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## Go East, Young Man

Francaviglia, Richard

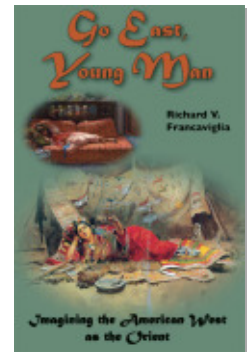
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## To Ancient East by Ocean United *The Pacific Northwest as Asia*

*“If the Chinamen in our midst are an evil, who is to blame for it?”*

*Choir’s History, Business Directory and Immigrant’s Guide Book to and Throughout  
Washington Territory and Vicinity (1878)*

BY THE LATE 1870S, WHEN *Choir’s Guide Book TO THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST* was published, the Chinese presence was palpable throughout this large region lying north of California and south of Canada. Choir’s took the opinion that Chinese people per se were not to blame. They were, after all, victims of age-old oppression. As the writer of the guidebook asked rhetorically: “Did not the emperor of China wall in his kingdom and declare it locked up against all foreign association? And did not the latter break down these barriers and invite and encourage immigration?” By this the writer meant the Treaty of Tien-tsin (1860), which had essentially opened China to outside influences, including the establishment of Western embassies and Christian missionaries, and the legalized importation of opium.

To many xenophobic Americans, this was bad enough, but the real question, as *Choir’s Guide Book* saw it, was tied to more recent legislation. As this popular source of information about the Pacific Northwest pointedly asked: “Is not that feather of aristocracy, the Burlingame Treaty, to blame for the hordes of Chinamen here to-day?” That 1868 amendment to the earlier treaty recognized what it called “the inherent and inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance, and also the mutual advantage of the free migration and emigration of their citizens and subjects, respectively for purposes of curiosity, of trade, or as permanent residents.” Although the Burlingame Treaty shied away from actual naturalization of newly arrived peoples from China, it had the effect of liberalizing immigration and stirring considerable

debate among nativists. The discussions were particularly virulent in areas of the United States with large populations of Chinese, namely California and the Pacific Northwest.<sup>1</sup>

These concerns had grown since about 1850, but the subject of Asia's relationship to the Pacific Northwest goes back much further in time, for it had fueled unsuccessful searches for a fabled Northwest Passage for several centuries. As late as 1800, such a passage was still on Thomas Jefferson's mind. By 1805 Jefferson had dispatched Lewis and Clark to find an easy water passage through North America that would bring the new United States closer to Asia. Instead, they discovered a poor substitute—the Columbia River—and encountered near its mouth a forested land where rainfall seemed incessant and a carpet of moss appeared determined to cover everything, especially during the long winter months. These explorers were not impressed with their stay, and for that matter, acknowledged that they had failed in finding the passageway they sought on behalf of the president. Nevertheless, they were the first Americans to reach the Pacific on a venture that had clear implications for future US-Asian relations.

Although this challenging corner of North America partly overwhelmed Lewis and Clark, the material contained in their report suggested that the region held real promise for the United States. By the 1840s, with the question of British control here nearing peaceful resolution, Anglo-American settlers began moving to the Pacific Northwest. In western Oregon, they found a climate that had dry summers and mild, wet winters. Within a short time, they too began to think of this area as the new Eden. Although their goal was to create a new and vibrant part of the United States, the more enterprising among them were intrigued—as had been earlier generations of mapmakers and explorers—by this region's proximity to Asia. However, while these nineteenth-century visionaries in the Pacific Northwest sensed a great commercial future with the Orient, that future would take a couple of generations to materialize.

In the meantime, the more fertile parts of the Northwest were settled by land via the Oregon Trail, while Chinese immigrants began to arrive via California by the early 1850s, when gold mining boomed along the Rogue River in southern Oregon. Most of these Chinese miners had arrived from California, but soon Chinese immigrants debarked in Astoria and Portland. By the 1860s, the Chinese were mining gold in central and eastern Oregon (and Idaho), but many also found work as cowboys and farmers. Of the miners, most selected spots some distance away from European Americans, and they often seemed to have a special knack for finding gold where others failed. Mostly, though, the techniques used by Chinese miners were especially

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PORTLAND, OREGON }  
SPOKANE FALLS, WASH. }

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BRICK MAKING, NEAR PORTLAND, OREGON.

Courtesy Oregon Historical Society (negative no. OrHi 83510)

Fig. 7-1. The presence of Chinese workers in this cover illustration from *West Shore Magazine*, 1890, gives an Asian feel to a brickyard near Portland, Oregon.

effective. Their relative isolation, however, did not guarantee safety. In 1887, at least thirty Chinese miners were killed in one of the West's bloodiest events, the massacre at Hells Canyon, Idaho. If, as historian R. Gregory Nokes claims, thirty-four Chinese miners were killed in this event, it ranks as *the* bloodiest episode in Chinese American history.<sup>2</sup>

Although tragic events like this left the landscape stained and the Pacific Northwest's history tarnished, there were some bright points in the relationship between the Chinese and the European Americans. As a writer for *West Shore* magazine observed in 1889, the Chinese were hard workers; one of them could accomplish "daily as much as two Caucasians would." Their handiwork was everywhere evident in the landscape: "By utilizing every inch [of land], by cropping the same ground several times a year, and by constant use of the irrigation ditch and watering can, he secures a marvelous quantity of vegetables from a very small patch of ground."<sup>3</sup> If *industrious* is a word often associated with the Chinese, it included more than mining and agriculture. Chinese workers were also prominent in the canning and brick industries: an 1890 lithograph of a brickyard near Portland transforms the Pacific Northwest into a nominally Asian scene as Chinese brick makers and hod carriers—recognizable by the characteristic dress, including broad-rimmed hats and cloglike shoes—produce and trundle bricks (fig. 7-1).<sup>4</sup>

The clothing worn by Chinese workers frequently caught the attention of Anglo-Americans. In particular, their conical, broad-rimmed hats were so distinctive that topographic features were often named after them. In Oregon alone, there are several evocatively shaped buttes bearing the name "China" or "Chinese" in reference to such distinctive headwear. These include China Cap in Union County, which "bears a close similarity to the hats worn by Chinese laborers throughout the Pacific Northwest in the early days of development," and therefore "it must have been named on that account," and China Hat, a butte in Deschutes County that "received its name because, when viewed from Fort Rock, it resembled the style of hat worn by Chinese during early days of the Pacific Northwest" (fig. 7-2). Toponyms like China Creek, China Flat, and China Bar commemorate the Chinese gold miners in parts of Oregon, and China Ditch recognizes their work in digging a drainage ditch alongside a branch line of the Union Pacific in Gilliam County.<sup>5</sup>

The Chinese were now part of the scene, and their colorful customs were often commented upon, but many found their presence disturbing. Nowhere is this ambivalence more apparent than among Anglo-American religious leaders on the West Coast, and the Pacific Northwest was no exception. In 1882, a Baptist minister in the Northwest made a generous claim pretty much



Author's photograph

Fig. 7-2. Nick Yehnert wears a “coolie hat” as he gazes at the aptly named China Hat in Deschutes County, Oregon, in September, 2010.

in sympathy with liberal legislation: “We believe that the gospel is for the Chinese; and we believe that we ought to meet the incoming tide of immigration with the open Bible.” To this, he added that “the Lord our God has had a hand, at least, in sending the Chinese to the Pacific Coast.”<sup>6</sup> Another minister stated that “the coming of the Chinese to America is excelled in importance by no other event since the discovery of the New World. It is,” as he put it, “one of the impulses, beyond all human conception or management, by which God is moving the history of mankind onward to its great consummation.”<sup>7</sup>

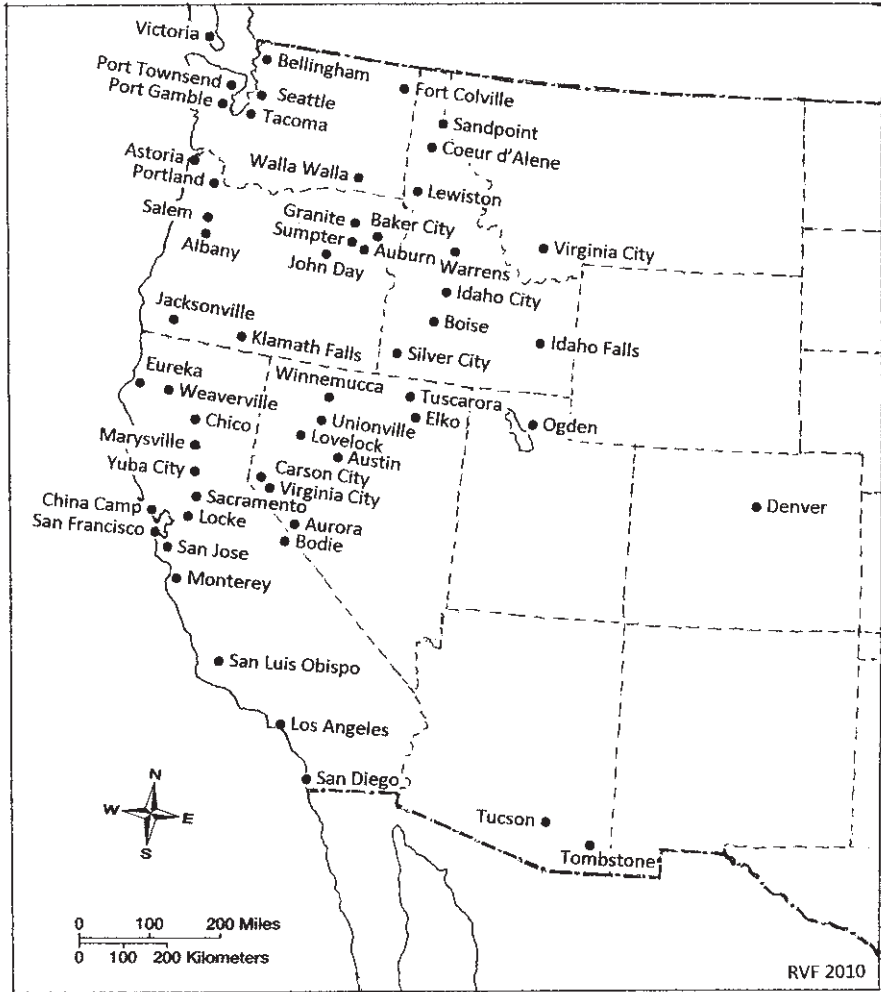
That is one side of the coin, but not everyone was quite so sanguine or generous. In 1909, the Portland *Oregonian* concluded that the Chinese “have not a dollar’s worth of real property or any kind of foundation to show as a result, but only a small group of ‘boys,’ as they are called, meeting in or moving from one little batty room to another, with the pretty white girl always the chief attraction.” Note the overtones of sexual jealousy here, with the Asian men seeming to prefer white women and thus threatening the manhood of Anglo-Americans by stealing their women. Leaving no doubt where it stood, the paper categorically stated that “Oriental persons cannot be ‘converted’ to Christianity.”<sup>8</sup>

As in California, Chinatown was a fixture of urban life in the Pacific

Northwest. In 1890, writer Harvey Whitefield Scott described Portland's Chinatown as a fascinating *mélange* of American and Chinese architecture. The buildings that composed Chinatown were brick and had been "put up in the first place largely by Americans." That, however, did not prohibit the Chinese here from tailoring the environment to their own needs—or as Scott put it, modifying it "according to their convenience and ideas of beauty." These buildings, Scott continued, "are intensely oriental in their general air, with piazzas of curved roofs, highly ornamented with yellow, white, and vermilion paint, and paper globes and gegaws." Along the streets, "red paper inscribed with characters in black serve as signs, and are pasted numerously over doors and windows." The impression created was both exotic and festive. Scott further noted that certain events could make Chinatown even more enchanting: "On gala days, the entire area is lit up by lanterns, or gaily ornamented with paper." Moreover, the sounds in Chinatown were different, too. Here, "the tones of their flutes and fiddles, and . . . gongs" filled the air.<sup>9</sup>

A map showing the distribution of western American communities with a significant Asian population, usually in the form of Chinatowns, is noteworthy (fig. 7-3). It reveals how intimately the Chinese were associated with mining and railroads and also how connected they remained to the Pacific Coast cities that served as their initial points of arrival to the United States. The remnants of the Chinese presence are etched into the rural landscape of the entire West from Arizona into Idaho, but their presence is most palpable near the Pacific Coast itself. As the map confirms, the Pacific Northwest was a major center for the Chinese; however, the Japanese also had a significant presence here, although many arrived somewhat later than the Chinese.

The acceptance of Asians into the fabric of the Pacific Northwest had taken considerable time as part of an elaborate image-building process. In fact, at the same time that an Asian presence was being established in the 1850s and 1860s, Anglo-Americans began to become aware that this new region had its own unique character—if only they could identify it. For the general public as well as writers, the Pacific Northwest's landscapes conspired to link it with someplace more exotic. To some, it was the mountainous area bordering the northern Mediterranean Sea, notably Greece. In the 1860s, writer Joaquin Miller observed that even the Indian and Anglo-American names in Oregon wouldn't suffice. As Miller put it: "Ah, you look incredulous and think of the practical names of the Luckimute [*sic*] and Long Tom and Soap Creek, but never mind them, look at Mt. Hood. It is itself a Parnassus." By equating Mount Hood with one of the most sacred places in ancient Greece, Miller simultaneously elevated it above mundane places and gave it an air



Map by author; based in part on a map in *Gum San: Land of the Golden Mountain* and additional research

Fig. 7-3. A map of the American West showing communities with significant Chinese populations, ca. 1900, reveals their presence in ports (fishing, commerce), along railroads, and in mining areas.

of the exotic. This meshed perfectly with Miller's romantic interpretation of Oregon's landscapes, which, he repeatedly reminded readers, were exceptional. While serving as editor of the *Eugene City Review* in the 1870s, Miller admonished his readers to "look at the Cascades. . . . Look at the little knolls and buttes that lay stretched up and down the [Willamette] valley, covered with white flocks and fat herds, and listen to the foaming sea afar off that beats with eternal roar over rock bound shores, and tell me if this, our sunset land, is not



a land of song and poetry.”<sup>10</sup> As Miller hinted, song and poetry would later play a role in regional identity, but travelers’ experiences elsewhere helped in the meantime.

But it was a new breed of educated person, notably the geologist, who would ultimately play a role in finding a more suitable counterpart to the Pacific Northwest’s landscapes in the nineteenth century. As geologists traveled to Asia in the 1860s and 1870s, they found a landscape analogue for the region in Japan. Like that island empire, the Pacific Northwest is shaped by volcanism. In contrast to much of the West, the Pacific Northwest is a land where tall volcanic peaks form the horizon not far from the coast. West of the towering Cascade Range, the region’s thick, fragrant forests of fir and cedar are reminiscent of what travelers encountered in Japan. Here and there, from the Canadian border south to extreme Northern California, snowcapped volcanic peaks crown the skyline. As with other landscapes around the Pacific Ring of Fire, volcanoes slumber but may awaken from time to time. The serene sapphire countenance of Oregon’s Crater Lake disguises a volatile landscape capable of sending volcanic ash and destruction over thousands of square miles, which it did about seven thousand years ago. There is something exotic about these mountains. Even the name of the former mountain that occupied the site of Crater Lake—Mount Mazama—sounds strangely Japanese. These and other aspects of the landscapes in the Pacific Northwest suggest a familiarity with, and similarity to, Asia.

The historical process by which the Pacific Northwest began to be Orientalized in the nineteenth century reveals much about the role of sophisticated travelers in securing information in Asia and bringing it back to America. Some of these travelers were scientists and some were writers. A few, like geologist Raphael Pumpelly, were both. We have already seen how Pumpelly characterized portions of the American Southwest and California, but he was traveling through the area with a more exotic goal in mind, namely, reaching the Orient and comparing its geology to that of the western US.

Upon reaching San Francisco on his epic westward journey in the early 1860s, Pumpelly observed that “the Japanese Government had instructed Mr. C. W. Brooks, their commercial agent, to engage two geologists and mining engineers, for the purpose of exploring part of the Japanese Empire.” However, Pumpelly added that he came by this job serendipitously. Because of a misunderstanding, a copy of the Japanese officials’ correspondence had been sent to the US government in Washington, DC, but “by a pure coincidence, I was chosen as one of the two men.”<sup>11</sup> “Coincidence” seems a strange word for a scientist like Pumpelly to use, but it was accurate. Actually, Pumpelly’s

confession reveals several aspects of Orientalism that are not often recognized. First, American and other Western explorers often came to Asia at the behest of governments in the Orient. Second, scientific explorers, not just political officials, were often at the cutting edge of observing the Orient firsthand and conveying images of its culture and landscape to the United States. Lastly, sometimes serendipity plays a role in the process of Orientalization. Pumpelly was not only one of America's scientific luminaries at the time but was also a gifted writer. His popular *Across America and Asia*, published in 1870, provided an evocative look at the Orient from Japan and China across the steppes of Russia. It did for Asia what John Lloyd Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Egypt* had done for the Near East about a generation earlier. Pumpelly's book was widely read and played a role in shaping attitudes about Asia by simultaneously demystifying, and yet romanticizing, Asian culture and landscape.

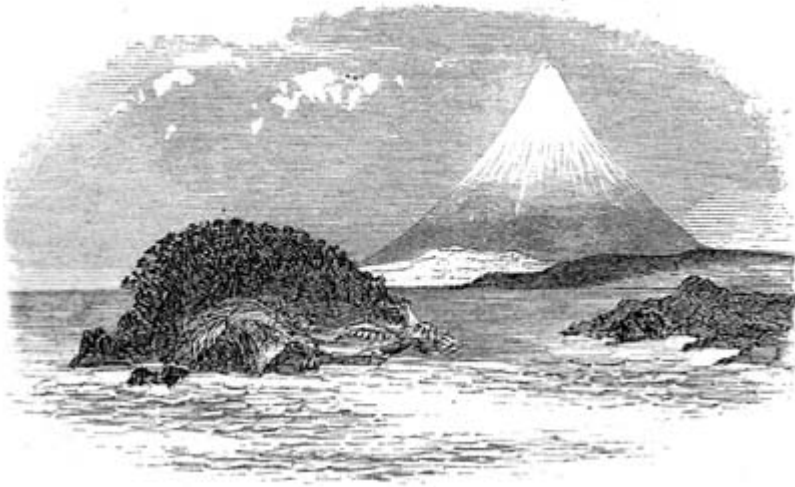
Even though Pumpelly was an earth scientist, he was also an astute observer of culture and history. That is what makes his writings so rich in content about the character of Japan. In a telling section, Pumpelly discusses the "executive power centered in the Mikado," adding that such a person was "too holy to be seen by other than the very highest of his attendants, the Sun, although himself a deity, not worthy of shining on his head, the Mikado may not touch the ground with his feet, nor even cut his [own] nails and hair, so sacred is his body."<sup>12</sup> That type of description fascinated and sometimes disgusted otherwise democratic Americans who insisted their leaders be both approachable and accountable. Similarly, those Americans like Stephens, who had had an audience with the Pasha in the Middle East, often noted the incredible social distance between a potentate and his people. This distance was both social and metaphorical, for it represented distant exotic places that seemed stuck in time—that is, had not, and perhaps could not, "progress" as did the Western world. It is telling, though, that Americans were impressed enough with Asian leaders like these to name two types of locomotives after them, the Mogul type (2-6-0) and the Mikado (2-8-2) being examples from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, respectively.

For his part, Pumpelly philosophically mused that every culture that tried to subdue Japan had failed. Even the great and terrible Kublai Khan, who hoped "to see all mankind united in one family," and would take Japan by force if necessary—"failed ingloriously." Idealistically, perhaps, Pumpelly believed that the "peaceful diplomacy" he was experiencing in the 1860s had actually "paved the way for bringing that empire into the circle of nations."<sup>13</sup> That notion of the circle of nations was, of course, a Western concept that included the United States center stage—though Pumpelly would have been

chagrined to learn that Japan's membership in this circle of nations would only follow the world's most destructive war almost a century later. Interestingly, it would be Japan, rather than China, that would ultimately have the closest connection to the Pacific Northwest.

Asian culture in the Far West was marginalized for a long time, but some Anglo-Americans—especially those in education, commerce, and religion—strongly resented that marginalization. Repudiating such discrimination, many educated and worldly Americans tried to promote a better understanding about Asians, as did Pumpelly. In his extensive section on Japan, for example, he observed that “the thoughtful traveller learns in the first stages of his wanderings, that the more distant the relationship between the two races, the more difficult it is to measure them by the same standard.”<sup>14</sup> Those two races, of course, were Americans and Asians. Many more Anglo-Americans, however, were in no mood for such generous cultural relativism, that is, making “us” better understand “them” through reasoning. Despite the inherent conflation of East and West that occurred in many parts of the West, the differences between the two cultures were difficult to reconcile. And so, Orientalism played out with considerable ambivalence: On the one hand, it could portray positive connections between East and West. On the other hand, it could emphasize differences that often led to tension, and even violence.

Pumpelly also revealed something significant about the character of Japanese landscapes, and his descriptions shed light on how Americans came to appreciate those exotic landscapes. In an insightful passage about his excursions in the Japanese countryside that would influence the creation of Asian gardens in America, especially the Pacific Northwest, Pumpelly noted that “a view presented itself in which I immediately recognized a scene familiar to all who have seen much of the Japanese lacquered ware.” In addition to the beautiful smooth waters of Wodowara Bay and the neck of sand that joined the beach to rocky Enoshima Island, this view contained an icon: “Far away over this neck, and the bay beyond,” Pumpelly noted, “rose the lofty and graceful cone of Fuziyama.” We call this mountain Fujiyama or Mount Fuji today, but it remains the premier topographic icon of Japan. How did it become so? Writing in 1870, Pumpelly observed that “this view of the mountain is a favorite subject of Japanese artists.” He underscored the significance of this “most perfect of volcanic cones,” which had become “an object of national [Japanese] pride, and the subject of innumerable sketches and verses.” To be sure that readers comprehended the significance of Fuji, Pumpelly included an illustration of this scene, which was based on a Japanese sketch, in his book (fig. 7-4). The iconic image of Fujiyama looming above Enoshima Island at



Author's collection

Fig. 7-4. In his popular book *Across America and Asia* (1870), geologist Raphael Pumpelly illustrated “Inosima and Mount Fusi-yama from a Japanese sketch.”

the mouth of Sagami Bay is enduring indeed. From Pumpelly’s time onward, Americans also recognized it as a symbol for Japan, especially in postcards after about 1900, some of which were commercially printed and others of which were actually hand painted by Japanese artists (fig. 7-5).

In the Pacific Northwest, Mount Fuji had several counterparts—impressive, snow-covered volcanic mountains that ruled the skyline. The towering Mount Hood to the east of Portland is that city’s signature landmark. It appears in countless photographs, paintings, commercial advertisements, and logos such as the University of Oregon’s seal, which was adopted in 1877. Portland actually had two such signature topographic landmarks at the turn of the century, though one of them was located north of the Columbia River in the state of Washington: Mount Saint Helens also appeared in many postcards and paintings (fig. 7-6) and was considered to be “one of the world’s most symmetrically beautiful mountains, in a league with Japan’s Mt. Fuji.”<sup>15</sup> However, Portland lost this iconic landmark in 1980 when a thunderous volcanic eruption blasted the top off of the mountain. In the wake of that catastrophic volcanic eruption, Mount Saint Helens is still visible from the city but reduced in stature and more a natural curiosity than an imposing, Fujilike landmark. Farther north, the urbanizing Seattle-Tacoma area also featured stunning, Fujilike volcanic mountains. In postcard views of the time, it was easy for artists to slightly retouch the peaks of Mount Baker and Mount



Author's collection

Fig. 7-6. Postcard view of Mount Saint Helens, Washington, rising above Spirit Lake (ca. 1920).



Author's collection

Fig. 7-5. In this beautiful, hand-painted postcard (ca. 1915), Fujiyama looms above the surrounding forested landscape near the coast.



Author's collection

Fig. 7-7. Postcard view of Mount Rainier as seen from Olympia, Washington (ca. 1915).

Rainier to give them their perfect, which is to say Fujilike, form. In a postcard view of Mount Rainier and the city of Olympia, Washington, the mountain interrupts the horizon in a manner very reminiscent of the Japanese paintings of Fujiyama (fig. 7-7). These snowcapped volcanic mountains were incorporated into the developing boosterism of the Pacific Northwest. More to the point, however, they subliminally equated the Pacific Northwest with the Far East. The verso of one revealing 1912 postcard notes that Mount Saint Helens is “our Fujiama,” though Mount Hood was also equated with that venerable Japanese mountain on occasion.<sup>16</sup>

These Northwest-as-Japan topographic comparisons were more than simply Anglo-American fantasies. The historical record confirms that immigrants from Asia could also feel the Pacific Northwest’s similarity to their native lands. After visiting several parts of the United States when he arrived from Japan in 1905, for example, Masuo Yasui ultimately settled in Hood River, Oregon, a small community situated in the shadow of Mount Hood. According to Yasui’s biographer, he became “transfixed by the beauty of the passing scenery” on a train ride through the Columbia River Gorge: “The dense, green valley sloping back to touch the base of a snowcapped peak that resembled the beloved Mount Fuji reminded him so much of Japan that he got off the train then and there, declaring Hood River his home.”<sup>17</sup>

Elsewhere in his discussions of the Japanese landscape, Pumpelly describes

the temple in Yeddo, the grounds of which “contained some beautiful specimens of Japanese gardening, consisting of dwarfed trees and rock work, with ponds containing gold fish and silver fish.” While discussing the Yeddo temple grounds, Pumpelly noted, “One feature that struck me was the abundance of large trees, many of them primeval forest pines, which met the eye at every turn, crowning the low hills or rising from the grounds of a daimio’s yaski.”<sup>18</sup> Pumpelly’s descriptions here emphasize several aspects of the Japanese landscape, namely, (1) the texture of varied objects such as rocks, trees, fish, and even mountains, (2) the placement of these objects in varied planes—foreground, middle ground, and background, (3) the concept of a primeval or pristine nature that is (4) altered, with positive results, by the artistic hand of man. *Artistic* is the operative concept in Pumpelly’s descriptions, and it appears at three levels. First, in the very aesthetic quality of the landscapes he describes; second, in the fact that Japanese artists are recording and interpreting the scenes with considerable emotion; and third, in the actual artistic manner in which the Japanese were shaping the landscape itself—cultivating stunted trees, placing rocks, and so forth. These three levels of appreciation all have a spiritual quality to some degree—after all, Fujiyama is a spiritual locale—but they remind us how closely aesthetics and spirituality are connected in Japan. This artistic impulse and the spiritualization of the landscape in Japan, of course, combine to create something we recognize as the “character” of Oriental landscaping today. However, Pumpelly’s book revealed it at just the time that the Pacific Northwest—with its lofty, snow-covered, volcanic mountain cones looming, Fujilike, above primeval green forests, stunning seascapes, and thriving cityscapes—was being articulated for public consumption.

Although the developing regional identity of the Pacific Northwest was influenced by Asia, there was also strong competition from other places. In fact, the Pacific Northwest is heir to two very different influences. On the one hand, it has a strong connection with Asia, but it has perhaps an equally strong affinity to the British Isles and New England. In 1925, J. Russell Smith noted that the “Puget Sound Valley” was “the climatic duplicate of England.” In this, Smith was somewhat more enthusiastic than perfectly accurate, but the coastal Pacific Northwest is indeed cool and cloudy enough to seem like England, Scotland, and Ireland. And yet the far northwestern corner of the continental United States also has strong connections across the Pacific Ocean. As evidence of this dichotomy, consider two invasive plants in the Pacific Northwest that have become weeds but otherwise give the landscape a distinctive look—the flashy yellow Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) that decorates hillsides and reminds one of the British Isles, and the Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus*

*armeniacus*), which forms thick stands of tangled vines that yield delicious fruit in late summer. Both symbolize the region's dual personality, or at least dual sources of inspiration.

Even though the Pacific Northwest has long recognized and touted its British Isles and its New England Atlantic heritage, its connections to Asia were especially appealing to business and commercial interests from a fairly early date. In fact, Seattle's position on the most direct route between New England and Asian ports made it the perfect jumping-off place for anyone traveling from the Northeast to the Orient. As Smith continued, in Seattle "there is also much Oriental talk and trade, for this harbor, [situated] from one to three days nearer to the Orient than San Francisco, has several important steamship-lines in the Asia trade." To clarify this, Smith explained that "the route is shorter than more southerly routes because the spherical shape of the earth makes the north great-circle routes shorter than the southern routes." If Asian silk were shipped through Seattle, Smith observed, it could go from Yokohama, Japan, to New York in just two weeks. As Smith concluded, "In Seattle, more than any Pacific city, one can feel commerce."<sup>19</sup> One manifestation of this expedited trade was the high-speed "silk trains," which rushed their precious cargo east from Seattle on passenger train schedules.

Smith was here building on a theme Seattle had begun capitalizing on at least a generation earlier. This was some time in the making. As early as 1878, a poem titled "SEATTLE" began with the words "Enthroned Upon thy emerald hills / Queen City of the Sound" but praised the fact that the city was "To Ancient East by ocean united."<sup>20</sup> Like San Francisco, Seattle looks both eastward and westward. Unlike that California city, however, Seattle had no nearby goldfields. Rather, the city found itself perched in the far northwest corner of the continental United States in a location that was peripheral to the rest of the nation, but—as Seattle's elite often pointed out—actually much closer to the Orient than was San Francisco. Despite its relative isolation, though, Seattle's dream was a step closer to reality in the early 1880s, as two northern transcontinental railroads—the Northern Pacific and Great Northern—now linked it to the eastern and midwestern United States. Those railroads further helped Seattle (and Portland) tap their vast interior hinterlands yielding wheat, lumber, and mineral wealth. That, and the Alaska and Yukon mining booms of the late nineteenth century, finally put Seattle on the map; Seattle was often placed in the middle of a map that included both the United States and Asia. Seattle's connections to Asia were, in fact, a key element of its success. Its port had come of age in 1896, as a huge crowd gathered there to celebrate the arrival of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha's steamship *Miike*



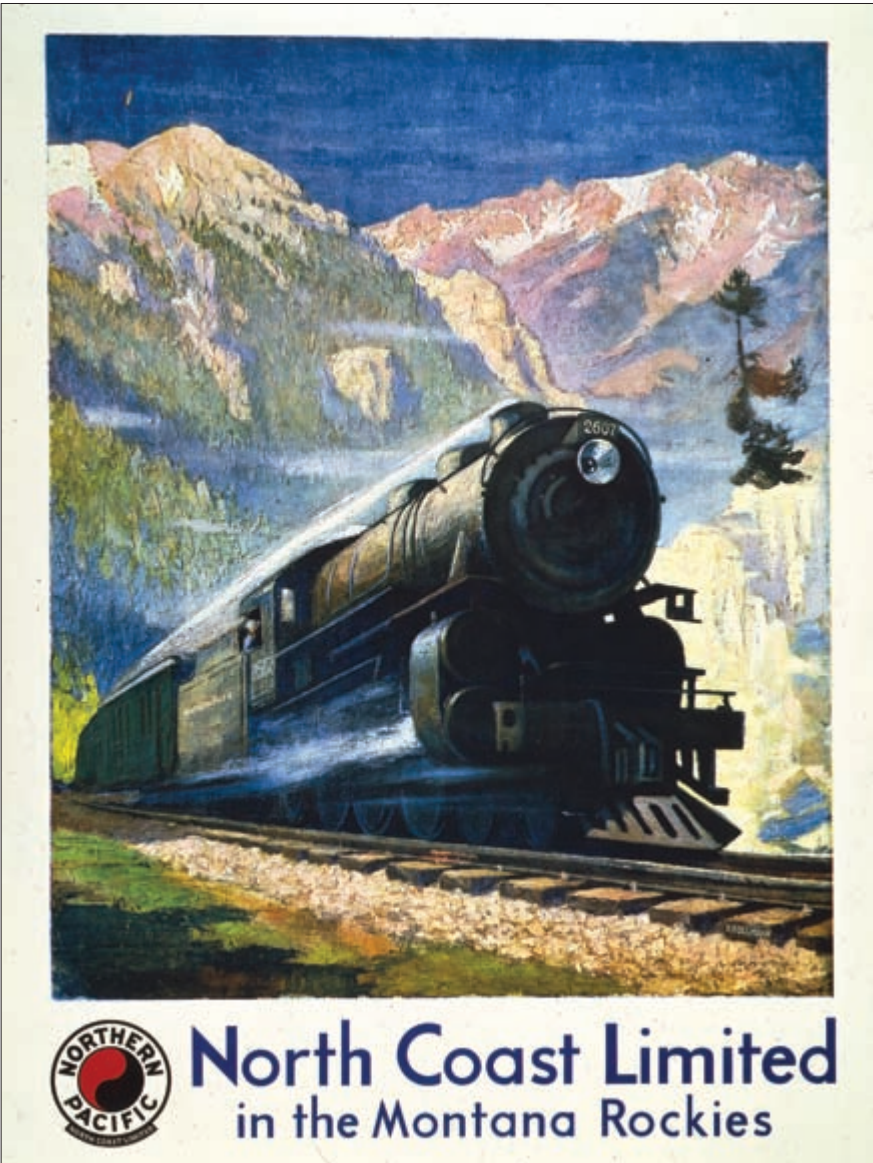
*Maru* from Japan. According to the local newspapers, the enthusiastic crowd went wild as “the yells of thousands of people on the docks and the blowing of every steam whistle for five miles along the waterfront . . . celebrated the glad event and welcomed the Oriental visitor of the East to the Occident.”<sup>21</sup>

The Seattle business community was a major factor in the city’s westward-looking philosophy, which is to say fascination with Far Eastern Orientalism. In early twentieth-century Seattle, Japan became a major focus of efforts when two major events—the Yukon-Pacific Exposition (1909) and the International Potlatch Festival (1934)—were held as part of the white, elite, commercial agenda. This top-down flow of ideas helped Seattle become more “cosmopolitan,” and the positive side of Orientalism was no small part of the equation. By “bridging the Orient and Occident” and including Japanese residents, Seattle was rather unusual. As historian Shelley Lee observes, conditions in Seattle “allowed cosmopolitan ideology to take root” and encouraged “internationalist and pluralist trends in American politics and intellectual life that paralleled, but did not displace, racism and nativism.” Although Lee states that the latter “reaffirmed [that] Orientalism” was alive and well, the cosmopolitanism countered it. Lee here uses the term “Orientalism” in the most negative (i.e., Saidian) sense. Arguably, though, both the positive welcoming of the Japanese and the negative resistance to them operated simultaneously as two sides of the same Orientalist coin. One side, as we have seen, was dark indeed in that it plumbed deep fears, while the other brighter side embraced the richness of the Orient, bringing it home, so to speak. Seattle’s general reception to the Japanese led a local commentator to claim they “had become an integral part of Seattle and [*sic*] a center combining both Oriental and Occidental features.”<sup>22</sup>

As in the American Southwest, the railroads in the Pacific Northwest played an important role in Orientalizing their region. This began in the late nineteenth century and continued well into the twentieth. The goal was nominally commercial—that is, increasing revenues by increasing traffic—but it involved considerable aesthetic skill on the part of railroad management. The Northern Pacific Railway’s advertising department, for example, employed the monad, a yin and yang symbol closely associated with the Far East. E. H. McHenry, the railroad’s chief engineer, had seen the monad on a Korean flag in an exhibit at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair and realized it would make a perfect trademark for the Northern Pacific. McHenry learned that the monad was Chinese in origin, and his railroad soon adopted it. The railway’s promotional literature pointed out the symbol’s enlightening cultural history. As a symbol, the monad perfectly captured the belief that two

complementary opposites (light and dark, male and female, East and West) were meant to be naturally (re)united. In this case, it was the Northern Pacific Railway that would fill that natural role of bringing together the western United States and the Orient. The Northern Pacific Railway's art, too, often provided an Oriental touch to posters and other railway advertisements. In a poster for the North Coast Limited in the 1920s, the Northern Pacific Railway artists featured not only that train speeding through a Montana landscape but also another suggestive icon—a pine tree rendered with characteristic “Oriental” sketchiness—is evidently well rooted on the hillside but seems to stand almost in thin air (fig. 7-8). This poster confirms that commercial artists were looking “toward Asia to forge an independent artistic identity.”<sup>23</sup> The integration of the monad and the rugged, forested landscape suggests an Asian affinity and serves as a reminder that the Northwest's physical setting and Asian connections would continue to play a role in the region's Orientalization.

Both the Northern Pacific Railway and the Great Northern Railway were influential in creating this Asianized regional identity that linked people and place. The Great Northern named its premier Minneapolis-Seattle train the “Oriental Limited.” Given the strong interest in the Orient in early twentieth-century America, that train was aptly named to embody both the American penchant for speed and the enduring allure of the Far East. The Oriental Limited was one of several transcontinental trains created to get people not only to the West Coast but also across the Pacific. Both the Northern Pacific Railway and Great Northern Railway had fleets of steamships that did exactly that, serving the ports of China and Japan. The Oriental Limited operated under that name between 1905 and 1929. It was the railway's premier “name train,” so important that its name was painted on the letterboards of the passenger cars, which were two-toned green. The name Oriental Limited was inspired by Great Northern president James J. Hill, a turn-of-the-century transportation magnate who envisioned his trains and ships playing a major role in Asiatic commerce. Originally the Oriental Limited's drumhead (the sign placed on the back railing on the observation car) featured a logo dominated by an orange circle—suggesting a rising (or setting) sun. That venerable symbol for Imperial Japan served as the train's logo for years but was later replaced by one featuring a mountain goat in an open circle. That change was symbolic indeed, for it revealed the railway's desire to supersede the previous Asian identity with a symbol associated more with the region itself. Affectionately called “Rocky,” that Rocky Mountain goat became Great Northern's premier symbol, and he decorated the drumhead of the Oriental



Courtesy Montana Historical Society, Haynes Foundation Collection, 1980.61.161, gift of Mrs. Isabel Haynes

Fig. 7-8. Poster of the North Coast Limited in the Montana Rockies by Gustav Wilhelm Krollman (ca. 1930), features the Northern Pacific Railway's monad (yin/yang) logo.

Limited until service ended in 1929.<sup>24</sup>

Although Rocky helped to de-Orientalize the Oriental Limited to some extent—perhaps simply as an admission that more people traveled to and from the Pacific Northwest on this train than would ever go to East Asia—the railway and the National Park Service had laid the foundation for Orientalizing the parks along its route. In her book *See America First*, historian Marguerite S. Shaffer notes that Glacier National Park, which was served by the Oriental Limited, enthusiastically embraced the Asian theme. Within the Glacier Park Hotel itself, “Japanese references further added to the eclectic mosaic presented in the park.” As Shaffer noted, “The Japanese lanterns, the couple serving tea, and the cherry blossoms decorating the hotel dining areas embellished the Oriental theme already exploited in the Great Northern’s first-class transcontinental train, the Oriental Limited.” Like the train itself, the Glacier Park Hotel was themed for a good reason. As Shaffer put it, “The Japanese accents in the rustic décor of the Glacier Park Hotel added to this imagery, positioning the park, Great Northern, and by extension America in a global framework and suggesting that the strenuous life of the American frontier and domination of world trade were two sides of the same success story—Manifest Destiny.” Shaffer concludes that “these eclectic references brought together to define the Glacier Park landscape embodied the vision of an American nation that borrowed from and built on an eclectic mix of cultures to create an ideal republican empire.”<sup>25</sup> This is a reminder that Orientalism serves two sometimes opposing purposes. It can impart a venerable and noble Eastern quality to the nation, thus increasing national pride through appropriation. Conversely, it can become an obsolete element in the system of image building when the goal is emphasizing American roots, rather than Oriental connections. Paradoxically, though, Orientalism can be employed to empower the United States to envision its horizons beyond its own borders. That premise, in fact, is a key factor in the Orientalization of the American West in the modern era.