The Hunt for Oregon Missionary Sources

Clifford M. Drury’s Enduring Archives Legacy

“THE FACTS PRESENTED by you concerning the pioneers of the Inland Empire brought vividly to our minds the experience and hardships of the men and women who have made possible the development of the Northwest,” wrote Dr. E.O. Holland to Dr. Clifford Drury in 1935, with thanks for Drury’s recent lecture at the State College of Washington (WSC), where Holland served as president.1 Holland shared Drury’s view that the West had been developed through the efforts of early white pioneers, and the two men worked together for many years to help fix those pioneers’ legacies through collection and preservation of relevant material in the college archives. Drury, pastor of the nearby First Presbyterian Church in Moscow, Idaho, had contacted Holland earlier in the year, asking a favor: with a completed manuscript of some “120,000 words” on the life of missionary Henry Harmon Spalding, Drury hoped that Holland might invite him to “appear before a student body assembly to speak on this subject.” Drury needed more than just publicity. “I have had to put so much money into the gathering of my material that I am hoping to realize some in honorariums or royalties to permit me to continue my researches in similar lines.” In early May, Holland invited Drury to campus for a convocation lecture on Henry Spalding, and between May and June, Holland and Drury reached an understanding whereby Drury would hunt for manuscripts on behalf of the WSC Library and at the same time support his own research.

The resulting partnership significantly affected not only WSC’s research collections but also regional historiography. Drury would eventually publish twelve books, including biographies of Henry Spalding, Marcus Whitman (in
two volumes), Elkanah and Mary Walker, and more than thirteen academic articles related to the missionaries and Indians of the Oregon Country. In June 1935, Holland presented Drury with an official letter of introduction authorizing him as the “accredited representative of the State College of Washington” to make purchases and receive donations of “source materials” to be added to the College Library “with proper credit given to those who furnish this material.” The letter continued: “the State College of Washington has no money for the purchase of such materials, but, as stated above, friends of the institution have authorized Doctor Drury to make a few modest purchases.” On September 6, the two men met and further formalized their arrangement. According to a summary of their meeting, Drury would devote several days a month, “ranging from three or four up to seven or eight, in obtaining material for the historical collection” and would receive three cents per mile for the use of his automobile and $7.50 per diem.

Nearly forty years later, Drury reflected on his career as a historian and collector in an essay for the Western Historical Quarterly. He described himself in heroic terms, ferreting out original manuscripts from individuals...
and saving collections from ruin by handing them over to “well-established repositories.”

Neither in that essay nor in his 1984 autobiography did Drury reveal the financial details of his agreement with Holland, although he kept an expense account throughout his adult life and shared in his autobiography other personal information, including his earnings, insurance policies, the costs of cars he purchased, and the royalties or lack of royalties received from every book he wrote. Drury’s financial arrangements and associations with WSC and other repositories were significant because they enabled him to begin a prolific career as a historian and at the same time preserve and make publicly available key sources related to missionaries and the Plateau Indians to whom they ministered. Drury’s collecting and depositing of sources related to early Oregon missionaries and his interactions with the nascent archival programs in eastern Washington illuminate our understanding of how individuals with complex motivations influenced what sources survive in archives, libraries, and museums — and how those surviving sources have been organized and described.

As the historian Albert Hurtado notes, the buildings that house great collections “give the impression of solidity and permanence. They exude an air of inevitability, as if the library gods plunked down each granite pile chockablock, full of books. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is nothing inevitable about libraries.” Distinctive library and archival collections are formed by passionate individuals such as Drury. He not only preserved important materials but also encouraged the subsequent collecting of historical sources by archivists and librarians who built on the core of collections he had acquired. Archivists estimate that they preserve only 1 to 5 percent of all contemporary documents. Because so little of the documentary record is ever preserved in an archive, what does survive is imbued with a special significance.

Drury’s intense period of collecting — from 1934 to 1939 — predates the modern era of American archives administration. In 1934, Congress authorized the creation of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and in 1936, the Society of American Archivists was established. Professional education and best practices for archivists took decades longer to develop. The lack of standards for handling archival collections helps explain the unfortunate treatment and poor documentation of the collections acquired by Drury. The collections were scattered across many institutions as a result of his methods and the lack of professional archival standards of his day. Nevertheless, Drury was a critical figure in the development of Pacific Northwest regional archival repositories. He aided Holland’s ambitions to increase his college’s reputation and the quality of its library’s collections and at the same time satisfied his own motivations — a complex
To Whom It May Concern:

Doctor C. M. Drury, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Moscow, Idaho, is the accredited representative of the State College of Washington. Doctor Drury is authorized by friends of the State College to make a few purchases of books and letters, newspapers, and other source material, which will be placed in the State College Library, with proper credit given to those who furnish this material. The State College of Washington has no money for the purchase of such material, but, as stated above, friends of the institution have authorized Doctor Drury to make a few modest purchases.

In all cases, those who either give material or sell material to Doctor Drury will be given proper credit by the historical faculty of the State College of Washington, and the material itself will be marked as either furnished or donated by the persons supplying it.

Furthermore, in all cases, such material will be placed in a fire-proof building and guarded carefully, in order that it can be used for historical purposes and for research in the years to come. As indicated above, proper credit will be given those who supply this material.

Very sincerely yours,

E. C. Holland, President

This official letter from Holland authorized Drury to collect in WSC’s name. Drury donated the letter to WSU in 1964. During Holland’s tenure as president, the WSC Library received few direct funds to purchase collections; instead, Holland divided funds among academic departments to buy materials.
mixture of concern for the historical record, self-promotion, and religious zeal.

Drury grew up on a farm in Iowa. Tired of picking corn, he persuaded his father to allow him to attend the nearby Buena Vista College. Drury later recounted how, in 1915, his father purchased fifty dollars worth of clothes, including a twenty-five dollar suit, for him to attend college. Given the expense of the clothes, Drury felt that he could not ask his father to also buy him an appropriate shirt or gloves. He covertly sold chickens from the farm so that he could replace his cotton corn husking gloves and his hand-me-down shirt with more fitting attire.

Drury's father died in the following year, leaving him with no parents. After graduating from college in 1918, Drury briefly served in the U.S. Army in a chemical warfare unit at the Yale Medical School before attending the San Francisco Theological Seminary at San Anselmo. After his ordination in the Presbyterian Church, Drury and his spouse, Miriam, moved to China, where Drury served as Pastor for the Community Church in Shanghai. The Drurys lived in China between 1923 and 1927, then left for Scotland, where Drury completed his coursework in eight months for a Ph.D. in theology at the University of Edinburgh. In 1928, Drury accepted the position of Pastor for the First Presbyterian Church in Moscow, Idaho.

Drury began actively collecting missionary sources in 1934. His passion for the enterprise, he explained, began when he became “incurably” interested in the “Whitmans and Spaldings and their associates who served in the Oregon Mission of the American Board, working among the Nez Perce, the Cayuse, and the Spokane tribes” during the mid nineteenth century. As the Presbyterian Pastor serving a Northern Idaho parish, Drury felt a close connection to Henry Spalding, whose mission at Lapwai was located roughly forty miles from Moscow. In 1836, Henry Spalding and his wife Eliza
joined Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and William Gray on a mission to bring Christianity to the Indians of the Oregon Country. The group was sponsored by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). The following year, Gray returned to the East for reinforcements, and in 1838, the ABCFM sent Elkanah and Mary Richardson Walker west, along with Cushing and Myra Eells, Asa and Sarah Smith, William and Sarah Gray, and Cornelius Rogers. The missionaries established stations at Tshimikain, Waiilatpu, Lapwai, and Kamiah and suffered from internal quarrels and dissent. They were among the first American, non-Indian permanent residents of the Oregon Country. The missions closed after a group of Cayuse men murdered Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and ten others on November 29, 1847. The sensational death of the Whitmans and others at Waiilatpu, the role of the missionaries in the American conquest of the West, and the copious documentation left by the missionaries in the form of reports, letters, and diaries, ensured that their stories played a prominent role in Pacific Northwest and western history.

The historian Kent Richards notes that the “missionaries wrote or influenced much of the historical work about the region until well into the twentieth century.” The stories of the Oregon missionaries have long fascinated Americans. According to historian Peggy Pascoe, “nineteenth-century writers mourned the ‘martyrdom’ of the missionaries murdered by Indians, mid-twentieth-century historians emphasized their role in ‘opening’ Oregon Territory to white settlement [while] today’s historians . . . tend to

Mary Richardson Walker wrote more diary entries than any other ABCFM missionary and did not hesitate to share her opinions or criticisms of fellow missionaries. Drury secured a major collection of Walker papers for WSU and transcribed Walker’s complete diaries from her time at Tshimakain. He published an edited edition of her diaries in 1963. (OHS digital no. bb010279)
see the Indians, rather than missionaries, as the martyrs.” Drury made it his mission to document their story, and his activities as a collector and later as a publisher of edited missionary diaries influenced how western history would be written and remembered. Drury’s works are cited (or remain recommend reading) in many works of western history, including books by Ray Billington, Bernard DeVoto, Richard Etulain, Kenneth Holmes, John Faragher, Patricia Limerick, and Carlos Schwantes. In his historiography of Oregon and Washington, Richards writes, “Drury has left little undone in his work on the ABCFM missionaries.”

Drury came somewhat late to the hunt for missionary and Plateau Indian sources, as many important materials had already been purchased by other collectors. From 1879 until the outbreak of World War I, the Smithsonian sponsored major ethnographic collecting expeditions. For decades before Drury started, wealthy western businessmen, as well as curators and librarians at institutions such as the Wisconsin Historical Society, Bancroft Library at U.C. Berkeley, the Huntington Library, and Yale had been acquiring primary sources concerning missionaries and overland journeys to the West. During the mid nineteenth century, Lyman Draper established a model for collecting western sources. Unlike other collectors of his generation who focused on Revolutionary era figures and rare books, Draper focused on the Midwest and collected material (including oral histories and memoirs) bearing on pioneers and military leaders of the trans-Appalachian interior. In 1854, Draper became the corresponding secretary of the newly formed State Historical Society of Wisconsin, where he deposited his vast collection.

Starting in the 1860s, Hubert Bancroft began gathering sources for a Pacific Coast handbook. Devoting extraordinary energy and resources over ten years, Bancroft gathered some 16,000 volumes related to California, the Northwest, Mexico, Central America, Alaska, and Hawaii, with a particular focus on the periods of Spanish and Mexican administration of California. In 1905, Bancroft partially sold and partially donated his collection to the University of California, Berkeley. According to Hurtado, Bancroft “originally conceived his collection as a working research library. . . . This quality set it apart from other great collections amassed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.” The railroad magnate Henry Edward Huntington founded his library and gardens in southern California in 1919, but his library was a less public and more elite institution than Bancroft’s. Huntington bought individual items through dealers and auctions as well as entire libraries. The core of Huntington’s western collections included the acquisition of the libraries of E. Dwight Church (1911), Augustin MacDonald (1916), and Henry R. Wagner (1922). With those purchases, Huntington owned “most of the significant imprints on the trans-Mississippi West including the
accounts of explorers, fur traders, missionaries, forty-niners and overland emigrants.” Yale’s extensive collection of western Americana took shape in the late 1940s, when William Robertson Coe donated a fine collection of books, maps, and manuscripts related to the exploration and settlement of the West. Coe also left Yale a substantial financial gift to catalog his collection and establish an endowment for staffing, future purchases, and a chair at Yale in American studies.

While wealthy collectors and curators from established repositories could readily purchase collections through dealers, Drury, Holland, and the librarians at WSC did not have such financial means. Instead, Drury worked through informal networks. He wrote hundreds of letters to individuals who he believed might possess the kinds of documents he sought. Drury’s first collecting coup occurred in 1934, when he met Mary Spalding, the daughter-in-law of the missionary Henry Harmon Spalding. For fifty dollars, Drury purchased eight substantial letters written by Spalding. Inspired by the acquisition, Drury offered them to several institutions, including the Spokane Public Library. He later recounted that the unpublished letters were the “basis not for just a magazine article but for a full-length book!”

Drury’s exciting discoveries continued. Learning that Myron Eells, the younger son of early Oregon missionaries Cushing and Myra Eells, had left his collection to Whitman College, Drury visited the campus. He met with Dr. Howard S. Brode, the college’s museum curator and professor of Natural History, and found the collection had been dispersed around campus. Brode showed Drury a trunk stuffed with manuscripts that had been stored in the attic of the Whitman Memorial
Building for over twenty-five years. Apparently, Brode valued the collection’s artifacts, especially the natural history objects. He arranged them in museum cases while the books went to the library. As Whitman College did not yet have an archives reading room or the appropriate staff to manage manuscripts, the trunk of manuscripts had remained untouched. It proved a bonanza of source materials for Drury.

In a letter written to George W. Fuller, librarian of the Spokane Public Library, shortly after his visit to Whitman College, Drury could hardly contain his enthusiasm: “I did find about 200 letters which Spalding received . . . his original commission signed by Zachery [sic] Taylor . . . and a wealth of other material — including Mrs. Spalding’s diary and Mr. Spalding’s diary.” Drury continued: “I was the first one to appear to look over the materials. Please don’t spoil my chances there to make a thorough examination of the materials by having others go.”

Drury wanted to ensure that he had first and exclusive access to the Eells collection. He even persuaded Brode to loan him a stash of unique manuscripts from the trunk: some fifty-two letters Spalding had received.

In an era before cheap photocopying, Drury had limited duplication choices. He could order expensive photostatic copies, hire a stenographer, or copy the letters himself. Drury did not have much spare money. He was initially hired as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Moscow with an annual salary of $3,000, but in 1932, as the Great Depression unfolded, the parish reduced Drury’s salary to $2,400 and did not provide for car expenses or a secretary. Given Drury’s responsibility to support a family of six, he had to find additional financing for his historical research.

To make copies of the Whitman materials quickly and cheaply, Drury made a proposal to Fuller: “would you be interested in getting copies of these letters? If so, I would hire a stenographer here and make two copies and send you one of these letters provided you were able to pay the stenographer hire.” With this arrangement, Drury obtained his copies while also

Henry Spalding was hot tempered, prone to jealousy, and hard working. Drury believed Spalding’s missionary work had been overshadowed by Whitman’s, and Drury’s early discovery of Spalding’s manuscript letters inspired his collecting. (OHS digital no. bb010273.)
improving the Northwest collections at the Spokane Public Library. If all went well, after the first bunch of documents was transcribed, Drury could get more. Fuller was intrigued. In addition to a professional interest in Northwest history, Fuller was actively acquiring an excellent collection of rare, printed northwest Americana. He wrote encouragingly to Drury: “I am astonished at your discovery at Whitman College. It is surely a scoop . . . and I should like to have copies of whatever materials you may be able to borrow from the Whitman. Furthermore, I shall be glad to stand the expense of typing these copies, — one for you and one for us.”

While a stenographer copied the Spalding letters and diaries, Drury scoured eastern Washington and Idaho for more sources. As Drury’s enthusiasm for collecting source materials grew, so did his ambition to write a biography of Spalding. In November, he had fresh news to report to Fuller: “I was down at Lewiston [Idaho] yesterday and got more dope . . . Mrs. Monteith [a daughter of Marcus Whitman’s nephew, Perrin] turned over to me everything she had but feels that she must be paid something for it all. She showed what she had to some friends in Lewiston who said that it was worth from $500 to $1,000.” Realizing that those prices were much too high, Drury nevertheless advised Fuller that Monteith should be paid something for the collection to “clear all matters of ownership.” According to Drury, Monteith’s small collection included many clippings, “some valueless,” papers on the Chief Joseph war, a John Mullan letter, and “her MSS [manuscript] of her account of the Indian treaties which is most interesting for she was an eye witness to some of the councils” that preceded the Nez Perce 1877 war.

Drury returned to Lewiston and negotiated what he deemed to be a much more reasonable price of fifty dollars. The Spokane Public Library (and other libraries in the region) had not yet developed standardized deeds of purchase, so Drury suggested language for Fuller to include in a receipt for Monteith to sign. The receipt (now lost) apparently gave “clear title” to the Spokane Public Library, which still holds the Monteith Family Papers 1871–1928, though researchers working with the collection will likely not be aware of Drury’s role in purchasing it. Drury’s name is not associated with the collection in the online catalog, and the library does not possess ownership documentation for the collection. Key details regarding how Fuller acquired the collection are therefore unavailable to researchers. For scholars interested in the documents’ authenticity or looking for clues about the location of similar papers, documentation on the chain of ownership is important.

While Drury worked with Fuller, he wrote a letter to Holland of WSC requesting “honorariums or royalties.” In Holland, Drury found a great supporter and willing collaborator. Unlike Fuller or Brode, Holland paid for
travel. Holland had a well-deserved reputation for being careful with college resources, so his offer to Drury of seven dollars and fifty cents per diem plus mileage indicates his strong support for Drury’s activities on behalf of the college. Drury wrote that he never received anything except travel assistance, yet his per diem for part-time collecting for Holland nearly matched his salary of fifty dollars per week as a pastor. For his part, Holland was a great booster for WSC and worked incessantly to improve the college’s reputation. Holland had great ambitions for the library and devoted higher than average resources to it compared to other land-grant libraries.\textsuperscript{37}

With Holland’s support, Drury directed his collecting efforts toward material that would aid in finishing his biography of Henry Spalding. “By the spring of 1935,” Drury later wrote, “I realized I had to go back to New York State and visit the birthplaces of Spalding and of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. How I managed to get the money for this trip I do not now remember.”\textsuperscript{38} Given the passage of time, Drury may simply have forgotten his arrangements with Holland, but surviving documents, including detailed reports by Drury in Holland’s papers, indicate that WSC paid Drury seventy-five dollars for his travel back East. Drury’s omissions in his published recollections may have been an effort to downplay the assistance of Holland and others in financing his early career as a historian. His choice of language reflected how he wanted others to remember his efforts as a collector; he described the results of his collecting for Holland and others as “turning over” materials, implying that he donated the collections, rather than acted as a paid agent.

What did the college get in return for its expenditure? Drury spent twenty-five dollars on books, but the major purchase of the trip was the Pratt Collection, which Drury acquired for $100.75. According to Drury’s statement to Holland, Charlotte Howe of Prattsburg, New York, had collected items related to the early lives of the Spaldings and Whitmans.\textsuperscript{39} Her Pratt Collection included holograph Spalding and Whitman letters, Joel Wakeman hand-written drafts of stories related to Spalding and Whitman
published in the *Prattsburgh News*, and seven issues of the *Prattsburgh News* containing Spalding-Whitman matter. In a July 19, 1935, letter to WSC Librarian W.W. Foote, Drury wrote enthusiastically about his purchase: “So far the trip has abundantly justified itself . . . I am short on cash so if a check . . . could reach me in Chicago, I would greatly appreciate it . . . I bought a lock of Narcissa’s hair for you — $5.00 more.”

The Pratt Collection did not remain intact. Drury and the WSC Library staff separated the Spalding and Whitman materials and created new collections. In modern archival practice, dividing collections is anathema. Breaking apart collections that were assembled for a particular purpose destroys their original context. Howe created her Pratt Collection because she thought it was important to keep information on the early lives of Whitman and Spalding. Archivists term keeping a collection whole (as opposed to breaking it up) as maintaining its provenance. The notion of provenance is at the core of modern archival practice. When a collection is divided or mixed with other collections, the original provenance of the collection is destroyed, as is information on how the materials in the collection relate to each other. In dividing up the Pratt Collection, the WSC librarians dispersed what Howe had created. Over time, the newspapers in the collection were lost and the Spalding and Whitman manuscript letters were moved to newly created Spalding and Whitman collections associated with Drury. The Wakeman manuscripts were cataloged as a separate collection not associated with Drury or Howe, and the lock of Narcissa’s hair ended up at the Whitman Mission National Historic Site.

In the process of this dispersion, some of the pieces were lost. Drury’s purchase of a lock of Narcissa’s hair reflected his and Holland’s interest in preserving the manuscript materials in the library and associated artifacts in a historical museum on campus. Holland did not allocate
the resources required to support the historical museum, however, and his successor, Wilson Compton, dissolved the museum and scattered the collections to regional repositories. The Eastern Washington Historical Society (now the Museum of Arts and Culture, or MAC) in Spokane received most of the materials. Several Whitman-related items, including the lock of hair purchased by Drury, went on “permanent” loan at the Whitman Mission National Historic Site. After visiting the Whitman Mission in 1958, Drury requested a loan of mission artifacts for a display at the San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo, California, where he was then employed. The superintendent of the Whitman Mission, Robert Weldon, arranged an “indefinite loan” to Drury of ten items from the archaeological excavations at the mission, including chinaware fragments, square nails, gun hammers, glass fragments, and other household items. Most of the objects, which have not been displayed for decades, are still at the San Francisco Theological Seminary Library, where the librarian is making arrangements to return them to the Whitman Mission. Drury inspired trust, but his arrangements with regional repositories for loans, purchases, and gifts left a trail of dispersed collections.

The largest, most substantial collection that Drury acquired for WSC was related to Elkanah and Mary Richardson Walker, who in 1838 were members of the second party of missionaries to support the Whitmans and Spaldings. The Walkers, with the Eells, established the Tshimakain mission thirty miles northwest of Spokane. Drury contacted Samuel Walker, the last surviving son of Mary and Elkanah Walker, and brokered an arrangement whereby WSC would pay fifty dollars for sixteen items including manuscript letters of Elkanah and Mary Walker and Spokane language manuscripts “with the assurance that photostatic copies would be furnished [to Samuel Walker] of all documents desired, and also that the materials would be available to any member of the family, either in case of sale or loan, for research purposes.”

On September 26, 1935, Drury wrote to Holland, enclosing the cancelled check from Samuel Walker: “I am delighted for this gives you one of the best collections of source materials dealing with the missionaries in the Northwest. Whitman College and the Oregon Historical Society are ahead, but I think that you rank an easy third.” Apparently, Drury was fomenting a rivalry; Holland likely did not want his institution to be third. Drury then advised that Holland “better keep this check for reference purposes should there ever arise a question about ownership.” All of the correspondence concerning the Walker Collection remained in Holland’s vast collection of papers rather than in the library’s administrative files. Drury’s contact with the Walker family eventually inspired other Walker descendants to donate to WSC the bulk of their collection, including rare artifacts, such as garments and domestic items from the Tshimakain mission (spoons and thimbles, for
example). While this was an important purchase for Holland, the core of the Walker papers — including manuscripts, correspondence, and twenty-nine diaries kept by Elkanah and March Richard Walker during their trip across the plains and their missionary activities in Oregon — had already been purchased by Huntington in 1922. During his retirement near the Huntington Library, Drury transcribed the diaries that Mary Richardson Walker kept during her mission. In doing so, Drury filled a major gap in WSU’s Walker Collection by reuniting transcripts of the diaries to their original geographic context.

In securing the Walker Collection, Drury made a substantial contribution to regional archives. Other acquisitions were much less significant, even unfortunate. On September 24, 1935, Drury met with Mrs. S.M. Atkinson of Kamiah, Idaho. According to Drury, he “secured” from her two old rifles “one of which had the end cut off and had been used, so it was claimed, in the Chief Joseph War. The other rifle is in fairly good condition, and may have been used at the same time and thus passed into the possession of the Nez Perce Indians.” He also acquired a cigar box with “copper trinkets” strung on “buckskin and kamo cord” that had been “found by Mrs. Atkinson in old graves of the Nez Perce’s [sic] at Kamiah” and a “roll of clippings relating especially to Indian Chiefs and Indian tribes.” Drury’s notes illuminate an earlier era, when “historical sources” were collected without ethical reservations regarding burial grounds and other culturally sensitive sites. While there is no longer any trace of the “roll of clippings,” curators at the WSU Conner Museum discovered unassociated funerary items in the museum.

Following Drury’s advice, Holland kept this cancelled check among his papers as proof of WSC’s ownership of the Walker Collection.
Staff then transferred the objects to the Museum of Anthropology for repatriation according to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). According to Mary Collins, Director of the WSU Museum of Anthropology, “the items were in a cigar box on a bed of cotton and it seemed to me that they had been in the cigar box for a long time.” The cigar box was the only such item containing Plateau burial goods in the museum’s storage area, and its contents matched the description Druty provided to Holland, meaning it was very likely the one that Drury “secured.” Unlike most of the other collections that Drury acquired for WSC, the burial items had limited research value, especially since their provenance had been forgotten.

After remaining unused for decades, on Friday, February 2, 2012, the cigar box and grave goods were repatriated to the Nez Perce, Umatilla, Yakama, Colville, and Warm Springs tribes. Tribal members reburied the items in an Indian cemetery near the confluence of the Yakima and Columbia rivers. This episode speaks to changing attitudes regarding collecting and curating American Indian materials. Over the past two decades, many museums, including the WSU Anthropology Museum, have developed procedures to work with Native peoples according to NAGPRA legislation.

**While Drury Gathered** materials for his research and for regional archives, he also completed his first book, a biography of Henry Spalding. In the spring of 1935, he submitted the manuscript to the *Atlantic Monthly* for a contest for the best biography of a western pioneer, but it did not win. Following a second rejection from a large publisher, Drury had better luck with a small regional press. He contacted a member of the editorial staff of the Caxton Printers of Caldwell, Idaho, and sent them a copy of the manuscript. An anonymous reader report from the Caxton Printers barely survives: the document is burned around the edges with some loss of text. The reader noted that Drury offered an “enthusiastic and scholarly biography” of Spalding, but cautioned:

> [His] approach is partisan, since he is primarily interested in Spalding’s work as a religious worker. . . . [His] work is minutely documented and his footnotes are almost unbelievably abundant. Dr Drury’s literary excellence is only average. . . . I believe that his book, if published, would have a very limited appeal; its greatest value being as a source book for documentary evidence. . . . from a [co]mmercial standpoint publication of Dr. Drury’s book is almost [ce]rtain to be a loss, unless underwritten; but it is possible that his [ma]ss of historical materials needs to be preserved.

With this reader’s report, J.H. Gipson, Managing Director of The Caxton Printers, drew up a contact in which Drury agreed to provide the press with
$300 and sell another $600 in copies of his book within one year or pay the equivalent of $900. In spite of the skeptical assessment by the reviewer, the book was a modest success. Caxton issued a second printing within a year of the initial publication.

This contract was a real commitment for Drury, especially given his annual salary of $2,400. He actively sold advance copies though his church network and to interested friends. Holland was one his best customers. The WSC president gave the book to friends of the college. Drury’s arrangements with regional repositories for collecting and copying sources helped him save the money necessary to cover the expenses of publishing his books. His obligations to the Caxton Printers (and similar arrangements with his subsequent publisher, Arthur H. Clark Company) help explain Drury’s lifelong self-promotion for book sales.

Dr. Herman J. Deutsch, Associate Professor of American History at WSC and a well-respected regional scholar, wrote the preface for Drury’s Spalding biography, noting the author’s ability to ferret out new sources. “The constant appearance of new data is the greatest factor in keeping alive the profession of the historian . . . many new sources discovered by the author . . . will appear in a book on Whitman now in preparation.” Deutsch lent academic credibility to Drury’s book, and Drury commended Holland and the WSC Library — and himself indirectly — by publicly noting that WSC boasted “a fine collection of Spalding and Whitman material which includes twelve Spalding letters, the original Wakeman manuscripts, and other important items.”

*Henry Harmon Spalding: Pioneer of Old Oregon* received favorable reviews. Dan Clark, a historian at the University of Oregon, remarked that the book constituted “an important contribution” and that Drury “has written with complete objectivity.” Noel Breed, College of the Pacific, concluded his review by observing: “Doctor Drury has uncovered a large amount of new source materials . . . if his style is somewhat reminiscent of the pulpit, his documentation establishes his patient and accomplished scholarship.”

Late in Drury’s career, reviewers continued to note Drury’s comprehensive scholarship while remarking on his biases, such as his “partisan” support of the Protestant missionaries.

The biography was an important contribution to early regional historiography; no scholar since Drury has written a biography of Spalding. Despite Clark’s review, Drury’s religious bias is evident in the work. As a Presbyterian pastor serving a parish close to Spalding’s mission, Drury admired Spalding’s success as a missionary in converting the Nez Perces. Drury thought that with so much attention devoted to Whitman, Spalding’s life had been neglected by historians. Drury’s style was to quote extensively
from primary sources. While he did not ignore evidence unfavorable to his subject, he cast such information in the best possible light. Drury’s analysis of Spalding’s use of the whip on the Nez Perces serves as an example. According to Drury, “it is hard for us to pass judgment [on Spalding] when all of the factors are not known to us. We must remember that these few white people were living among uncivilized Indians, and perhaps times did arise when the only language the natives understood was that of force.” Drury not only brought a strong religious bias to his work, he also reflected a common view of his era that individuals, such as Spalding and Whitman, were the agents of civilization. Drury’s summary of the first two years of missionary activity by the Spaldings and Whitmans reflected his views. As he wrote: “alone in a strange land, surrounded by uncivilized Indians . . . they [the Whitmans and Spaldings] founded their homes and laid the foundations of a civilization upon which all who followed have builded [sic]. They were the pioneers of the pioneers.”

In Drury’s view, the missionary story was the key to understanding the history of the Northwest.

In 1938, Drury accepted a faculty position in Church History at the San Francisco Theological Seminary. From there, he continued to assist Holland in expanding WSC library’s collections. On July 17, 1939, Drury again visited the Samuel Walker home and secured additional materials to send to WSC. Eventually, the Walkers donated four boxes weighing 300 pounds
to the Pullman campus. They included Mary Richardson Walker’s parasol, two bonnets, a black taffeta dress, paintings of fruit, Mary and Elkanah’s autograph books, and an original drawing of Tshimakin Mission by the botanist Charles Geyer. Another box included Walker’s writing desk, which travelled across the plains in 1838. In the desk, wrote Drury, “are a number of Indian baskets which Mrs. Walker used in her home. Undoubtedly these baskets were made by the Spokane Indians.”

Drury suggested that Holland send to Walker copies of his book on Marcus Whitman and his forthcoming biography of the Walkers. The donation of the Walker Collection came just in time. A few months after the collection had been shipped to Pullman, fire destroyed the Walker house and “the old couple [Samuel and his spouse] were barely able to escape with their lives.”

Drury wrote a detailed description of the Walker Collection in his 1940 biography of Elkanah and Mary Walker, noting that:

the College [WSC] has the means and disposition to give proper care to such important historical records and relics. These original old letters will be wrapped in cellophane, bound, and placed in a fireproof vault. The books and other items will be placed in another fireproof room known as the treasure room. Dr. E.O. Holland . . . and others on the faculty have shown the keenest interest in collecting and preserving not only the items of the Walker collection but also those pertaining to other historical figures belonging to the Pacific Northwest history.

If all of this praise was not enough, Drury published an overview of the WSC Walker Collection for the Oregon Historical Quarterly, further burnishing WSC’s reputation as a serious research library. Fortunately, librarians at WSC did not follow through with plans to wrap the “old letters” in cellophane and bind them, thereby causing irreparable damage. The documents survived this period unscathed. Like the Eells collection at Whitman College, the Walker Collection was split into pieces with the books, manuscripts, and photographs going to the library treasure room, the garments sent to the College of Home Economics, and the objects moved to a historical museum on campus where they were lost until 2011.

The high point of Drury’s relationship with WSC came in March 1941, when Holland attempted to woo him back to eastern Washington as an Assistant Professor and Assistant Librarian. Holland wanted to hire a noted author who would both increase the stature of the college and perform two jobs. Holland’s attempt to hire Drury mirrored those of Stanford and U.C. Berkeley, who, decades earlier, had tried unsuccessfully to hire the most famous western historian of the day, Frederick Jackson Turner. Holland viewed Drury as an important regional author and respected authority on Northwest history. Drury replied to Holland’s offer three days later, politely
refusing the position due to his strong religious convictions. He wrote to Holland that he wanted to remain at the San Francisco Theological Seminary, where he could deal “directly with those choice young men who are going out to be the ministers of tomorrow.” Religion was a key aspect of Drury’s career as a historian. In a speech delivered at the Whitman Mission in 1979, he concluded with a reference to the biblical story of Job. After God inflicted Job with disease and destroyed his family and possessions, one of Job’s servants survived to tell Job of his losses. Drury remarked: “I feel that this verse applies to me. With but one exception, all of the 28 who helped me gather materials for my Spalding book are dead.” He concluded: “I have a deep conviction that God wanted me to ferret out the details of this history [of the missionaries] and to write it down. A great story has been saved for future generations.”

By 1959, Drury began considering where to leave his personal papers, and two years later, he informed WSU (Washington State College became Washington State University on September 1, 1959) Archivist Mary Avery that he was planning to sell them to the Eastern Washington State Historical Society (MAC). Drury received eight hundred dollars with the understanding that he would donate two hundred dollars back to the society. Although Avery and her WSU Library colleagues were likely disappointed not to have Drury’s papers, she responded she did not have the “funds to buy even a fraction of what is donated to the Library, and, if owners of such materials learn that we have purchased one item, they expect, of course, to be reimbursed for any that are placed here.” Avery’s policy of not paying for collections did not remain in practice. Under her successor, Earle Connette, Librarian and Chief of the Manuscripts Division, the library purchased occasional manuscript collections, most notably the papers of Pierre-Jean De Smet, Jesuit Missionary to the Coeur D’Alene and Flathead Tribes. Still, most manuscript collections were received as gifts, as they continue to be today. Though WSU did not receive the bulk of Drury’s papers, his earlier donations and gifts of letters from Holland left a collection of three boxes of materials. And just as Drury sold or deposited missionary records at numerous repositories, so too did he disperse his own papers. In addition to WSU and the MAC, Drury collections are held by Azusa Pacific College, Idaho State Historical Society, Oregon Historical Society, University of the Pacific, The San Francisco Theological Seminary, and Whitman College.

Drury’s relationship with the WSU Library began to sour during the 1970s. Connette chaffed at Drury’s requests for copies. In a letter to Drury, Connette wrote that he could not approve Drury’s appeal for selectively copying items in the Walker collection, for the “selection, removal, xeroring and returning would require too much handling and too much time and
energy for this staff to superimpose on an already extremely busy schedule.”

When the WSU Library sent Drury a copy bill for 45 cents, he complained to Library Director G. Donald Smith, reminding him of his long association with the library. Smith replied that he had canceled the charge, but that he could not promise “it won’t happen again.” If it did, Smith promised that he would take care of it. Drury was not fully satisfied. On May 31, 1974, he again wrote to Smith, requesting that someone in the library locate two articles and send copies to him “without cost.” Drury concluded: “I am sure that when you see the large ms. [manuscript] of Walker’s diary, you will feel that I am giving to your library far more value than anything I am asking in return.”

Drury finally confided to Smith that WSU’s lack of recognition for his services had been bothering him for some time:

I have a suggestion to make and that is that all of the items which I have been able to turn over to your library dating back to the days of Holland and Foote be designated as the “Clifford M. Drury Collection” and that when permission is granted to students to use such materials, due acknowledgment be made. If a donor were to give you one million dollars, I am sure some recognition would be made.

Since Smith and Connette were approaching retirement, Drury requested that Smith “formulate some guide lines for your successors and for research students who will be using these materials so that proper and, I feel, just, recognition can be given?” He concluded: “I have hesitated long before writing this as I did not want to appear to be egotistical or demanding.” Drury believed that his role as a manuscript scout for Holland, who died in 1950, had been forgotten. Smith and Connette did not agree to rename the collections or to mandate acknowledgement to Drury.

For the most part, Drury’s acquisitions on behalf of the WSC Library were small, fairly unsubstantial collections — with the major exception of the Walker Collection. But Drury’s influence loomed larger than the size of his collections. He alerted Whitman College that its priceless collection of missionary manuscripts should be better cared for, he aided Holland in making the WSC Library a respectable research repository, and he acquired materials for the Spokane Public Library and other repositories. Over the course of a long and prolific career, Drury published extensively on the ABCFM missionaries and gave hundreds of lectures and sermons. Alvin Josephy, in the acknowledgements to his seminal work on the Nez Perce, noted he would be “remiss” if he did not acknowledge his particular debt to “Lucullus V. McWhorter, Dale L. Morgan and Clifford M. Drury.”

More recently, Julie Roy Jeffrey noted that while she disagreed with Drury’s interpretations, he was “indefatigable in tracking down documentary materials on the Whitmans and their fellow missionaries.” Drury also influenced how
Northwest history courses would be taught. Mary Avery, in her influential textbook read by thousands of high-school and college students, *Washington: A History of the Evergreen State*, devotes twenty-four pages to the Protestant missionaries — most likely due to Drury’s extensive publications — while the Catholic missionaries received only two pages of coverage.\(^1\)

Beyond Drury’s scholarship, he also preserved key sources of some of the earliest extended interactions between the missionaries and the Plateau tribes. His close friendship with Holland in the 1930s educated Holland on the value of collecting primary sources. In addition to starting the Friends of the Library group, Holland devoted the later years of his presidency at WSC to bringing other manuscript collections to the library. Holland wrote to Drury in 1949 to notify his friend of what would be his greatest contribution to the WSC Library: the McWhorter Collection.\(^2\) Employing methods similar to those used by Drury, Holland wrote in 1940 to Virgil McWhorter, alum of WSC and son of the collector Lucullus, requesting that his father donate his extensive collection of Indian “relics” to the college’s “splendid museum.”\(^3\)

After extensive negotiations and promises by Holland to the McWhorter family, the McWhorter collection came to WSC and provided a vast wealth of information on the Plateau nations, especially the Nez Perce. The Nez Perce materials in the McWhorter collection would provide a Native perspective generally missing from the missionary papers that Drury collected.

The early twentieth century was a critical period for the development of collections at manuscripts repositories throughout the Pacific Northwest. Curators at the young institutions learned how to secure, care for, and preserve important collections. Certainly the staff at archival repositories had much to learn. The divergence and growing specialization of libraries, museums, and archives meant that collections such as those of Eells at Whitman College and the Walker Collection at WSU were often split based on material types, with the unfortunate result that the intellectual connections among artifacts, papers, and books were not maintained. As this research demonstrates, however, Drury’s correspondence (housed at multiple repositories) allows us to reconstruct the lost provenance of the materials he collected and to understand how he and Holland influenced what would be added to the nascent WSU archives.

Beyond stories of discoveries and missed opportunities, of recognition and ego, the collecting by Drury matters. Although the collections he most assiduously bought as an agent for Holland are small and incomplete, Drury collected during a period that predated professional archives practice. He influenced administrators and librarians at the region’s repositories and alerted them to the value of collecting source materials and the importance of documenting their acquisitions.
Drury’s early influence on the collecting of WSU, the Spokane Public Library, Whitman College, and the MAC resulted in those institutions enhancing their collections related to the Plateau peoples. The development of archival repositories in eastern Washington ensured that many key collections were preserved (at times precariously) in the very region they describe and not alienated from their geographical and historical context by wealthier institutions. Understanding the work of Drury and his fellow collectors provides an explanation for why archival repositories on the Columbia Plateau developed with an early focus on collections related to white missionaries and pioneers. Historians in particular rely on publicly accessible primary sources for their research. Since so little documentary evidence survives from the past in archives, what survives influences our understanding of the past and what can be written about the past.

According to the historian Randall Jimerson, archival collections “appear no longer as impartial or neutral carriers of facts. The archival record is complex, problematic. It represents power relationship in society, both in the events, person, and ideas memorialized in the documents themselves and in the process of how they are selected for preservation and validation with archival repositories.” By collecting missionary sources rather than materials related to other groups — such as Chinese or Punjabi laborers, for example — Drury helped create what the historian Johanna Ogden described as the “persistent foundational myth of Oregon as a land of white pioneer families.” Yet without Drury and influential individuals such as Holland and Fuller, the growth and preservation of collections held by regional archives would have been delayed, and key collections from the Columbia Plateau would have been destroyed or removed to distant, wealthier repositories.

NOTES

An earlier version of this essay was presented at a graduate seminar at WSU taught by Professor Noriko Kawamura.


2. Clifford Drury to Ernest O. Holland April 17, 1935, folder 2, box 1, Drury Papers, Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries, Pullman [hereafter MASC].

3. Holland to Whom it May Concern, June 25, 1935, Drury Papers, folder 2, box 1, MASC.


5. Drury in an earlier version of his “Reminiscences of a Historian” essay included the following section: “Foote introduced
me to Dr. E.O. Holland . . . who immediately took a personal interest in what I was trying to do. Learning of my restricted budget he offered to pay my expenses whenever I went on an exploring expedition for source materials, with the understanding that whatever I found or purchased would be turned over to the College library. He agreed to reimburse me for travel expenses and for money paid out for materials. This arrangement was of immense help to me in those days, and explains why I turned over so many historical items to W.S.C. rather than to the University of Idaho” (who had turned him down on a similar arrangement). *The Pacific Northwesterner* 16:4 (Fall 1972): 12. When this essay was reprinted in the *Western Historical Quarterly* Drury omitted any mention of Holland or WSU. Clifford Drury, “Reminiscences of a Historian,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 5:2 (April 1974): 133–49.

6. After making copies for himself, Drury generally sold the manuscripts he acquired at cost. In addition to purchasing manuscripts for WSC, Drury also sold or donated sources to the Presbyterian Historical Society, the Spokane Public Library, the Eastern Washington Historical Society, and the Whitman Mission National Historical Site. Drury, “Reminiscences of a Historian,” 136.


11. Drury’s mother, Mae Dell, died on June 30, 1908, from complications following the birth of twin sons. Ibid., 21.

12. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) sponsored the first American missionaries to the Oregon Territory. During the 1830s and 1840s, the ABCFM considered the Oregon Territory a foreign region. Drury, “Reminiscences of a Historian,” 134.


26. Drury wrote that the Spalding letters were eventually purchased by the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, but

38. Drury, My Road from Yesterday, 270.

39. Ibid.

40. Drury to Foote, July 19, 1935, Holland Papers, folder 4773, box 157, MASC.

41. Narcissa’s hair is not currently on display at the Whitman Mission National Historic Park, but may be viewed by making arrangements with the park staff. A second lock of Narcissa’s hair is displayed, along with Marcus Whitman’s saddle, in the archives reading room in the Penrose Library at Whitman College. In the Marcus and Narcissa Whitman Collection, WCMss105 there are five additional locks and one strand of Narcissa’s hair, all donated from different sources. Melissa Salrin, email to the author, December 6, 2012.

42. Donor Files, Museum Dissolution file, box 6, MASC.

43. The other Whitman items loaned by WSC included a bonnet worn by Mrs. Henry Whitman and a sheet of paper belonging to Narcissa Whitman. Container list, 1963, Whitman Papers, folder 17, box 1, MASC.

44. Drury, My Road from Yesterday, 279.

45. Drury to Walker, September 9, 1935, Holland Papers, folder 4773, box 157, MASC.

46. Drury to Holland, September 25, 1935, Holland Papers, folder 4773, box 157, MASC.


48. Drury to Holland, September 25, 1935, Holland Papers, folder 4773, box 157, MASC.


52. In Collins’s report to the Federal Register, NAGPRA Notice N177: “there are no labels associated with the bracelets or the necklace all of the items show clear evidence of having been buried for some period of time and all are object types common to the historic and proto-historic period burials along the Lower Snake River region of Washington State.” Ibid.


54. Drury, My Road from Yesterday, 269.

55. The Caxton Printers suffered a fire in March 1937. Surviving correspondence files from the era are burned along the edges. C.M. Drury, Moscow, ID, Old Correspondence, 1936, file 7, Caxton Press Collection (unprocessed), MASC.


publication merits the term. . . . He continues to be frankly partisan in his support of the Protestant missionaries, but is entirely fair to their Catholic rivals.”

63. Drury to Holland, July 17, 1939, Drury Papers, folder 41, box 21, MAC.
69. Holland to Drury, March 24, 1941, Drury folder, box 3, MAC Donor Files.
71. Drury to Holland, March 27, 1941, Drury folder, box 3, MAC Donor Files.
73. Drury to Avery, February 9, 1961, Drury Papers, box 3, folder W-6 36, WCL.
74. Contract signed by Clifford Drury and Joel E. Ferris, November 14th, 1960, accession files, MAC.
75. Avery to Drury, February 21, 1961, Drury folder, box 3, MAC Donor Files.
77. Drury to G. Donald Smith, May 7, 1974; Smith to Drury, May 22, 1974; Drury to Smith, May 31, 1974. All found in Drury folder 3, box 3, MAC Donor Files.
78. Drury to Smith, June 14, 1974, Drury folder 3, box 3, MAC Donor Files. In his reply to Drury, Connette explained that the Drury Collection “consist of approximately 150 items. . . . As for provenance, you have been cited as the agent in all cases. . . . We are not able to dictate how our collections will be cited other than giving credit to [WSU] . . . . We are in line with policy elsewhere and uniformity makes scholarly use consistent, wherever by whomever.” Connette to Drury, September 17, 1974 (ibid.).
81. Avery’s textbook went through eight printings between 1961 and 1979. Mary Avery, Washington A History of the Evergreen State (Seattle, 1979), 124–52. As the first archivist at WSU, Avery knew Drury well; she also listed his books as recommended reading for her chapter on the missionaries.
82. This story is told in Trevor James Bond, “From Treasure Room to Archives: The McWhorter Papers and the State College of Washington,” Pacific Northwest Quarterly 102 (Spring 2011): 67–78. Lucullus McWhorter’s son, Virgil McWhorter, would also help Holland solicit and eventually acquire the papers of William Compton Brown, author of The Indian Side of the Story (Spokane: C.W. Hill Print Co., 1961) and owner of a collection of photographs taken by Frank Matsura.
83. Holland to McWhorter, April 16, 1940, Lucullus Virgil McWhorter Papers, folder 306a, box 31, MAC.
84. Jimerson, Archives Power, 212.