

# A Working Chronology of Oregon Literature – 1838 -1950

By Tim Barnes with additions by Rick Rubin & David Milholland

**1838** (March) First Oregon poem, written by Mrs. Jason Lee, a farewell to her husband Jason Lee.

**1843** *Prairie Flower*, by Sidney Walter Moss, was probably the first novel written in Oregon. An Oregon City merchant, Moss sent it east with a friend. It was published by Stratton & Barnard in Cincinnati under the name of a well-known author of the time, Emerson Bennett.

**1846 -1855** *Oregon Spectator*, Oregon's first newspaper, printed some of the earliest poetry written in Oregon, frequently unsigned.

**1852** *A Melodrame Entitled "Treason, Stratagems, and Spoils,"* by Breakspear (Charles Lysander Adams). This political satire appeared in five installments in *The Oregonian* and later as a pamphlet. Adams may have been the most popular writer in Oregon in this era.

(April 23) Edwin Markham born in Oregon City. The author of "The Man with the Hoe" (1899), the most famous poem of the Progressive Era, left Oregon at the age of five.

**1854** *Grains, or Passages in the Life of Ruth Rover, with Occasional Pictures of Oregon, Natural and Moral*, by Mrs. Margaret Jewett Bailey. The first novel published in Oregon, a thinly disguised autobiography detailing Bailey's difficulties as a woman missionary in Oregon.

**1862** *The Canoe and the Saddle, Adventures Among the Northwestern Rivers and Forests*, by Theodore Winthrop, a stirring account of a voyage from Port Townsend to The Dalles in 1853, published around the time of the author's death early in the Civil War.

(October 12) "Joaquin" Cincinnatus Hiner Miller and Theresa "Minnie Myrtle" Dyer married in Port Orford after a whirlwind weekend romance.

**1868** *Specimens*, by Joaquin Miller, his first book, was published by long-time Portland printer George Himes.

(April) Samuel L. Simpson publishes "Ad Willametum," better known as "Beautiful Willamette" in the *Albany Democrat*. This is the most famous Oregon poem of the nineteenth century and established Simpson as the bard of Oregon.

**1869** Joaquin Miller and Minnie Myrtle divorced.

**1870** *River of the West*, by Frances Fuller Victor. This biography of Joe Meek, which reads like a novel, is drawn from her interviews with the famous mountain man.

**1871** *Songs of the Sierras*, by Joaquin Miller. Published in London and praised by Robert Browning, this book brought Miller international fame.

In order to support herself and their two children, Minnie Myrtle lectures on Miller and their failed marriage.

**1871-1887** *New Northwest*, edited by Abigail Scott Duniway, Oregon's foremost suffragist, who wrote and serially published seventeen novels in her weekly paper.



Sam Simpson Society officers celebrate the centenary of the poet's death in 1999 with OCHC.



**1873** *Life Amongst the Modocs: Unwritten History*, by Joaquin Miller, dedicated to “the Red Men of America.” “Such pictures as these were unknown to our literature when they were written, and they stand unsurpassed today in their largeness of movement and their mass of shade and light.” – Hamlin Garland

**1875-1891** *West Shore*, a magazine of literature, art, science, and Northwest boosterism. Published a number of Oregon poets and poems, including Ella Higginson’s popular “Four-Leaf Clover.”

**1883** *Life Among the Paiutes*, by Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, an account of her people.

**1887** (October 22) John Reed born in Portland.

**1890** *The Bridge of the Gods, A Romance of Indian Oregon*, by Frederic Homer Balch. This stilted but dramatic tale of early Oregon, for decades the most popular Oregon novel, has never gone out of print.

**1894** (October 18) Harold Lenore (H.L.) Davis born at Rone’s Mill, Oregon, (in Douglas County).

**1898-1911** *The Pacific Monthly*, a magazine of politics, culture, literature, and opinion, published in Portland. C.E.S. Wood is the most frequent contributor. Jack London’s *Martin Eden* first appeared serially in its pages. Other contributors include: Leo Tolstoy, George Sterling, Joaquin Miller, and Sinclair Lewis.

**2** **1899** (October 1) Ernest Haycox, dean of western writing, born in Portland.

**1900** *McLoughlin and Old Oregon, A Chronicle*, by Eva Emery Dye. This is the first of several historical novels by the long-time Oregon City resident. Others include *The Conquest*, *The True Story of Lewis and Clark* (1902); *McDonald of Oregon, A Tale of Two Shores* (1906), about an Oregon man Ranald McDonald’s part in opening Japan to the West; *The Soul of America, An Oregon Iliad*, a novel of crossing the plains and mountains to Oregon told from a feminist perspective.



**Young Homer Davenport waits for induction into the Good Templars Lodge, an illustration from his 1910 *The Country Boy*.**

(June 14) Sam Simpson dies.

**1902** *Oregon Literature*, by Jacob Horner. This expansion of an 1899 pamphlet is the first Oregon history to focus on literature. His *Oregon History and Early Literature* (1931) enlarges on the earlier volume.

**1903** (May 5) Author and cook extraordinaire James Beard born in Portland.

**1905** *Letters From an Oregon Ranch*, by Katherine (Louise G. Stephens), amusing account of homesteading in the Coast Range.

**1906** *Cathlamet on the Columbia*, by Thomas Nelson Strong, the passing of the tribes of the lower Columbia River.

**1908** *Looters of the Public Domain*, by Stephen Douglas A. Puter, a well-documented chronicle of the timber scandals.

**1910** *The Country Boy*, by Homer Davenport, a graphic and picturesque account of the editorial cartoonist and animal lover’s childhood in Silverton.

Also valuable: *My Quest of the Arabian Horse* (1909), a vivid narrative of his extraordinary trip to the Middle East.

*The Gold-Gated West, Songs and Poems*, by Samuel L. Simpson, an extensive collection of his verse.

**1914** *Insurgent Mexico*, by John Reed, initially published in *Metropolitan Magazine*, an account of Pancho Villa and the Mexican Revolution that marks the inception of modern journalism.

Where Rolls the Oregon, Dallas Lore Sharp, early Columbia River lore.

**1915** *Poet in the Desert*, by C.E.S. Wood. Set in southeastern Oregon, this long poem summons the example of nature to cure a sick society.

**1916** (July) One-act play *The Game*, by Louise Bryant shares the Provincetown Players stage with *Bound East for Cardiff*, the first play by Eugene O'Neill. It followed an earlier performance of *Freedom*, by John Reed. Performances that season are considered the birth of modern American theater.

**1918** *The Slave with Two Faces*, a play by Mary Carolyn Davies, produced by the Provincetown Players.

*Six Red Months in Russia*, Louise Bryant, the Russian revolution and events leading up to it from the perspective of its women participants.

**1919** *Ten Days That Shook The World*, by John Reed. This is the famous eyewitness account of the first days of the Bolshevik revolution by Portland-born poet and journalist.

H. L. Davis, of Wasco County and The Dalles, wins the Levinson Prize from *Poetry* magazine for a group of poems called "Primapara."

**1920** *The Story of Opal, Journal of an Understanding Heart*, by Opal Whiteley. Reputed to be the diary of a seven-year old girl, it became a runaway best-seller, second only to Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street* for that year. The story of Opal Whiteley is one of the most mysterious and controversial in Oregon literary history, and her prose some of the most delightful. Ben Hoff, author of *The Singing Creek Where the Willows Grow, The Rediscovered Diary of Opal Whiteley* (1986) describes *The Story of Opal* as "the most talked-about book of its time."



“...the last old tumbledown this side of ridge of snags.”  
Anthony Euwer, *By Scarlet Torch and Blade*

**1922-1928** *The Lariat*, edited by Colonel E. Hofer, Salem poetaster and publisher of mostly mediocre verse; poesy flourished here.

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**1923** *The Fang in the Forest*, by Charles Alexander, an animal tale set near Yachats, was his first novel. Other books include *The Splendid Summits* (1925) and the highly successful *Bobbie, A Great Collie* (1926). Beginning in 1920, he edited and produced *The Sunday Democrat* of Albany, Oregon, a strong venue for regional poetry and writing. His “As a Dog Should” appeared in *Collier's* and was a 1922 O'Henry Short Story Prize winner.

The J. K. Gill's bookstore in Portland establishes a poet's corner with a fireplace and a painting of Hazel Hall on the mantel.

*By Scarlet Torch and Blade*, by Anthony Euwer of Hood River, a poet of nature and human foibles, and a talented illustrator. Another fine volume is *Friendly Firs*, 1931

**1924** (May 11 – Mother's Day) Poet Hazel Hall dies at the age of thirty-eight. Hall, an invalid, author of *Curtains* (1921), *Walkers* (1923), and the posthumous *Cry of Time* (1928), gained national recognition.

*Skyline Trail, A Book of Western Verse*, by Mary Carolyn Davies.

**1925** *Paul Bunyan*, by James Stevens. A robust remaking of the Bunyan myth that brings the legendary logger to the Northwest.

**1926** *Singing in the Rain*, by Anne Shannon Monroe. One of twelve books, mostly novels, this Lake Grove resident wrote between 1900 and 1941. She presented the story and views of Harney County's Big Bill Hanley in the entertaining *Feelin' Fine!* (1930).

*How Could I Be Forgetting*, by Ben Hur Lampman, *Here Comes Somebody* (1935), *At the End of the Car Line* (1942), and *The Wild Swan* (1947), were widely read sketches from *The Oregonian*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Sunset* and other popular magazines.

*Brawnyman*, by James Stevens, is a lively account of the early teamsters building and harvesting the west. "The jobs, fights, travels, loves, and the immense appetite of husky young Jim Turner are as genuine as anything in contemporary literature." *The Independent* Stevens' humorous WWI novel *Mattock* appears in 1927.

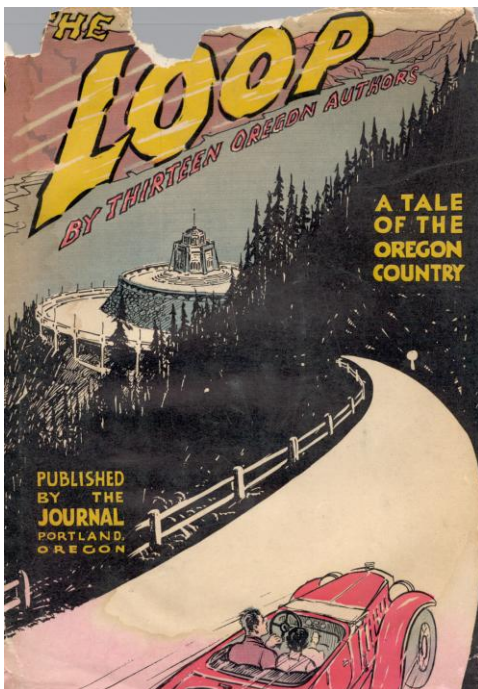
**1927** *Status Rerum, A Manifesto upon the Present Condition of Northwestern Literature: Containing Several Near-Libelous Utterances, upon Persons in the Public Eye*, by H.L. Davis and James Stevens. This scathing attack on Northwest writing and writing teachers, composed in Davis' hotel room in Eugene, caused a furor in the region's literary scene.

Carl Sandburg tours Oregon and meets a number of Oregon writers (Davis, Stevens, Alexander, Albert Wetjen).

*Heavenly Discourse*, by C.E.S. Wood. Forty satires set in heaven with a *laissez faire* God lampoon militarism, imperialism, prudery, prohibition, censorship, evangelicals, and bigotry. A best-seller of its time.

**1928** *White Peaks and Green*, by Ethel Romig Fuller, the first book of poems by long-time editor of Oregon verse. Others: *Kitchen Sonnets* (1931) and *Skylines* (1952).

**4** *The Cabin at Trail's End, A Story of Oregon*, by Sheba Hargreaves



**1929** *Free Grass*, by Ernest Haycox, the first paperback novel by this dean of western writers who lived and wrote in Portland.

*Poems from the Ranges*, by C.E.S. Wood, lyrics set in the Harney Country, Blitzen River area.

**1930** *Oregon Detour*, by Nard Jones. Set in the mythical Eastern Oregon town of Creston (a thinly veiled Weston), the "new realism" of the novel establishes it as the first modern Oregon novel.

*The Mountain in the Sky*, by Howard McKinley Corning. His poems appeared in some of the finest magazines of the day. See also *These People* (1926) and *This Earth and Another Country* (1969).

**1931** *Northwest Anthology of Verse*, edited by Harold G. Merriam. This anthology features a number of Oregon poets and is dedicated to Hazel Hall, containing eleven of her poems.

*The Loop A Tale of the Oregon Country*, by Thirteen Oregon Authors – Dean Collins, Sabra Conner, Harold Bradley Say, Anthony Euwer, Charles Alexander, Robert Ormond Case, Kathleen MacNeal Clark, Theodore Acland Harper, Sheba May Hargreaves, Stewart Holbrook & Major John D. Guthrie. The foreword concludes, "Oregon is becoming

as well known for its literary output as for the excellence of its salmon, apples, pears, lumber and livestock." The volume shows the Oregon literary community having a ball together.

*Fiddlers' Green*, by Albert Wetjen, a sea tale by a hard-working Brit who lived in Oregon between 1920 and 1935.

**1932** *Genevieve, a Tale of Oregon*, by Frederic Homer Balch, assembled and published by Alfred Powers.

**1934** *The White Headed Eagle*, by Richard G. Montgomery, a thorough biography of a father of Oregon, Dr. John McLoughlin..

**1935** *History of Oregon Literature*, by Alfred Powers. An invaluable and thorough account of Oregon’s literary past, beginning before the coming of the white man. Powers fine juveniles include a book of stories *Marooned in Crater Lake* (1930), and the novels *Prisoners of the Redwoods* (1948) and *A Long Way to Frisco* (1951).

*Oregon Poets, an Anthology of 50 Contemporaries*, Henry Harrison, editor. Foreword by Ethel Romig Fuller.

*Dr. Mallory*, by Dr. Alan L. Hart, the story of an idealistic general practitioner drawn from Hart’s experience in Gardiner near Coos Bay. See also: *The Undaunted* (1936), *In the Lives of Men* (1937) and *Doctor Finley Sees it Through* (1942). Dr. Hart grew up as Alberta Lucille Hart in Albany.

*Saga of a Paper Mill*, by Laurence Pratt, a poet’s deft take of the working world.

*Blue Interval, Poems of Crater Lake*, by Ernest G. Moll of Eugene, taut poetry and lovely illustrations by Karl J. Belsler. Notable also are his *Campus Sonnets* (1934).

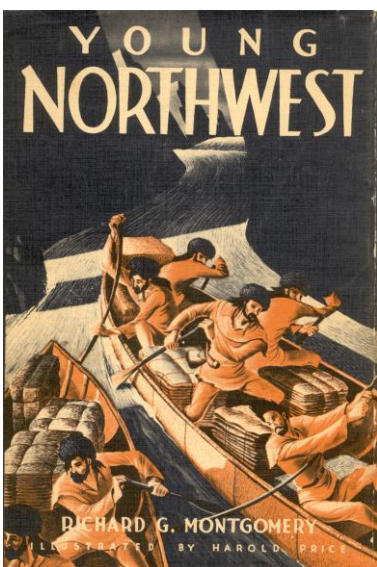
**1935-1937** *Northwest Literary Review*, Courtland Matthews, editor, a short-lived but worthy literary review that featured a number of Oregon writers.

**1936** *Honey in the Horn*, by H. L. Davis, the only Oregon novel to win the Pulitzer Prize. It sweeps across rural Oregon, not a paradise at the end of the Trail, but a new land that shapes a people’s character.

*Mansions in the Cascades*, by Anne Shannon Monroe and Elizabeth Lambert Wood (in collaboration), a fictionalized account of life high in the North Umpqua drainage in recovery from the personal toll of WWI.



*Night Life in Portland (Oregon)*, “scene of gaiety and good clean fun” – Mr. Otis



**1938** *Holy Old Mackinaw, A Natural History of the Lumberjack*, by Stewart Holbrook, the author of dozens of nonfiction works, including *Far Corner, A Personal View of the Pacific Northwest* (1952) and *The Columbia* (1956). Illustration above is from his delightful *Mr. Otis* (1958).

Raymond Carver born in Clatskanie.

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**1939** Ernest Haycox’s story, “Stage to Lordsburg” made into the John Ford movie classic starring a young John Wayne, *Stagecoach*.

**1940** *Swift Flows the River*, by Nard Jones, has gone through a number of re-printings. It joins his novels *Scarlet Petticoats* (1941) and *Still to the West* (1946) in chronicling the history and drama of the Columbia River.

*The Trail of the Plow*, by Marie M. Goffin, the Homesteaders versus the Beaver Land Company, a tale of early Eastern Oregon, “offers stirring and authentic voices” – Mable Holmes Parsons from the foreword.

**1941** *Young Northwest*, by Richard Montgomery, “a biography of the region” through WWII, in brief.

**1941-1945** *The Illiterati*, an anarchist / arts magazine and the associated Untide Press publish William Everson, Glen Coffield and Kenneth Patchen, among others; printed at the Conscientious Objector camp at Waldport on the Oregon Coast.

**1942** *Proud Riders and Other Poems*, by H.L. Davis.

*The Rock and the Wind*, by Vivien R. Bretherton, Willamette Valley railroad wars of the 1860s and '70s.

**1943** Ben Hur Lampman's "Blinker Was a Good Dog" is an O'Henry Short Story Prize winner.

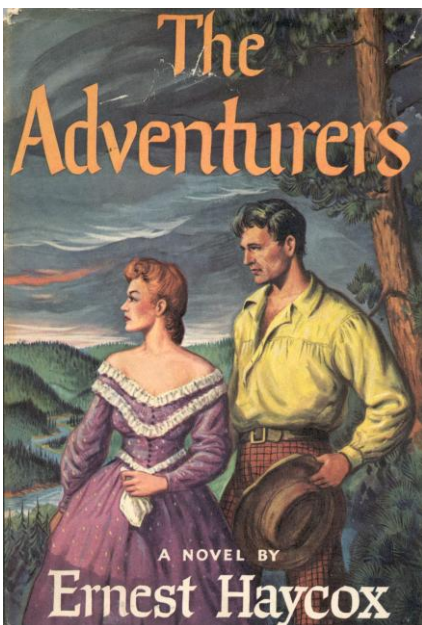
**1945** *The Last Mountains The Story of the Cascades*, by Robert Ormond Case and Victoria Case, capable writers of regional history. See also: *The Empire Builders* (1949), Robert Ormond Case and *The Quiet Life of Mrs. General Lane* (1952), Victoria Case.

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**1946** *Beyond the Garden Gate*, by Sophus K. Winther, a novel set in Eugene, in which a boy gets a girl in trouble and his family resolves the affair with kindness and understanding.

Ken Kesey, eleven years old, moves with his family to Springfield, Oregon.

**1947** *Harp of a Thousand Strings*, by H. L. Davis, his first novel since *Honey in the Horn*. He will publish three more: *Beulah Land* (1949), *Winds of Morning* (1952), and *Distant Music* (1957), all dealing with the westering experience. He also publishes a book of short stories, *Teams Bells Woke Me* (1953), and one of essays, *Kettle of Fire* (1959).



*Down in My Heart*, by William Stafford, a memoir of this Oregon poet's experiences as a conscientious objector in World War II. Stafford's *Traveling Through the Dark* wins the National Book Award in 1963.

**1947-1951** Gary Snyder, whose book of poems, *Turtle Island*, will win the 1975 Pulitzer Prize for poetry, attends Reed College, with Philip Whalen, Lew Welch, and Don Berry, all significant Northwest writers.

**1948** *Mountain Man*, by Verne Bright. This epic poem in 24 sections tells the story of how the descendants of Daniel Boone come to Oregon.

*Big Jim Turner*, by James Stevens, a novel of a young working man and poet in the Northwest of the early twentieth century.

**1949** *The Coming of the Pond Fish*, by Ben Hur Lampman, a lively account of the introduction of eastern species to western waters and their voracious adaptation.

**1950** (October 14) Ernest Haycox dies in Portland. After immense success as a western writer, his first novels set in Oregon – *Long Storm* (1946), and the posthumously published *The Earthbreakers* (1952) and *The Adventurers* (1954) – reflect a major career change.

**This list will be expanded through the 1970s. No such compilation is ever complete or definitive. Please send us your own brief suggestions for inclusion, following the same format.**



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