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Howard Royal's memoir

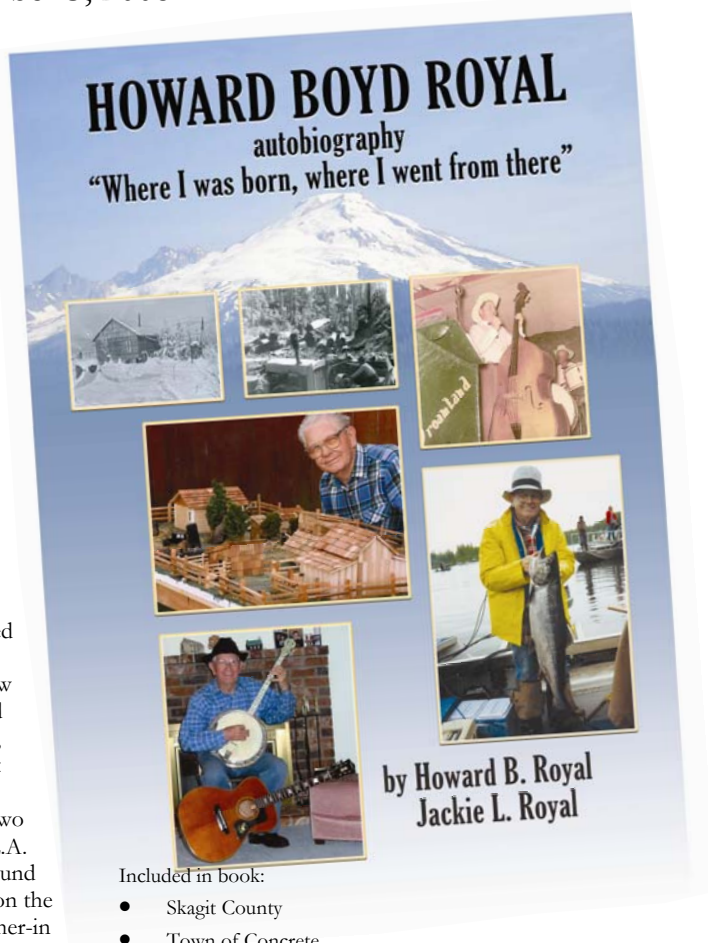
By Noel V. Bourasaw, Skagit River Journal
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I met Howard Royal in 1992 when he and his son Phil, came to the Courier-Times office and showed us the model that Howard built of his family's Stump Ranch that we always passed on our way to visit friends in Concrete. My folks would often stop the car so that we could hike out in the field and pose us kids in front of the stumps that were visual reminders of just how tough those pioneers had to be to persevere through the rainy winters.

I was amazed at the details of Howard's model and every time I asked about a portion of it. He described the root cellar where his mother stocked canned goods and dried meat for the winter. Each structure was lovingly carved out of wood and looking closely at them, I could imagine living inside with Howard as the rain beat on the roof. A few years later I met his grandson, Dan Royal, who was inspired by Howard's memories and those of his great-grandmother, Mabel Boyd Royal-Steen and is now historian for the Skagit County Pioneer Association.

Howard's autobiography will reward readers on two levels. You will learn about the amazing pioneer family of L.A. Boyd who ran away from his home in New York, sailed around the world, then nearly succumbed to the elements and fire on the plains and came to the **upper Skagit River** to join his brother-in-law, George Savage, in what must have seemed a paradise after Nebraska. But most of all, you will learn about his mother Mabel's brood, including Howard, who were poor in material goods and moved continually all over Washington and the West Coast. But they were rich in imagination, strong backs and their memories.

As you turn the pages, you may even sense Howard's knack at melodies, reminding us of the good times around the stumps in Birdsvew when he played and sang with the "Three Blind Mice," with Nellie Quackenbush Wheelock and Kate Quackenbush Glover.



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