was at fault.⁹ Meanwhile, Lord Richard Lyons, British Ambassador to the US, met with Secretary of State William Seward and took a hard line.¹⁰ In the end, the Lincoln administration decided on a policy of ‘one war at a time’ and released the envoys. But news of the decision was slow to reach the PNW, and both John Murphy (editor of the *Washington Standard*) and Poe commented on this silence, though only Poe used it as an opportunity to editorialise.¹¹ In January 1862 Poe wrote in ‘John Bull Getting Belligerent’ that

⁷ ‘Sidney Ducks’ were former convicts from New South Wales attracted to California by the gold rush. They acquired a singular reputation for criminal activity, see Sherman L. Ricards and George M. Blackburn. ‘The Sydney Ducks: A Demographic Analysis’, *Pacific Historical Review* 42, No. 1 (1973), 20-31. A ‘stump-tail’ is an Australian lizard whose tail looks like its head suggesting that it is impossible to tell which way it is going.

⁸ ‘John Bull and His Colonial Calves’, *OP*, Dec 9, 1861.

⁹ *British Colonist*, Dec 14, 1861, 2.

¹⁰ Lord Lyons was praised by both the government and the British liberal John Bright for his handling of the affair. Brian Jenkins and James Leahy, *Lord Lyons: A Diplomat in an Age of Nationalism and War* (Montréal, Québec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 181-184.

¹¹ Murphy’s views are like Poe’s, except that he argues against Democrat articles in Oregon and does not complain about the lack of information from the Federal Government; ‘Are we to have War with England!’, *Washington Standard*, December 7, 1861, 2.

neither government had released information on the issue but argued this posturing was a ‘bluff’ and that to release the pair would be a sacrifice to Britain’s ‘abominable vanity.’¹²

Poe learned of their release from the *San Francisco Herald* and commented that it ‘puts the only face on the Mason and Slidell affair that is at all becoming’; essentially, Poe accepted that the American Government had made a pragmatic decision, that the Confederates were humiliated by accepting English protection and, in Poe’s first reference to history, that ‘chivalrous Normans and honest Saxons’ would despair.¹³ He expressed surprise that the government had released Mason and Slidell against the ‘almost unanimous wishes of the people’ and hoped that it would ‘satisfy the country’ by explaining its thinking.¹⁴

The Trent Affair provided Poe the opportunity for his longest satirical commentary ‘Chronicles of Succession’, which he used to effect in this case by couching his potentially controversial political commentary in a familiar also humorous genre. The item imitates the language of the King James Bible which pervaded nineteenth-century American culture and political discourse.¹⁵ John Bull represented England, Uncle Samuel America and Father Abraham the president. Poe wrote:

And it came to pass in the latter days ... in the realm of Uncle Samuel, ... [t]hat Father Abraham was made steward of the household of our rulers. And all good men rejoiced greatly ... But there arose ... a great revolt. ... Father Abraham went into the temple, and upset the tables of the money stealers; yea, he scourged them with the thong [whip] of reform. ... And he blockaded the coast... there was great lamentation... [f]or the Yankees have stopped our ports.

¹² *OP*, Jan 2, 1862.

¹³ ‘Release of Slidell and Mason’, *OP*, Jan 16, 1862.

¹⁴ ‘News’, *OP* Jan 16, 1862.

¹⁵ Robert Alter, *Pen of Iron: American Prose and the King James Bible* (Princeton University Press, 2010). Poe’s inspiration might have been Joseph Smith’s *Book of Mormon* which reflected on themes of the day. De Cosmos (whose original name was William Smith) had been a Mormon.

The rebels sent ambassadors in the 'neutral ship of John Bull', but they were 'returned into the hands of Uncle Samuel.' John Bull feigned an interest in peace to avoid an embarrassing war but later became angry; his 'scribes reminded him how, aforesaid, he had quarrelled with Uncle Samuel and gotten a black eye. ... John Bull reflected ... lest I lose my Provinces of Canada ... I will ... bide my time.' Besides, '[t]here is an African in my neighbor's fence; yea, also an Irishman in my own hedge; Therefore, I will be discrete lest trouble should arise in mine own household.'¹⁶ Poe did not oppose all the president's policies, however, and in a rare editorial comment on the *unnamed* president, Poe described a presidential message on the state of the Civil War to the nation as a 'plain, simple, unpretending, aiming to give a true and comprehensive view of our present national affairs' to preserve the Union.¹⁷ In describing him simply as 'the President' Poe was resisting the tendency to elevate the person above the position.

In Poe's allegory, Britain would not interfere in the Civil War, lest it be defeated 'a third time' by America. Moreover, appearing to support slavery might draw attention to Britain's own troubles in Ireland. Poe's reference to President Lincoln as 'steward' of Congress suggests Poe's view of the presidency. His general silence about Lincoln the man in contrast to his clear support for the president's aim to preserve the Union arose from his conception of the president as more of a magistrate than a majesty. The Whig model of presidential leadership arose from opposition to 'King' Andrew Jackson and the name itself carried an echo of the English Civil War as a struggle against a tyrannical monarch.¹⁸ Poe's frequent commentary urging preservation of the Union left no doubt that he supported the president and echoed his earlier Whig commitment to the constitution and the Union. Poe's silence on the president himself, however, contrasted with praise for Lincoln in the *Washington Standard* and provides a clue to Poe's ideal of local democracy and was consistent with

¹⁶ *OP*, April 7, 1862, 1.

¹⁷ 'The President's Message', *OP*, Dec 19, 1861.

¹⁸ Michael J. Korzi, 'Our Chief Magistrate and His Powers: A Reconsideration of William Howard Taft's "Whig" Theory of Presidential Leadership.' *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2003): 317-9. The issue is more complex than this of course.

him not nominating any political hero. This characterisation reflected Poe's vision for an idealised American Polity. Here American democracy was expressed through the president as steward, against the confederacy who sought personal gain against the Union on the one hand and Britain on the other.

The PNW was, of course, a long way from Washington City and there was some anxiety in the community that Britain might take the opportunity to invade. This anxiety was partly fuelled by the lack of clarity regarding the location of the international boundary which passed through the archipelago between Vancouver Island and Bellingham Bay. Each side regarded the other either as squatters or invaders. The 'Pig War', a standoff between Britain and America over ownership of the San Juan Islands between Bellingham Bay and Vancouver Island, began in 1859 when an American settler shot a British pig. This conflict remained a source of tension until 1872, with troops of both nations positioned in the archipelago.¹⁹ Poe generally ignored the issue by downplaying the possibility of conflict. For Poe, the English and the Americans had much in common in the PNW, including the *Overland Press*.

Governor James Douglas of British Columbia, though, saw benefit in an invasion. On 28 December 1861 he wrote to the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, arguing that Britain should seize the Washington Territory while America was preoccupied with the Civil War. If Britain took control of Puget Sound, he argued, 'we should ... command its trade, and soon compel it to submit to Her Majesty's Rule.'²⁰ While Douglas' belligerence towards America was well known, his proposal was not. Potential triggers were the San Juan Islands, legal battles over the purchase of the land assets of the HBC and Puget Sound Agricultural Company and the presence of Confederate sympathisers apparently willing to take private action seize American gold. That no significant military operations occurred has been credited to how effectively Union officials and diplomats neutralised the threat by

¹⁹ Scott Kaufman, *The Pig War: The United States, Britain, and the balance of power in the Pacific Northwest, 1846-72* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2004). The only casualty was the pig.

²⁰ James Robbins Jewell, 'Thwarting Southern Schemes and British Bluster in the Pacific Northwest' in Adam Arenson and Andrew R. Graybill, *Civil War Wests: Testing the Limits of the United States* (Oakland, California: University of California Press 2015), 20.

monitoring confederate activities in British Columbia and reminding Douglas of Britain's official policy of neutrality.²¹

Poe supported these efforts by challenging the idea of a cross-border war and, unlike his contemporaries Murphy and Charles Prosch (Democratic editor of the *Puget Sound Herald*), who emphasised what Americans had in common with the English across the border. Moreover, Poe argued that war was unlikely because Englishmen living far from the control of aristocracy had more in common with Americans than their distant Imperial masters. The federal government recruited Territorial Volunteers to monitor British activities in the region, freeing Army Regulars to fight the Confederates and Poe supported efforts to raise volunteer regiments to replace Californian volunteers serving in the Territory.²²

Poe's Imagined Community

The Trent Affair had been the trigger for Poe to focus on international aspects of the Civil War and in so doing to consider what distinguished America from both 'England' and the Confederate States. Anderson's *Imagined Communities* offers a framework for examining Poe's ideas about the nation. Moreover, Poe's story helps to open a new window onto Anderson's work as it applies to the mid-nineteenth century PNW. Anderson's ideas, although hugely influential for historians of nationalism, have not been utilised to examine the Antebellum newspapers in the PNW. To some extent this is understandable, given the lack of new historical work on the PNW in the 1980s and 1990s, when Anderson's notion of the imagined community was becoming influential. Poe's story

²¹ Jewell, 'Thwarting Southern Schemes', 5-6, 16. The idea is explored in Scott McArthur, *The enemy never came the Civil War in the Pacific Northwest* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Press, 2012). Neither mention Poe or discuss any plan to influence public opinion via the press. Allen Francis, a one-time newspaperman in Illinois, was appointed Consul at Victoria in November 1861 to co-ordinate intelligence.

²² "The W. T. Volunteers', *OP* Match 12 1862. Several Civil War generals served in Washington Territory before the war; George Pickett (CSA) who was based in Bellingham Bay when Poe was there and faced off against British troops during the Pig War, Ulysses S. Grant (USA), Philip Sheridan (USA), George McClellan (USA), former Governor Isaac Stevens (USA) and John E. Wool (USA) who had opposed Stevens' 'Indian Wars'.

suggests that there is much to gain from a re-examination of the formative mid-nineteenth century PNW in the light of Anderson's work.

Anderson's concept of imagined communities sees a nation as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign... It is *imagined* because the members ... will never know most of their fellow members, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.' Moreover, the 'nation is *imagined* as limited because even the largest ... has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations.'²³ To have one nation means there must be another or multiple nations against which self-definition can be constructed; in Poe's case this was aristocratic 'England', that part of the old world from which Americans had separated. Anderson argues for the social construction of nations as political entities that have a limited spatial and demographic extent, rather than organic, eternal entities. Furthermore, 'It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm ... nations dream of being free ... The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state.'²⁴ It is also 'imagined' as a community, 'because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is ... conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. This fraternity that makes it possible for people ... willing to die for such limited imaginings.'²⁵ The masculine terminology is appropriate in describing Poe's time; community leaders including militia officers, who were prominent in Thurston County, were male and only males could vote.²⁶

Grouping Poe's editorials on nationalism and analysing them in relation to Anderson's ideas enables us to focus in on Poe's view of the American nation. For Poe, America was a democratic Union bound by the Constitution. This ideal was set in contrast to what Americans had to avoid – the growth

²³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6-7 his emphasis.

²⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7. By implication he is also limiting the coverage of the phrase.

²⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

²⁶ Mary Ellen Rowe, *Bulwark of the Republic: The American Militia in Antebellum West* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003), 150-1.

of aristocracy and inherited privilege. Poe articulated these ideas through his *Overland Press* editorials, and in doing so spoke to an imagined community that straddled the border between Washington Territory and British Columbia. Poe's readership to the north included what might be called 'lapsed Americans' (blacks and Confederates) and 'latent Americans' – namely, the 'English', who Poe saw as instinctively democratic and in the PNW had an opportunity to repudiate aristocratic rule. Within the Territory Poe was encouraging his readers, American and British, to support the democratic Union and resist aristocracy.

Anderson also notes that newspapers 'made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways.'²⁷ Poe's editorials demonstrate that the idea of the American (US) nation was still being refined eighty-five years after its creation. While nationally, antebellum newspapers were 'extremely partisan', confirming rather than creating readers' prejudices or opinions, independents like Poe were rare.²⁸ Poe was particularly successful in presenting his views on America to a diverse audience on both sides of the American-British Columbian border and across the political divide within the Territory.

The concept of the nation developed in the late eighteenth century to replace European monarchical or religious structures. Although it was a new way of conceptualising sovereignty, the existence of other ways of seeing sovereignty (for example with regard to Indians) did not occur to Poe or his contemporaries; his concern for their welfare was limited to honouring treaty obligations and paternalism. Political power would be concentrated in a defined population and territory over which the state, in the name of nationality, could exercise power.²⁹ In addition to mass communication generating 'nationalism and ethnicity', Anderson also identified mass migration leading to the creation

²⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 36.

²⁸ Susan-Mary Grant, *North over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 173. Grant's newspaper study took account of Anderson's ideas (page 7) and could serve as a model for a parallel study focussed on the PNW including British Columbia.

²⁹ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University 1993), 5 develops these themes and makes this point in the case of post-British [East] Indian nationalism. It can also be made regarding Indian populations of Puget Sound.

of 'Creole pioneers' who consciously saw themselves as 'fellow-nationals' in a way that the first generation of migrants did not; Poe had earlier emphasised that boosting was designed to attract migrants *from the States* in order to build the Territory *into an American State*.³⁰

Poe's imagined American community was built partly on the political principles of the Whig motto: "*Liberty and Union, now and forever*" [emphasis in original].³¹ The other element, which Poe commended the Legislative session of 1861-2 as having, was the democratic spirit which he admired (and influenced).

Poe imagined that the American polity should resist aristocracy and privilege. The form closest to home was presidential patronage. Poe did not mention Lincoln by name in his editorials; he was 'Father Abraham' and those who benefitted from his support 'Abraham's tribe'. To Poe, Presidential patronage was counter-democratic and allowed incompetence and corruption in administration. He argued that before coming to power, Republicans had conferred on the 'people of [the] Territories the right of electing their own officers.' The principle was 'right and just' and 'its violation by the British Crown in 1776, was one of the grievances cited in the Declaration of Independence as justifying the Colonies in throwing off the yoke of British tyranny.' The current practice was a betrayal of these principles, treating the Territory as a 'political poor house' for failed Illinois politicians.³²

Poe's ideas of virtue and gentlemanliness included achieving agreed priorities and deferring discussion of issues where there was no hope of achieving progress; it was this oil that kept the cogs of democracy turning smoothly. Poe supported the view that the Civil War was principally about the Constitution and was being fought to secure the Union. He reprinted an item from the *New York Times*, with a comment that the paper previously 'seemed to favor a policy of making this a war of emancipation, [but] has lately changed its tone and offers a vigorous protest against it.' Poe thought it presented 'the constitutional side of the question very cogently.' Forcing the slavery issue would

³⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7, 50.

³¹ 'Salutary', *Puget Sound Courier*, May 19, 1855, 1.

³² 'Partisan Consistency', *OP*, June 16, 1862.

weaken pro-Union forces in the border states where the war would be won or lost. It would be another nine months before Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was announced, but at this point Poe maintained the Whig view that preserving the Union was paramount.³³ However two months later, in February 1862, Poe published a humorous item which suggested a different view: 'They've caught a white elephant in Africa. This country caught a black "elephant" there some time ago, and now we're at sword points what to do with it.'³⁴ He implied that slavery was a central issue under dispute but dressed this controversial thought in humour. This was previously the problem of the 1830 Missouri Compromise which Whigs, including Poe, had strongly supported in 1855.³⁵ The contest was 'for equality, for the supremacy of the Constitution' and the war would 'set [slavery's] limits' and 'the entire overthrow of the institution, is more than probable.'³⁶ In Poe's imagined community, once the Union was saved, it would then be necessary to address the question of slavery.

Just as Poe's *Overland Press* editorials carved out a vision of his imagined community in the PNW, they simultaneously identified and critiqued the principles, individuals and groups which threatened that vision – and whose exclusion needed to be ensured. The most visible enemy was the Confederacy, which he cast as a 'Sambo rebellion', meaning it had no chance of succeeding.³⁷ Poe's ideas about the limits of American citizenship were expressed in his response to calls in San Francisco for a poll tax on 'Mongolians' and their employers to protect the wage labour of citizens who had to earn more to pay taxes. The bulk of the Chinese in America were indentured, and for Poe, it was the

³³'Slavery and the War', *OP*, Dec 23, 1861, 1-2. The Whig resolutions he had helped draft in 1855 supported the (later overturned) Missouri Compromise on this basis. Lincoln issued the preliminary *Emancipation Proclamation* on 22 September 1862, declaring that if the rebels did not end the fighting and re-join the Union by 1 January 1863, all slaves in the rebellious states would be free.

³⁴ *OP*, Feb 20, 1862, 1.

³⁵ *Puget Sound Courier*, May 19, 1855.

³⁶ 'The Master Race', *OP*, Sept 1, 1862.

³⁷ Elizabeth Maddock Dillon and Michael Drexler (eds), *The Haitian Revolution and the Early United States: Histories, Textualities, Geographies*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016) 278-9. Sambo was a popular black stage character who mixed comedy with an edgy tone. While the point was that the Confederacy could not win the war, the phrase likened them to a trope of black powerlessness. 'A Retrospect', *OP*, April 14, 1862.

lack of individual agency, which meant they were neither able nor willing to become citizens.³⁸ In contrast he viewed Indians as a 'passive encumbrance' economically, suggesting he did not see them as American citizens (although he was not explicit on this). Treason was the clearest political disqualifier for Poe. He supported actions by the California Government to strip privileges from citizens who supported the Confederacy. While loyal newspapermen were 'intent on persuading bad men to do right,' he urged the Californian government to 'prevent them from doing wrong' by removing their right to vote and prevent the 'treason' of subverting loyal governments by weakening them electorally. He urged Californian authorities to 'let aliens in the heart be aliens in fact.'³⁹

Other threats to this community included the 'ultra party spirit': 'the professional politician – the material from which traitors are made [and who] – never looks beyond the interests of his party ... while we are for no party.'⁴⁰ Later, when he left for California, Poe offered some final melancholy remarks that encapsulated his vision for the Territory and something of his philosophy: 'In bidding a reluctant adieu, gentlemen, we wish you health and happiness – long continued. May you live and flourish and grow in wisdom till our little Territory becomes a great State - great enough to give you all a seat in Congress.' He hoped that 'after your last earthly adjournment you will be called to order in a better place. Good bye. Be virtuous and you will be happy.'⁴¹ Poe's remark about virtue was not a throw-away line; he considered virtue as essential for American democracy as freedom of thought.

Poe also identified that he had something in common the both the 'rebels' and the English. In February 1862, Poe commented that in a 'rebellion among enlightened people of one blood ... [the] less wide and bloody the breach the best will it be healed.' He continued: 'Americans cannot fight Americans even for freedom and right, as England fights Mongolians and Indians, nor fight John Bull

³⁸ 'Chinese Coolie Question,' *OP*, Feb 18, 1862, 1. On February 19, 1862, Congress passed *An Act to Prohibit the "Coolie Trade" by American Citizens in American Vessels*. Small numbers of Chinese miners and merchants were in the region from the 1850s. 'Mongolian' refers to the Mongol Empire and most in California were from Guangdong.

³⁹ 'Successionists and Citizens', *OP*, May 12, 1862.

⁴⁰ 'Party Politics', *OP*, Aug 12, 1861 he repeated the idea in 'The Legislature', *OP*, Nov 28, 1861.

⁴¹ 'Adjournment of the Legislature', *OP*, Jan 30, 1862. He had commented on his poor health in *OP* Jan 23, 1862.

himself should he set his foot on American soil.⁴² Englishmen, Yankees and rebels shared a democratic heritage as well as a common ancestry. In speaking to his audience in British Columbia, he was speaking to all three to show up the weaknesses of Tory rule: '[o]ur Colonial neighbors ... have been three years petitioning their bovine progenitor for ... "Free institutions," a steamboat, and population' but could only obtain these by 'inducing Uncle Sam to annex their little colony to Washington Territory,' an idea that both nations considered possible.⁴³ Poe's editorial reach put him in a strong position to press this idea. To underline his view of common heritage, he asserted that the British Government only supported the rebels 'for the purpose of preventing that mighty uprising of the people of Great Britain which sooner or later will upturn the rotten system of monarchy in that empire' and pointed to British Liberal MP John Bright, who believed that Englishmen and Americans held similar ideas of democracy, to prove his point.⁴⁴

De Cosmos had earlier characterised local conflict arising from the Trent Affair as potentially leading to another 'Civil War' between the 'two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon family'.⁴⁵ Poe recast this with democracy-loving Americans being the exemplars of that common heritage. Both Poe and De Cosmos knew that a significant proportion of their readership included African Americans, mostly freemen, who sought the protection which they imagined a British colony led by a mixed-race governor might provide. The whites were mainly gold miners, many of whom were also Confederate sympathisers. This readership retained an interest in American affairs and also had the potential to influence policy and society in the British colonies. Poe characterised the mix in a short item: 'A Union man at Victoria wants to know how it is that so many of the immigrants to Cariboo are secessionists. We can't account for it, except that the chivalry may be seeking a country favorable to the indulgence

⁴² 'Progress of the War', *OP*, Feb 20, 1862.

⁴³ 'A Long Prayer', *OP*, Dec 12, 1861. He pursued the theme in 'English and Colonial Journals', *OP*, Dec 26, 1861. David E. Shi, "Seward's Attempt to Annex British Columbia, 1865-1869," *Pacific Historical Review* 47, no. 2 (1978), 217-238.

⁴⁴ 'British Sympathy with the Rebel Confederacy', *OP*, May 5, 1862; 'A Bright Idea', *OP*, March 20, 1862.

⁴⁵ 'A War Cloud Gone Another Come', *British Colonist*, Dec 23, 1861, 2. Kevin P. Phillips, *The Cousins' wars: religion, politics, and the triumph of Anglo-America*, (New York, Basic Books, 1999) explores this idea though, unlike Poe, ignores Canada.

of their natural proclivities—treason, poker and niggers.⁴⁶ The ‘chivalry’ was a play on Southerners’ self-perceptions; ‘treason’ their comfort in living in an undemocratic state; ‘poker’ their lack of work-ethic; and ‘niggers’ their comfort in being surrounded by blacks (though in this instance they were not slaves) in whose presence they felt superior. Poe hoped to turn all his readers into American democrats.

Poe’s imagined community was most clearly set out in mid-1862 when he argued the War had turned in the Union’s favour. In ‘The Beginning of the End’ he declared, ‘we are not partisan we are American: we glory in the triumph of American valor ... and the constitution...Our allegiance is due to the administration to which the people for the time being have confided the government ... to preserve the Union.’⁴⁷ Parties and presidents, party platforms and individual leaders, may come and go but the Constitution, the Union and democracy pursued with gentlemanliness should be pursued to make America.

Kendall buys the *Overland Press*

In time Poe’s poor health forced him to suspend his developing press career and move to the better climate of California. He left Washington on 23 August 1862, sold the *Overland Press* to Kendall and appointed Kendall as his agent to fulfill his well-paid contract as Public Printer.⁴⁸ Kendall’s admiring editorial described Poe as a ‘long and respectable resident of this Territory, but like many others, unfortunate in a financial way.’ ‘We trust’, Kendall continued, ‘he may recuperate and return to excite our smiles by his genial wit and philosophic indifference.’ Kendall captured the essence of Poe’s editorial style and most likely his personality with these words. His own style by contrast was

⁴⁶ *OP*, April 14, 1862, 2.

⁴⁷ ‘The Beginning of the End,’ *OP*, April 28, 1862

⁴⁸ ‘From Olympia’ *Weekly Oregonian*, August 16, 1862: 2, implies Poe’s ownership was supported by a loan which he was unable to service by stepping back from the *Overland Press* and subcontracting the work of the Public Printer to Kendall. The contract was sealed with a bond which he would forgo if he did not complete his obligations.

blunt and aggressive. Kendall's closing sentence suggested that Poe was known to hold strong opinions, but that he was nonetheless well-respected: 'He leaves behind him many friends and no enemies he wishes to be otherwise.'⁴⁹

Poe had certainly made one enemy: Dr Anson Henry (the most senior Republican in the Territory), who was also Kendall's nemesis. It is hard to identify any others who might be called 'enemies', except ardent Henry supporters. Perhaps the humourless Kendall mistook the banter of rival newspaper editors like Murphy and Prosch too seriously. Poe's major combatants in editorial jousting gave almost as good as they got, but also hinted at their admiration for their old rival in their later years. For all his strong views, Poe's wit and satirical flare, enabled the *Overland Press* to raise what were difficult and hard-fought issues in a way that was open to readers with competing party allegiances on either side of the border between Washington and British Columbia. The importance of Poe's skills as a publisher and writer for the success of the *Overland Press* and its ability to speak to a diverse audience were to come into sharper relief in his absence.

Kendall expected Poe to return to the Territory in late January 1863, but events intervened. Poe had met his obligations as Public Printer and was credited with publishing four items: the journals of the House and Council and the session laws.⁵⁰ However, Pickering expressed 'confusion' to the legislature regarding Kendall's position. His implication was that since Poe was no longer resident in the Territory he could not be employed regardless of his contract with Kendall, and on 17 December 1862 appointed George A. Barnes as Public Printer.⁵¹ Barnes was a Republican brother-in-law of Murphy's who would likely do the printing work. Poe, however, was legally Public Printer until the Legislative Assembly met to elect his successor. Kendall maintained that Poe had the right to sub-

⁴⁹ *OP*, Aug 25, 1862.

⁵⁰ The fourth item, a message from Governor William Pickering, was published by Kendall in December 1862 but credited to Poe for whom he was agent.

⁵¹ The appointment was made on the premise that Poe had left the Territory and therefore was no longer legally the Public Printer. "Poe having removed from the Territory during the last summer ... I have this day appointed George A. Barnes Public Printer." *Journal of the House, Tenth Annual Session, 1862* (Olympia, 1863), 44. Edward Furste to McElroy, Sept. 22, 1862, CY.

contract to him until a new election was held, but in the interim, Barnes considered the governor's appointment official and published one item as Public Printer.⁵²

Meanwhile, Kendall's battle with Henry became increasingly bitter. Kendall was relentless in his accusations of corruption against Henry in two editions of the *Overland Press* in March 1863. In response, Prosch commented prophetically; 'The present editor of the *Overland Press* is seemingly in painful affliction regarding a fancied insecurity of life hereabouts. ... If a man is determined to make a martyr of himself ... he can easily be accommodated, and especially in the business of publishing a newspaper.' Prosch counselled that martyrdom was 'as easy to avoid as it is to incur the risk' – something which Poe understood as well.⁵³

Kendall also took on legal work and one of his clients was the unpopular British Puget Sound Agricultural Company (PSAC), which still held several properties in the Territory.⁵⁴ In spite of the arrangement being supported by the Oregon Treaty of 1864, American settlers resented the presence of the British company holding American land. The PASC employed American George Roberts to manage their property at Cowlitz and he improved it with buildings and fences. On the night of 24 October 1862, an American settler attempted to drive Roberts off the PASC property. Roberts' barn and other buildings were destroyed.⁵⁵ Kendall concluded that Horace Howe, a 70-year-old farmer, had set the fire. Instead of taking legal action, Kendall attacked Howe in the press: '[t]his veteran wretch goes on with his work of robbery.' Howe waited a month before attacking Kendall in public with a cattle prod. Kendall responded with a gunshot, wounding Howe, but believed that Henry was behind the attack.⁵⁶ Kendall saw the delay as evidence that Howe had acted 'contrary to his own intentions [stirred] by parties in Olympia slightly shy of trying the job for themselves' and named Henry as the

⁵² See W. A. Katz, 'Public Printers of Washington Territory, 1853-1863', *PNQ*, 51: 3 (July, 1960), 112-3.

⁵³ 'In Affliction', *Puget Sound Herald*, April 2, 1863, 2.

⁵⁴ The Oregon Treaty of 1846 stated that the US would respect PSAC property but had the right to purchase.

⁵⁵ When the US bought the property in 1869 Roberts successfully claimed 160 acres for himself.

⁵⁶ *Puget Sound Herald*, January 8, 1863, 2 and *OP* Dec. 22, 1862.

stirrer.⁵⁷ After another two weeks, Howe's son visited the *Overland Press* office and shot Kendall once in the heart. Howe's son was released on bail but disappeared.⁵⁸

The consequences for Poe were significant; having lost his agent in Olympia there was no means for him to continue as Public Printer. The *Overland Press* survived Kendall's death, and on 12 January 1863, after missing one edition, it appeared with 'turned rules' of mourning (dividing the columns of type with heavy black lines) and carried a lengthy editorial on Kendall's life and character. The owners, former employee L. G. Abbott and new owner R. H. Hewitt changed the paper's name to *Pacific Tribune* and in 1868 it was bought by Poe's admirer and rival Charles Prosch, though they showed little interest in maintaining Poe's large cross-border readership.⁵⁹

Conclusion

Benedict Anderson's concept of the 'imagined community' provides a framework for examining Poe's role as politician-newspaperman in the PNW, promoting and building his own American community. Poe's idea of an imagined community was grounded on a belief in the fraternity of 'true Englishman', which he saw as uniting the Anglophone world, with Oliver Cromwell as one of its heroes.

Poe's vision for America as expressed in his editorials show that he maintained a non-partisan, and Old-Whig, position. His primary aims were to support the Union and the Constitution and thus the creation of a nation rather than a confederation of states. He argued against the 'ultra party spirit' of professional politicians as working against that national unity and therefore treasonous, but also against the undemocratic corruption embedded in presidential appointments. While supporting the aims of President Lincoln, Poe resisted praising him too much out of a deep-seated wariness of

⁵⁷ 'An Unfortunate Presumption', *OP*, Nov. 10, Dec. 22, 1862.

⁵⁸ Possibly with the assistance of friends, the State Archives record him as reported dead in California though no current record of his death exists. *Puget Sound Herald*, January 15, 22, 1863, 2.

⁵⁹ The paper closed in 1878 when he sold it.

anything approaching presidential kingship. Lincoln and his party were in power only because the people wanted them there at that particular historical moment.

Poe's views and skills as an editor and publisher were significant enough to attract the largest newspaper audience in the region. Where his rival newspaper editors often sought to feed the existing opinions of their partisan audiences, Poe remained more measured, in a way that reflected his keen sense of the diversity of his readership. Although repartee and bluster were part of the entertainment which most newspapers of the time provided, Poe was able to use his humour to gently prod readers to consider alternative views and to look beyond strictly partisan interpretations of the key issues confronting the Union and the PNW. At the heart of his vision were education, gentlemanliness and free labour, which he took to be the basis of democracy and American citizenship.

Conclusion: California Coda

The aim of the thesis has been to locate Poe and the *Overland Press* into the narrative of the formation of Washington Territory and in so doing enhance understanding of the period including reflections on nationalism as expressed in the region.¹ Poe became a newspaperman to shape a political role for himself with the start of the Civil War without the backing of a political party and built a cross-border audience around Whig ideas and an imagined English tradition of democracy.

Chapter One explored Poe's journey to the PNW and his first years in the Tumwater community. It argued that he was apprenticed as a community administrator to Michael Simmons leader of the Tumwater community. After trying his luck on the California goldfields, Poe returned to Puget Sound and with several colleagues and took part in the Cowlitz Convention, which led to the creation of Washington Territory in 1853. Chapter Two focused on the different approaches to settlement and boosterism as advocated by Poe as a member of the Territorial Legislature versus Governor Isaac Stephens. Poe subsequently had a formative role in the creation of the town of Whatcom, which was briefly the largest town in the Territory, but collapsed when miners no longer needed to pass through the town.

Chapter Three examined Poe's creation of the *Overland Press* which allowed him to renew a political role in the Territory without the backing of a political party. Through this medium he continued to support the issues which he had championed as an elected Whig member of the Legislative Assembly in the previous decade. Widespread interest in Civil War news had been one of the reasons for creating the newspaper and Chapter Four examined how this also led to Poe commenting more explicitly on national affairs and the nature of American democracy. These chapters argue that Poe's unique coverage of Washington Territory and British Columbia also helped frame his

¹ Further work to locate Poe's views against a national background may also be instructive.

engaging style in dealing with controversial issues intended to persuade and not merely to mirror readers' views.

Unfortunately, poor health arrested Poe's career in 1862. He sold the paper to his associate B. F. Kendall, who showed less interest in cross-border collaboration and none of Poe's engaging humour. No other editors followed Poe's cross-border approach. While Poe was not explicit about seeking to make British Columbia part of the US, he was clear in arguing that its residents had more in common with the US than far-off Britain. In 1866, annexation of British Columbia by the US remained an option.²

Poe's civic involvement, support for the Union and gentlemanliness were also distinctive themes of his final years in California. An overview of his final years concludes this account but also serves as a re-elaboration of his time in the Washington Territory. In late 1862 Poe settled with his brother Americus in Napa, where he pursued a connection with Whig turned Republican Judge Chancellor Hartson, who had the Yankee-Methodist background Poe admired. Poe continued working, married and began a family. Despite his deteriorating health, he continued in civic roles.

Judge Hartson had come to California in 1851 and after opening a legal practice was elected a judge and member of the California Assembly and helped establish the Republican Party in California. Rev Daniel Bagley may have been the connection to Judge Hartson, whose family was active in the Napa Methodist Episcopal Church. Poe, who had often complained of loneliness, also took an interest in Harston's house guest Emma Hartshorn. Emma had qualified as a teacher at Hamilton College, New York, and was the daughter of Harston's cousin, Rev Chancellor Hartshorn. Their family had a Massachusetts ancestry going back to the seventeenth century.

² David E. Shi, "Seward's Attempt to Annex British Columbia, 1865-1869," *Pacific Historical Review* 47, no. 2 (1978). 217-238.

Poe soon proposed to Emma and they married in Napa on 19 January 1863.³ The marriage was celebrated by the newspaper editors in California who received champagne from Poe, and when the editor of the *Washington Standard* saw the marriage notices he was keen to learn of the success of Poe's anticipated 'engineering' efforts.⁴ Poe's first child, Emma Agnes Poe, was born on Christmas Day later that year.⁵

A tax return shows that Poe worked as a real estate agent and was also a registered 'intelligence office'.⁶ An intelligence office was an employment agency and it, along with real estate sales, required paid registration under federal law. Poe was also registered under the *Conscription Act* to recruit troops for the Union cause in Napa which may have been the main activity of his intelligence office. He was also a willing conscript himself during the period November 1863 - January 1864, where he declared his profession as 'topographical engineer' and is so listed in the *San Francisco Business Directory* – his usual pre-political profession.⁷ The conscription register leaves blank the question about whether he was married. Married men over thirty-five were not required to serve; Poe was thirty-seven and had married during the registration period. Americus was also a draftee shown as a 35-year-old single farmer in Napa.⁸

The *Napa County Recorder* supported Lincoln and the Union when Poe arrived in Napa. However, with an ownership change in October 1863, it became, in the view of an early historian, a

³ The celebrant, P. L. Haynes began his role in 1862 and was succeeded by W. J. Maclay, 1864. Soon after Maclay's arrival, the parsonage and its contents, including the Church records were destroyed. C. V. Anthony, *Fifty Years of Methodism: A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church Within the Bounds of the Californian Annual Conference from 1547 to 1847-1897*, Methodist Book Concern, San Francisco, California, 1901.

⁴ *Napa Reporter*, 24 Jan 1863, 2; *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 28, 1863, 3, *Washington Standard*, February 14, 1863, 2 credits 'California Press.'

⁵ *Seattle Gazette*, 27 January 1864: 3. The notice in a Seattle paper suggests Rev Bagley as the informant.

⁶ U.S. IRS Tax Assessment Lists, 1862-1918, Division Four of Collection District One in the State of California for July 1864, 3; An Act to Provide Internal Revenue Support to the [Federal] Government, paragraphs 25 and 27, which required a licence to be purchased prior to conducting business. The registration was confirmed by the Board of Supervisors on 15 August 1864; *Daily Alta California*, August 16, 1864, 1.

⁷ *The San Francisco Directory for the year commencing December 1865* (San Francisco: Excelsior Steam Presses: Towne & Bacon, 1865), 360.

⁸ United States, Civil War Draft Registrations Records, 1863-1865, National Archives and Records Administration, Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau, California, Northern, Vol 2, sheet 29 for Alonzo and sheet 28 for Americus.

‘vehement opposer’ of Lincoln. The editorials argued for slavery even though California had entered the Union as a free state.⁹ Soon after, Poe was appointed as enrolling officer for those subject to the draft in Napa. The new editors reported his visit to the newspaper office in that capacity, giving some clue of Poe’s manner as well as their cynicism: ‘[t]he gentlemanly officer has paid us a flying visit. And we are placed on his list. A feeling of intense patriotism animates our corporeal system....’ Three lines from a patriotic song followed.¹⁰

Poe joined a new militia unit in April 1864, and was elected as a colonel for that unit with Americus a private.¹¹ The unit was not given military orders during the Civil War, although they performed regular public exercises. Being involved in the creation of the unit was a political statement. Many California militia units were disbanded and reformed to remove Democratic secessionist influences which were more prominent in southern California than Napa.¹²

Poe continued to seek elected office. In June 1864 he wrote to his friend William Winlock Miller and after discussing business, land sales, the value of greenbacks and people they both knew, he anticipated applying for a ‘registrar’ job (which he seems not to have obtained). He closed with a cheery ‘wife and baby send compliments.’¹³ Later he sought election to one of the two positions of Justice of the Peace for Napa. The *Napa County Recorder* was cool on Poe’s candidature.¹⁴ In spite of this Poe was elected, assisted by his militia profile and association with Hartson, the only Republican not attacked by the stridently Democratic *Recorder*. However, by this stage Poe’s illness affected his ability to work and the *Recorder* described his health as ‘delicate’.¹⁵

⁹ Lyman Palmer, *History of Napa and Lake counties, California ... and biographical sketches of early settlers and representative men* (San Francisco: Slocum, Bowen, 1881), 273.

¹⁰ ‘Enrollment at Home’, *Napa County Reporter*, Nov 7, 1863, 2; *Washington Standard*, 21 Nov 1863: 2.

¹¹ ‘Cavalry Company’, *Napa County Recorder*, April 23, 1864, 3. The unit was the Napa Rangers, Company L, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, established nine days after this meeting.

¹² Napa Rangers, Militia Companies Records, 1849-1880, Military Department. California State Archives, Item No.: B3411-3.

¹³ Poe to Miller June 24, 1864, Special Collections Unit, University of Washington Libraries, Miller family papers, 1851-1974 Collection: 3912, Container: 2/6, 3912-001, Poe A M.

¹⁴ ‘Local Officers Napa Township’, *Napa County Recorder*, Oct 14, 1865: 2; Poe also placed an advertisement on the same page as did the other three candidates and a on 23 September before any other candidates.

¹⁵ ‘Local Officers, Napa Township’, *Napa County Reporter*, October 14, 1865, 2.

Poe conducted his last wedding as Justice of the Peace in January 1866, a fortnight before his death from 'inflammation of the lungs', though he had by that time conceded that he was no longer able to perform his role.¹⁶ Although tuberculosis took a significant toll on urban populations, it was not considered contagious and cholera and smallpox were of more concern.¹⁷ On 1 August 1865, Emma Agnes died in San Francisco and Poe brought her body back for burial in Napa.¹⁸ Although the cause of Emma's death was not recorded, most children who died in San Francisco were victims of tuberculosis (described as 'consumption' for most people and 'inflammation of the lungs' for those of better social standing).¹⁹

Poe died on 31 January 1866 and was buried the same day.²⁰ No notice appeared in the *Napa County Recorder*, though it reported that he had been replaced as a Justice of the Peace due to his death.²¹ Americus initiated arrangements to sell the remaining land Poe held in the Territory.²² Emma left California in April to live with her parents in Michigan where she died in 1872.²³ Americus moved to Lake County in California, where he purchased farmland and invited his younger brother Alexander Hamilton Poe and his family to join him from Missouri after their mother died.²⁴

¹⁶ *Daily Evening Reporter* (Napa), Jan 4, 1867, 2. The parties were Ephraim Merrett and Nancy Purkeypile who was three months pregnant. The *Napa County Reporter*, Jan 27, 1866: 2, carried a notice that as he had been ailing for over a year the other Justice, S. S. Tucker, would execute the 'judicial functions of both offices.'

¹⁷ Susan Craddock 'Tuberculosis, tenements and the epistemology of neglect: San Francisco in the nineteenth century', *Ecumene* 5, No. 1, (January 1998): 53-80.

¹⁸ 'Deaths', *Sacramento Bee*, August 2, 1865:3; Napa Valley Genealogical Society, 'Tulocay Cemetery: Index of burials from 1864 to 1936', March 1999: 1. A second child was born and died in 1865, Willard Irving Tyler Brigham, Emma Elisabeth Brigham, and William E. Brigham, *The history of the Brigham family; a record of several thousand descendants of Thomas Brigham the emigrant, 1603-1653* (New York: The Grafton Press, 1907): 182.

¹⁹ 'Hospital reports' in California Board of Supervisors, *San Francisco municipal reports, for the fiscal year 1865-66, ending June 30, 1866*, 250-253. Only one case of 'inflammation of lungs' is recorded for 1865.

²⁰ 'Tulocay Cemetery...', 1.

²¹ By G. E. W. Towle, *Napa County Reporter*, Feb 10, 1866.

²² Americus N. Poe to E[dwin] Marsh July 22, 1866, included in Alonzo Marion Poe, 'Donation Land Claim File 193', Records of the Bureau of Land Management, Oregon & Washington Donation Land Files: 1851-1903, Olympia Land Office. Marsh was Register of the land office in Olympia. Will and probate documents have not survived due to successive fires in the Napa Valley.

²³ 'Departure of the Rev Jessie T Peck of the ME Church' and 'Eastward Bound', *Daily Alta California*, 10 April 1866, 1.

²⁴ 1880 United States Census: Gravelly Valley, Lake County, California, dwellings 30, 31.

On 17 February 1866, John Murphy published his obituary for Poe in the *Washington Standard*. It was the work of an admirer who reflected what he felt would resonate with his readers and effectively confirmed that their rivalry was professional rather than personal. Poe's 'genial good nature, and whole-souled generosity had endeared him to all with whom he came into contact, and his virtues will long be remembered by his many friends.' Poe had held several 'positions of trust' amongst which Murphy included the editorship of the *Overland Press* and, while they disagreed on some issues, characterised Poe's approach as marked by 'honor and integrity.'²⁵ 'Integrity' was the basis of Poe's argument against elected officials putting party loyalty before the welfare of the country and 'honor' or gentlemanliness characterised the way he considered American democratic society should conduct itself.

²⁵ 'Death of Hon. A. M. Poe' *Washington Standard*, February 17, 1866: 2. The item was copied in full or in part in other Washington and Oregon newspapers.

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[Image] ID Number: 658. Description: Caption: "Alonso [sic] M. Poe, first engineer to arrive at Whatcom. He improved the Indian Trail to the Fraser River. Platted town of Whatcom, 1858."

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