Coleman Johnson, February 2018
Advisor: Katharine Morse

New Icons of the Old Frontier: The Mountaineer, the Indian, and the Automobile at Mount Rainier and Crater Lake National Parks

My thesis explores the ways in which authors and editors of magazines and newspapers deployed mythic ideas of the American West in narratives of Mount Rainier and Crater Lake National Parks during the early twentieth century. Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 proclamation of the closing of the frontier stoked anxiety among the American public, as the frontier comprised a central element of popular conception of national identity. This was the inherent contradiction of the frontier: its very existence meant insecurity over its future, because its function was to foster the civilization that meant its disappearance. Mount Rainier and Crater Lake became sites at which Americans worked out this tension. Narratives of both parks in popular media placed them squarely within the tradition of the American West by using existing Western mythology. Like other Western narratives, authors used mythic icons to convey these meanings. This thesis focuses on three icons which were particularly common in narratives of Mount Rainier and Crater Lake: the mountaineer, the Indian, and the automobile, all of which shaped Americans' understanding of the parks themselves and the frontier. Both parks became popular tourist destinations during the early twentieth century, in part because of the appeal of these narratives. Ultimately, the opportunity to visit both Mount Rainier and Crater Lake served as a way for Americans to find reassurance that a small part of the frontier, and America's national identity, were preserved within park boundaries.

Sources Include:

*Harper's Weekly* articles between 1889 and 1912.
*Sunset* articles between 1911 and 1928.