

University of Washington Tacoma

Face Down in the Wishkah.

A Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis will reexamine the life of America's greatest unknown serial killer William (Billy) Gohl. Spanning an eight year period (1902-1910) Gohl was able to amass over one hundred victims in the port city of Aberdeen Washington. Gohl did this through taking advantage of people's trust and integrating techniques from 19th century San Franciscan criminals to produce a systematic murder enterprise. It took a new mayor, chief of police, and over two years of investigation to finally bring Gohl to trial and conviction. Gohl's story is one that covers a variety of historical studies and hinges on a fascinating narrative. The research and literature on Gohl is sparse but has been able to stay progressive and continuous throughout the years. Gohl's history and tale is one that has been rarely seen and almost hidden in our Nation's and Washington State History. But like Gohl's victims his story will always surface.

William F. Gohl came to America in the late 19th century.¹ Like thousands of other immigrants he was seeking a fresh start. As an adolescent in Hamburg, Germany he had already murdered a man.² Evading the clutches of justice and lusting for gold he jumped ship for Alaska.³ Upon failing to strike it rich in the gold fields and murdering yet again in Alaska he sailed south to San Francisco.⁴ By the early 20th century, Gohl stood 6'2" and weighed 200 pounds.⁵ His face was round, placid, and clean shaven (resembling the outlaw Butch Cassidy).⁶ After a few notable escapades in San Francisco he set his marks on the growing Washington port city of Aberdeen.⁷ Gohl's time in Aberdeen was only eight years (1902-1910) but during those fateful years he left quite the impact.⁸ If estimates and calculations are correct Gohl killed close to 130 men in Aberdeen.⁹ This death toll would make Gohl the most egregious American serial killer in our nation's history.¹⁰

The following pages will expose and reexamine the times and life in which Gohl lived in 20th century Aberdeen. Starting with a Historiographic essay on the study of Gohl throughout the years and the progress incurred by the noted works on Gohl. Followed by an examination of 20th century Aberdeen and its growing economy, port, and city life. Gohl's experiences in San Francisco will then bring to light how union activity and San Franciscan criminals would shape Gohl's actions in Aberdeen. The acts of murder that came to define Gohl and shock Aberdeen will also be brought to light. Then the city officials who vowed to capture Gohl and their investigation of Gohl will be explored. Gohl's final murders and the web of evidence that brought him to justice in court will be shown. We will end with life after the conviction of Gohl and how it impacted Gohl's own life, the city, and key people in the story of Gohl. The goal of this thesis is to explore

and inform the reader of Gohl's life, which despite being a forgotten and little-known tale, is still a worthwhile study of Washington State History. For Gohl's story encompasses sailor unions, murder, criminal justice and public history. Thus, Gohl's life produces a complex history and story like no other in Washington State History.

The research and work written on Billy Gohl is somewhat sparse. There are numerous primary sources from the time relating to Gohl. But Gohl has almost been lost in Washington State History transition. The most cited scholars on Billy Gohl are Murray Morgan, Edwin Van Syckle, John C. Hughes and Ryan Teague Beckwith, and Elizabeth Gibson. These five Washington State historians/authors are cited the most because of their in-depth research and story telling. Morgan, Van Syckle, Hughes and Beckwith, and Gibson are also frequently cited because they are the only authors to really write about Gohl. Morgan and Van Syckle garner a strong local history prestige; especially Morgan for his books on Washington State History that range from Seattle's early days to Grays Harbor's booming frontier life of the 19th and 20th centuries.¹¹ Van Syckle is highly esteemed as one of or the major Washingtonian historian on Grays Harbor County.

The field of study in regards to Billy Gohl has maintained an even keel but became more in-depth throughout the years. Gohl has consistently been portrayed as a greedy, conniving, murder. From *The Last Wilderness* by Morgan in 1955 to *Outlaw Tales Of Washington* by Gibson in 2002, Gohl has maintained the same historical guise. This in some instances can be seen as a positive because it proves the validity of these works in all being in accordance with each others facts on Gohl. But to have a story stay stagnant for 113 years is also somewhat surprising. Thankfully, the research on Gohl has improved in thoroughness throughout the years and led to new avenues of study.

The change is in the depth of research and material devoted to Gohl. In Morgan's book Gohl is given 6 pages whereas in Gibson's book Gohl's chapter is 12 pages. This increase in page length illuminates the furtherance of research and fact finding over a span of about 40 years. Newer sources such as Gibson and Beckwith and Hughes focus more on the trial, Gohl's crimping career, and accounts from Gohl's captors. Older sources such as Morgan and Van Syckle lay the foundation of the study with a strong and broad historical narrative on Billy Gohl and his exploits. Since the field of study on Gohl is somewhat limited a historiography of Gohl is limited to a few secondary sources. Thus, the following pages will focus on the inherit study of Gohl. Through the examination of these works one can see how Gohl's story fits into a range of 20th century American historical topics.

The first work to be written on Gohl and Grays Harbor was Murray Morgan's 1955 history of the Olympic Peninsula, *The Last Wilderness*. Morgan's history of the Olympic Peninsula highlights the turning point in the region through inquisitive and entertaining storytelling. Relying on eyewitness accounts/interviews, newspaper articles, and other primary sources. Morgan weaves a compelling story of man conquering the elements of the Olympic Peninsula and the industries/people that followed. Morgan's history spans the centuries and geography, from the late 18th-mid-20th century, from Port Townsend to LaPush Washington.

Morgan paints Gohl as a boastful murderer whose talk followed his murders.¹² *The Last Wilderness* supplies the reader with a vivid description of Gohl's physical attributes.¹³ Morgan bestows the reader with a clear knowledge of Gohl's boastful and reckless character as well. Along, with displaying how he was the scourge of Aberdeen's

port. Highlighting the major crimes of Gohl Morgan displays Gohl's greed and lack of value towards human life during his reign in Aberdeen.¹⁴ A strong example of this was when Gohl lured a Swedish sailor to stand on a river piling wherein Gohl shot the Swede in cold-blood for no reason but to satisfy his blood lust and greed.¹⁵ The narrative ends abruptly on Gohl and dives into the environment that surrounded Gohl during his tenure in Aberdeen. Morgan tells of Aberdeen being a rough and tumble town/port city due from the harsh logging industry that supported this coastal city.¹⁶ Furthermore in this section Morgan expounds on the violence incurred from the Wobblies and other labor factions in Grays Harbor during the early 20th century.¹⁷ Overall, Morgan's account on Gohl is satisfactory but leaves the reader wanting more and opens the door for further analysis on Billy Gohl.

The second writer and work that takes up the study of Billy Gohl was Edwin Van Syckle's 1980 history of Grays Harbor. Van Syckle's first history on Grays Harbor involving Billy Gohl was *They Tried To Cut It All: Grays Harbor-turbulent years of greed* published in 1980. Van Syckle focuses on the mid 19th- 20th century lumber industry, the crude and labor intensive work, and the boom towns that erupted in sway of the logging success. Van Syckle's reoccurring theme is that the loggers of this time ignorantly believed that the timber of Grays Harbor would never fail to suffice their lumber needs. *They Tried To Cut It All* was published at a time in which logging companies were being deescalated due from union and environmental issues. Thus, Van Syckle's book harkens back to the forlorn days of lumber and logging boom and bliss. Van Syckle relies on court records, interviews, newspaper articles, and Grays Harbor historians.

Contrary to *The Last Wilderness*, Van Syckle gives a far more in-depth narrative of Billy Gohl and his escapades in Aberdeen. Van Syckle portrays Gohl as a venomous pestilence to Aberdeen's port, waterfront, lumber industry, and shipping.¹⁸ This narrative revolves around three elements to Gohl's demise his boastful character; his bragging occurred after each crime, the appointing of Aberdeen sheriff George Dean, and Gohl betraying a confidant.¹⁹ Gohl's boasting is noted as his demise because he would always brag to an undercover police officer/ bartender of the deadly deeds he had and would commit.²⁰ Secondly, the hiring of a committed and justice seeking sheriff/detective George Dean brought about a sweeping investigation and trial of Gohl in May of 1910.²¹ Thirdly, Gohl killed a confidant's dog who therein leaked many leads and evidence about Gohl's murders.²² Van Syckle filled in the historical and narrative gaps which Morgan left in *The Last Wilderness* leaving the reader and scholar with a concise and descriptive history of Billy Gohl.

Van Syckle's second work on Billy Gohl was exhibited in his 1982 history of Gray Harbor entitled *The River Pioneers: Early Days on Grays Harbor*. In this book Van Syckle explores the early pioneers and homesteaders of Grays Harbor during the 19th-20th centuries. Focusing on how through their homesteading it brought progress to the area but in that progress their pioneer life vanished with it.²³ Overall, this is an overarching study of settlement in Gray Harbor. As in *They Tried To Cut It All*, Van Syckle's sources are period journal articles, government homestead acts, interviews, and local historian publications.

Van Syckle strengthens his previous study of Gohl in *The River Pioneers*. Expounding on Gohl's San Francisco life before Aberdeen, Van Syckle illuminates how

Gohl had already been a notorious ruffian before Aberdeen.²⁴ Gohl's exploits are reexamined and made more concise in this history of Grays Harbor. *The River Pioneer's* narrative of Gohl ends with a more humorous note and feel than in *They Tried To Cut It All*. Van Syckle tells of an embittered sea captain who takes revenge on Gohl by removing Gohl's privy on his dock while Gohl is inside.²⁵ Overall, Van Syckle's second study of Gohl becomes more of an appendix to the first found account in *They Tried To Cut It All* than a separate work.

The fourth most cited work on Billy Gohl is *On The Harbor: From Black Friday to Nirvana* edited by John C. Hughes and Ryan Teague Beckwith in 2001. This book tells of the major events in Grays Harbor County history. Hughes and Beckwith construct their history from period newspaper articles from Aberdeen's *The Daily World*. Topics range from the Spotted Owl debate in the 1980s to the mysterious Laura Law murder in 1940. Key events, people, and locations that shaped the county from the late 20th-21st centuries are examined in *On The Harbor*.

Hughes and Beckwith's account of Billy Gohl is the most in-depth cited source of the group. Hughes and Beckwith had a plethora of primary sources to work with because of their *Daily World* affiliation which brings about an extremely descriptive and insightful study of Gohl. The two chose *Daily World* journalist Pamela Dean Aho's article on Gohl for their book. What separates *On The Harbor* from Morgan and Van Syckle is the in-depth coverage and biographies on Gohl, the victims, George Dean, and the trail of Gohl. Hughes and Beckwith's book gives an extremely descriptive narrative of the capturing of Billy Gohl's henchman John Klingenburg and how without his confession Gohl would not have been convicted.²⁶ Klingenburg's gruesome testimony of

the killing of two former Gohl henchmen is recounted in rueful detail.²⁷ This testimony strengthens the source so much more than previous cited sources because this testimony brought about the end of Gohl's reign in Aberdeen. This publication also recounts the trial of Gohl in detail which had not been fully attempted previously to Hughes and Beckwith.²⁸ *On The Harbor* is the culmination of Gohl study and certainly the leaves little stone unturned.

The final most noted source is Elizabeth Gibson's 2002 book *Outlaw Tales Of Washington: True Stories Of Washington's Most Nefarious Crooks, Culprits, And Cutthroats*. This publication tells of the little-known but amazing lives of Washington State's famous early to mid 20th century criminals. Gibson relies on newspaper articles, historical books (i.e. Van Syckle), and journal articles to examine Gohl. *Outlaw Tales Of Washington* differs from the previous sources in that Gibson focuses on Gohl's criminology; such as his crimping, arson, murders, and greed.²⁹ The act of Crimping is especially absent or ambiguous in the other cited sources. Listing and describing Gohl's typical targets/victims expands the study of Gohl as well.³⁰ Thus, Gibson has proven that Gohl's story is not a closed book but one that can be reexamined in multiple lights.

The controversies and debates that revolve around Billy Gohl of did he really use a trap door to dispose of his victims? This debate stems from Murray Morgan's *The Last Wilderness*. Morgan states the trap door legend is false on page 126 and that the trap-door was just a rumor, claiming Gohl even scoffed at it. But the evidence and other sources say otherwise. But two other key sources cite Gohl having a trap door to dispose of his victim's bodies.³¹ Also, the same technique wherein Gohl disposed of the bodies is the exact formula that Crimps used in San Francisco to shanghai sailors.³² San Francisco is

the city in which Gohl last resided in before Aberdeen.³³ Thus, Gohl learned the technique of disposing bodies through a peer structure with a trap door from San Francisco and implemented it in Aberdeen.

Thus, the study of Gohl is sparse but has evolved over time. Beginning with Morgan the foundation of Gohl was laid. Van Syckle filled in the key gaps in Gohl's narrative after Morgan. Hughes and Beckwith then delivered the most detailed and concise history. Then most recently Gibson opened up new avenues of study in the Gohl history. Debates in the study are few but are easily answered by other sources and the pattern of crime. Overall, the field of study on Gohl is one that only strengthens over time and needs to be examined by every Washingtonian generation.

Early 20th century Aberdeen Washington was a coastal city on the rise.³⁴ This city was blessed with a deep bay, sandy seafloor, and a harbor sheltered from the ocean through spits and sand bars.³⁵ These geographic advantages positioned Aberdeen for greatness.³⁶ The city itself sat between the confluence of the Wishkah and Chehalis Rivers.³⁷ Saw mills and canneries situated themselves on banks of each river.³⁸ The first of the later to find residence was Mr. A.J. West's saw mill in 1884 on the Wishkah River and others soon followed.³⁹ By 1906, Aberdeen saw mills had "manufactured [a total of] 588,510,034 board feet [of lumber]."⁴⁰ This massive amount of lumber produced an impressive payout of \$9 million dollars.⁴¹ Surprisingly two-thirds of this \$9 million dollars went to paying employees and laborers associated with the mill and logging.⁴² Captain Weatherwax's mill not only was the biggest in Aberdeen but could produce the most as well.⁴³ Weatherwax's saw mill was able to mill "80,000 board feet in ten hours."⁴⁴ Aberdeen saw mills milled cedar, spruce, and fir timber from the Grays

Harbor's surrounding forests.⁴⁵ Ships sailed with this lumber as far south as Chile and even to Tasmania.⁴⁶

The second industry that anchored Aberdeen's economy was canneries.⁴⁷ Aberdeen had four canneries by 1890 and they all rested on the Chehalis River.⁴⁸ In 1890, alone these four canneries canned 40,000, 48 can packs of salmon at a profit of \$250,000.⁴⁹ This industry was only made possible because of the constant run of salmon from outlying rivers and the Chehalis feeding into Grays Harbor.⁵⁰ Employees at the canneries and the fishermen who supplied the salmon also garnered a fair percentage of the profit, likened to Aberdeen's mill workers.⁵¹

Even though Aberdeen had great economic growth and stability, the city had incurred a less-than-flattering stigma.⁵² During the early 20th century Aberdeen was nicknamed the "Hellhole of the Pacific."⁵³ This name drew its context and inspiration from Aberdeen's skid row.⁵⁴ "Skid-row life was raw and clamorous, often ugly, always boisterous, and nowhere more so than in Aberdeen."⁵⁵ Hume and F Streets were the epicenter of Aberdeen's seedy district.⁵⁶ In this portion of the city, saloons and brothels littered the area.⁵⁷ Loggers on leave after months in the forest would come and spend all their hard earned money on liquor and harlots, so much so that the loggers began to call their paychecks "pleasure money."⁵⁸ This immense influx of loggers caused the wooden sidewalks of skid row to splinter due to the logger's "corks" boots.⁵⁹ Gambling was also a costly passion of the loggers.⁶⁰ Slot machines installed in the saloons were an instant hit with the luck-lusting lumberjacks.⁶¹ The daily influx of sailors from the port only helped strengthen attendance and profit for skid row.⁶² These saloons served not only the loggers and sailors but its population of nearly 12,000 as well.⁶³

Gohl entered Aberdeen's scene in 1902 to take a job as a cigar salesman.⁶⁴ The growing economic prosperity perhaps drew him too, to this wet and cloudy coastal town.⁶⁵ Before coming to Aberdeen, Gohl was in San Francisco joining and working as a strong arm for the Sailors' Union of the Pacific (SUP).⁶⁶ While in San Francisco, Gohl established himself as an important asset to the SUP's control of crews.⁶⁷ For instance, on one occasion Gohl heard of a number of non-union crew members sailing out of San Francisco.⁶⁸ He informed the SUP who then paid him to not allow these men to sail.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the SUP assured Gohl that if arrested the SUP would pay his legal defense.⁷⁰ Gohl was able one way or the other to gather the name of one of the "scab" sailors.⁷¹ He then proceeded to arm himself and try to board the ship in an attempt to return the non-union sailors to shore.⁷² Once near the ship, Gohl was able to board by professing to be a companion of the "scab."⁷³ Gohl then by gunpoint ushered all the non-union members off the ship and into his boat. whereupon these scabs were taken to the SUP office for some "reeducation."⁷⁴

Gohl was also exposed to "shanghaiing" and "crimping" in San Francisco. "Shanghaiing" is the act of impressing someone into service on a boat against their will.⁷⁵ For "shanghaiing victim[s] [are] always either enticed on board under some mental delusion not to be realized, or else driven on board by some physical force not to be resisted."⁷⁶ This action was achieved the majority of the time through drugging, drunkenness, or rendering them unconscious.⁷⁷ Shanghaiing became popular in America during the later 1800s when merchant sailors' rights were basically nonexistent.⁷⁸ Merchant captains needed crews and they looked to "Crimps" to supply them.⁷⁹

A Crimp was usually an owner of a boarding house(s) who would tempt traveling or recently onshore sailors to lodge and revel at their establishment.⁸⁰ To lure sailors into their boarding houses, Crimps had their minions labeled as “runners” meet and board ships in the harbor and tell of the joys that would follow at the Crimps’ boarding houses.⁸¹ During Gohl’s stay in San Francisco Crimps were very successful and at the time were able to make \$50,000 a year while runners made \$500 a week for their luring.⁸²

As sailors entered these boarding houses they were directed to a bunk where their belongings were stored and then “plied with as much cheap liquor as [they] could drink.”⁸³ The “knockout punch” for a sailor, came in a spiked drink containing opium, brandy, whisky, and gin.⁸⁴ This drink was so strong that many sailors were unconscious for several days after ingesting this potion.⁸⁵ The majority of these boarding houses in San Francisco rested on pilings overhanging the water.⁸⁶ This played into the Crimps’ advantage for as soon as a sailor was rendered unconscious he was dropped through a trap door or “dead fall” and transported to waiting ships via rowboat.⁸⁷ The unfortunate souls would soon wake up on the high seas and very far away from shore or port.⁸⁸

The experiences, vices, and organizations that Gohl witnessed and took part in during his stay in San Francisco would follow him to Aberdeen. First of all, his SUP membership and responsibility only blossomed and on July 13, 1903 Gohl became the official SUP Agent for Aberdeen.⁸⁹ The previous Agent had taken the position of second mate on a schooner headed for Australia.⁹⁰ The SUP’s union headquarters in Aberdeen was one of the first to be established on the West Coast with a hiring hall.⁹¹ As he had done in San Francisco, Gohl showed great resolve and dedication to the union cause; even if his actions were illegal. Four events exemplify Gohl’s dedication. On one

occasion Hoquiam (Aberdeen's sister city) was having a labor strike and a rumor spread that the citizens of Hoquiam were going to break up the strike.⁹² Gohl heard of this and armed himself with two pistols and a scatter gun and headed towards the streetcars.⁹³ Gohl boarded every car and searched each passenger to see if anyone was carrying a firearm illegally.⁹⁴

Second and third aggressive actions by Gohl occurred in 1906. On June 2nd, the schooner *Fearless* moored in Aberdeen. Gohl soon learned that the *Fearless*' crew was not in the union.⁹⁵ In accordance to his previous actions in San Francisco, Gohl approached the *Fearless* with the sole purpose of extracting those non-union sailors.⁹⁶ This time Gohl had 16 armed followers.⁹⁷ The night's darkness hid Gohl and his 16 commandos and they approached the *Fearless* with ease.⁹⁸ But Captain Lilliquist spotted them and demanded Gohl and his men leave his vessel.⁹⁹ Gohl simply responded by firing at the captain.¹⁰⁰ The crew of the *Fearless* fired back at Gohl and a gun fight began between the *Fearless* and Gohl's launch.¹⁰¹ The skirmish waged for half an hour.¹⁰² The two vessels exchanged more than 100 shots.¹⁰³ Surprisingly the only fatality that occurred was one member of the *Fearless* crew.¹⁰⁴

After his gun play escapade, Gohl was soon arrested by local authorities and his bail set at \$500.¹⁰⁵ Gohl's bail was met most likely by the SUP.¹⁰⁶ Five months latter Gohl "was convicted of managing the attack on the Schooner *Fearless*" and ordered to pay \$1200.¹⁰⁷ Again the SUP paid the bill and Gohl stated that the bill was "worth every penny of it, for advertising."¹⁰⁸

1906 Gohl took part in a final unionist-charged action August 23, in this episode of union solidarity, Gohl and eight other men with rifles approached the docked lumber

schooner *Watson A. West*.¹⁰⁹ As in Gohl's previous encounters, there were non-union crew members working on the *Watson A. West*.¹¹⁰ Gohl and his heavily armed compatriots were able to encourage two non-union sailors off the schooner.¹¹¹ These two sailors were promised free travel back to San Francisco and came peaceably with Gohl and his armed men.¹¹² But, Gohl warned the other crewmen that if they did not also desert the *Watson A. West*, then "they would be severely dealt with."¹¹³ Surprisingly Gohl was not arrested or detained.¹¹⁴ Instead a police garrison watched the schooner the remainder of its time in Aberdeen.¹¹⁵

Gohl's position as SUP Agent brought him admiration from some and hate and disdain from others.¹¹⁶ Union sailors revered him.¹¹⁷ As an acting SUP Agent he stood for sailors' and their rights on and off shore.¹¹⁸ Gohl also spoke many languages.¹¹⁹ This allowed him interact, help, and build relationships with the many migrant sailors that came to Aberdeen's port.¹²⁰ These attributes brought about a trust between sailors and Gohl.¹²¹

On the other hand the merchants and businessmen loathed Gohl.¹²² Gohl was a constant pestilence to industry.¹²³ Gohl's interference with ships employing nonunion sailors led to the interruption of commerce in Aberdeen.¹²⁴ Gohl would also ignite strikes and other labor stoppages to hamper local businesses.¹²⁵ If any company or mill went against Gohl, the threat of arson loomed over them, and Gohl hampered the Aberdeen lumber mills too.¹²⁶ He did this by delaying the dates on which ships could load and leave port with milled lumber.¹²⁷ Gohl even oversaw the general looting of vessels moored in Aberdeen.¹²⁸

One other group of Aberdeen's citizenry Gohl encountered regularly were the dancehall girls and prostitutes of Aberdeen's skid row.¹²⁹ Gohl visited these "bawdy houses" enough to have contracted Syphilis and He married a dancehall girl.¹³⁰ Like the hard man he was, Gohl was attracted to a tough dancehall girl named Bessie Hager.¹³¹ The two shared an interesting first encounter to spark their relationship:

Billy got mean drunk one night and got fresh. She [(Hager)] landed one on his chin that knocked him down, then she kicked him in the ribs. Billy admired her courage. He liked that kind of rough and tumble courtship.¹³²

It apparently was love at first fight for Ms. Hager and Gohl, and these two lovers wed on May 16, 1905 in Hoquiam.¹³³ Not only did Gohl find love, but he also found another form of steady income, for through his marriage with Ms. Hager, he became the co-proprietor of the Hager's boardinghouse.¹³⁴

Gohl also took the techniques of San Francisco's Crimps and shanghaiing and implemented them for profit. To increase his income while working as a cigar clerk Gohl entered the dirty trade of Crimping.¹³⁵ At the time, Aberdeen had ships docked outside of its many lumber mills on the Wishkah.¹³⁶ These vessels garnished the nickname "misery ships" for their onboard conditions were horrendous.¹³⁷ Sailors did not volunteer or sign up to work on these vessels; instead they were shanghaiied.¹³⁸ In a twisted form of entrepreneurship Gohl saw a need of sailors and began to Crimp in Aberdeen.¹³⁹ As was the practice in San Francisco, Gohl would take an unsuspecting sailor to his favorite saloon (the Grand Saloon) and give him a drugged drink.¹⁴⁰ This concoction would knock out the sailor, whereupon, Gohl would remove the man's money and valuables and take him to join ranks of one of the waiting misery ships.¹⁴¹ In return for the new crew member, the captains of misery ships would pay Gohl.¹⁴²

Gohl then employed San Francisco's shanghaiing technique to hide his sinister murders. First of all, he chose a superior location. The Grand Saloon, this saloon was on the banks of the Wishkah River on pilings similar to San Franciscan Crimp boarding-houses'.¹⁴³ The Grand Saloon was also located right along Aberdeen's skid row at 300 South F St.¹⁴⁴ This gave Gohl a plethora of victims to stalk and prey upon.¹⁴⁵ At the Grand Saloon, Gohl chose the second floor and outfitted it to be the SUP Union Office.¹⁴⁶ From his office Gohl had a prime view of all the shipping coming in and out of Aberdeen. The SUP office also became a haven for traveling sailors to store their money, valuables, and to get "trusted advice" from Gohl.¹⁴⁷ Likened to the boardinghouses owned by Crimps in San Francisco, Gohl's office had a trash chute that acted as a trap door similar to the boardinghouse dead falls.¹⁴⁸ That chute opened to the Wishkah River below.¹⁴⁹ Therein, a row boat and eventually a gas powered boat waited to dispose of any recent victims.¹⁵⁰

The process by which Gohl took advantage of and killed his victims was hideously clever and malicious. As SUP Agent, Gohl was able to gather an enormous amount of trust and comradely with the sailor community in Aberdeen.¹⁵¹ Gohl abused this trust and in the process sent close to 130 men to a watery grave.¹⁵² He did this through the following steps. First, he would instruct sailors (who he planned on killing) to put their valuables and money into his office safe.¹⁵³ So that their hard earned money would be safe from thieves and wasting it all on whores and alcohol.¹⁵⁴ Gohl would then lead sailors to the area where he kept his safe. Gohl had positioned the safe so that the sailor depositing items had to crouch down.¹⁵⁵ Gohl standing behind the crouched and back-turned sailor would club or shoot him in the head rendering him unconscious or

dead.¹⁵⁶ He would then pilfer the sailor's money and valuables.¹⁵⁷ The hapless body would be dropped through his trash chute to the Wishkah River below.¹⁵⁸ His murders were concealed by darkness and the constant noise of a blacksmith and firehouse across the street.¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, surrounding businesses were closed and ignorant saloon customers paid little attention.¹⁶⁰ Two scenarios would then occur to the sailor. One, the river's current would take the body out to sea and thus drown the unconscious sailor (if he wasn't dead already).¹⁶¹ Or Gohl placed his victims in a rowboat and under the cover of darkness rowed out to the bay and disposed of the body there.¹⁶² Eventually Gohl stopped rowing the bodies out to sea because his looting of mariner victims had gained him enough money to purchase a gas powered launch.¹⁶³ Gohl named the vessel *Patrol*.¹⁶⁴ The *Patrol* then allowed Gohl to quietly tow the bodies in his row boat out to sea.¹⁶⁵ Gohl would dispose of the bodies there at sea by simply pulling a tow line from the *Patrol* to the rowboat capsizing the boat and disposing of the body as well.¹⁶⁶

By 1907 so many bodies had been discovered in the Wishkah River and Grays Harbor bay that Aberdonians began to call the bodies the "Floater Fleet."¹⁶⁷ At the high water mark of the Floater Fleet ten bodies per month were discovered.¹⁶⁸ These murders shocked and confused the public.¹⁶⁹ As one local newspaper the *Grays Harbor Post* stated, "There is no known feud on this harbor. No industrial disturbance of any kind to arouse the passions and to awaken the violence of men. Everything is at peace and yet the floater fleet increases."¹⁷⁰ The *Grays Harbor Post* also made the assertion that it was not a coincidence that the murders persisted and that someone was behind it all.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, the *Post* called out the authorities and asked for justice to be served.¹⁷² For,

“the fleet of floaters is constantly increasing and the people are wondering who will be next.”¹⁷³

The men to answer the call of justice were newly elected Mayor Ed Benn and newly appointed Chief of Police George Dean. Benn was the first non-Native American born in Aberdeen and son of the city’s founding father.¹⁷⁴ He was ambitious and young wanting to clean up the city.¹⁷⁵ For the floater fleet had brought about a bad stigma yet again to the city.¹⁷⁶ Through this “fleet” in 1908, Aberdeen had incurred another unflattering nickname “the port of missing men.”¹⁷⁷ Sailors began to loath coming to Aberdeen and this was bad for Aberdeen’s thriving economy of lumber and timber exportation.¹⁷⁸ Fear-stricken sailors and their money began to go to Hoquiam instead of Aberdeen.¹⁷⁹ Benn, once in office strove to find the culprit and clean the city’s name.¹⁸⁰ Like Benn, Dean was young and on the rise.¹⁸¹ By age 27, Dean had been the constable of Cosmopolis and now the Chief of Police to Aberdeen.¹⁸² Both men believed that the city needed justice and they were going to be the men to administer it.¹⁸³

Benn, Dean, and other leading city figures put in affect a secret plan to convict Gohl in 1909.¹⁸⁴ Both men knew that Gohl was the figurehead of the floater fleet. For, the majority of all the dead men found were sailors.¹⁸⁵ But there was no substantial evidence for a conviction.¹⁸⁶ So, Benn, Dean, and major business owners put aside a secret fund of \$10,000 investigate and catch Gohl.¹⁸⁷ First, the money was spent buying the Grand Saloon, Gohl’s favorite hang out and the residence of his SUP office.¹⁸⁸ Then the group installed the McHugh brothers as the new proprietors and bartenders.¹⁸⁹ Namely Paddy McHugh who befriended Gohl as the Grand’s new barkeeper.¹⁹⁰ Once friends with McHugh, Gohl began to trust and retell stories of his murderous actions.¹⁹¹ For instance,

Gohl told McHugh that he once held four non-union sailors at gun point on a local island.¹⁹² None of the four sailors could swim and as the tide came in and engulfed the sailors Gohl just rowed away to the sound of their cries for help.¹⁹³

Two breakthroughs cemented Gohl's criminality. First, Gohl killed a friend's dog which resulted in a key witness for the police.¹⁹⁴ Andy Jacobson was one of Gohl's close friends, a person to which Gohl often would brag about his recent killings.¹⁹⁵ Jacobson had a little dog which he loved and Gohl hated.¹⁹⁶ One day, Gohl, annoyed by Jacobson's dog, kicked and killed the little pooch, throwing it into the Wishkah River.¹⁹⁷ Jacobson soon found his dog floating dead.¹⁹⁸ Fed up and hurt by Gohl's brutality, Jacobson went to the police, specifically Chief Dean.¹⁹⁹ Jacobson related to Dean how Gohl had shot and killed a sailor.²⁰⁰ Gohl told the man to stand one of the river pilings and wait for an incoming ship.²⁰¹ While the sailor stood watching, Gohl waited until the four o'clock mill whistles' sounded, whereupon, he shot the sailor right in the head from his office window.²⁰² The noise from his rifle was not noticed due to the deafening bugle of the mill whistles.²⁰³ Gohl did this to make an easy buck, for the sailor had left him \$200 to safe-guard.²⁰⁴ Jacobson's morbid account displayed to Dean that Gohl truly was a cold-blooded killer and the source for the floater fleet.²⁰⁵

The second breakthrough came about by unfortunate means. At Ocean Shores, a Finish immigrant's house was broken into by three men.²⁰⁶ These brutes raped the daughter of the immigrant farmers and shot some of their cattle.²⁰⁷ This crime came to McHugh's ears by way of Gohl, though Gohl only hinted at it, for his inebriation hindered a clear story.²⁰⁸ Nonetheless, McHugh then told Dean to investigate the validity of Gohl's drunken tale.²⁰⁹ Dean went to the scene of the crime.²¹⁰ When interviewing the

Finnish victims, they fearfully described the rapists and cow killers.²¹¹ Their descriptions matched up to Gohl and his two of his cronies, Charles Hadberg and John Hoffman.²¹² Yet again, Gohl was the culprit of a hideous crime, but there wasn't enough to convict Gohl quite yet.

Gohl soon heard of Dean's questioning of the Finish farmers and the investigation of the crime scene.²¹³ Gohl had his suspicions of who told Dean, primarily McHugh.²¹⁴ Thus, he went back to the Grand Saloon immediately to talk to McHugh.²¹⁵ He then accused McHugh of telling the police about the crime which he and his friends committed.²¹⁶ McHugh was flustered and surprised that Gohl found out.²¹⁷ McHugh defended his confidentiality and flipped the blame on Hadberg and Hoffmann for exposing their crime.²¹⁸ Gohl believed McHugh's lie and soon doubted his henchmen's loyalty.²¹⁹ He then schemed to get back at Hadberg and Hoffman for talking to the police and endangering his freedom.²²⁰ Gohl's planning finally came to fruition in late December of 1909.²²¹

With renewed trust in McHugh, Gohl confided in him once more. This time it was different. Instead of relaying past crimes to McHugh, Gohl told him of his plans to commit future murders.²²² On the night of December 21st, 1909, Gohl told McHugh that he and another man, John Klingenberg, were going to kill Hoffman that night, and Hadberg would be dead by the 22nd.²²³ Four days later, Gohl entered the Grand Saloon in a jovial mood.²²⁴ McHugh, as he had done numerous times before, began to drink with Gohl.²²⁵ Wondering if Gohl truly killed Hadberg and Hoffman, McHugh asked Gohl casually if he knew their whereabouts.²²⁶ Gohl confidently stated, 'they went away for

good.”²²⁷ Upon realizing the gravity of this statement, McHugh reported to Chief Dean and a search for the men’s bodies ensued.²²⁸

Dean instituted a search party for the bodies of Hadberg and Hoffman.²²⁹ Searchers scanned over 90 miles of water in search of the missing men and found nothing.²³⁰ Finally, nearly a month later on February 1st, 1910 two Native-American brothers found the body of Hadberg in a local river near Hoquiam.²³¹ This was all the evidence Dean needed he then turned his eyes on arresting Gohl.²³²

Gohl was arrested on February 3, 1910.²³³ For fear of public unrest and possible violence towards Gohl, he was sent to the county jail in Montesano the following day.²³⁴ Gohl was charged with murdering Charles Hadberg on the night of Christmas Eve 1909.²³⁵ The evidence Dean and the prosecution retained was so great that Gohl’s attorney Wilson Buttner decided to quit before even taking on Gohl’s case.²³⁶ Gohl’s court trial was originally scheduled for March, 25th.²³⁷ But Gohl’s new lawyer A.M. Abel was ill-prepared and had failed to solidify his witnesses and defense for his case.²³⁸ Thus, Abel asked the court to push back the trial date to the month of May.²³⁹ The adjustment to the trial date was awarded to Gohl amidst the prosecution’s disdain.²⁴⁰ Abel was a young lawyer from Aberdeen who Mrs. Gohl able to coax into taking up her husband’s case.²⁴¹

While in custody, Gohl read up on law and became a model prisoner.²⁴² Gohl’s good attitude greatly impacted the county guards, to the effect that officers told the *Grays Harbor Washingtonian* that “Gohl is a model prisoner and no trouble is feared from him.”²⁴³ But Gohl’s cell mate at Montesano Alexander Dzgoeff was far from being a model prisoner.²⁴⁴ Dzgoeff was in jail for first degree assault and on his way to Walla Walla State Penitentiary to serve a five- year sentence when he roomed with Gohl.²⁴⁵

These two convicts' butted heads and Dzgoeff vowed to kill Gohl before he left for the State Penitentiary.²⁴⁶ Thus, on the day of his day of departure, Dzgoeff tried to fulfill his promise by attacking Gohl with a chair.²⁴⁷ Dzgoeff "knocked Gohl down and was using a chair on his head when the deputy interfered."²⁴⁸ Gohl only sustained minor injuries but it helped further the excitement of Gohl's coming trial.²⁴⁹ Gohl had even learned enough law to assist another inmate with his case.²⁵⁰ Ironically, Gohl had been studying law even before his trial three years prior in 1907.²⁵¹ His key areas of interest were arson and murder, to which one paper reported "on these two crimes he is gaining every bit of information possible."²⁵² Arson and murder were Gohl's forte for seven years in Aberdeen and its no wonder he kept up on the law and the prosecution of such crimes.

Before his trial even commenced in May of 1910, Gohl was not able to keep hold of two advantages: his new attorney or his model prisoner persona. When A.M. Abel came visiting Gohl in his county cell for the first time, Gohl boasted of his nefarious acts and even stated he had kept a journal dedicated to his crimes, which he often read for enjoyment.²⁵³ But the biggest revelation which brought about the exit of both Gohl's attorney and prisoner role model persona was the hidden gun and knife stashed in his cell.²⁵⁴ Not only did Abel retire from Gohl's case, but Abel then went and alarmed officials who confiscated the weapons and put Gohl in a separate cell.²⁵⁵ The fear of being in a cell with a serial killer inches away from a deadly weapon would surely make any counselor resign. Abel did not credit this event to him leaving the case, but rather to Gohl's bankruptcy and inability to pay for legal defense.²⁵⁶ To fill Gohl's defense void, the Superior Court provided Gohl with two attorneys J.A. Hutcheson from Montesano and A.E. Cross from Aberdeen.²⁵⁷ These new lawyers took on Gohl's case at a rate of \$1,

an hour which was \$.50 more than the Washington State's minimum attorney rate.²⁵⁸

Prosecuting Gohl were county attorneys W.E. Campbell and E.E. Boner, who according to the *Aberdeen Herald* "carefully guar[d] the evidence that has been gathered by the sheriff's office...but who do not hesitate to say they have ample evidence to convict Gohl of crimes alleged and many more."²⁵⁹

The evidence of which the prosecution boasted was the testimony and confession of Gohl's former confidant and henchman John Klingenberg. Klingenberg, a Dane standing five foot three inches and weighing 130 pounds, worked as a donkey driver, a key position in early 20th century logging in Washington State.²⁶⁰ This occupation consisted of operating a steam powered log winch known as a "donkey engine".²⁶¹ This logging machine allowed loggers to extract their recently cut timber from the woods to the yarding zones at camp where logs were loaded on trains and sent to the mill.²⁶²

Klingenberg testified to police on April 4th, 1910, that Gohl had killed John Hoffman and that Klingenberg was forced to murder Charles Hatberg for fear of his life.²⁶³ Before confessing, Klingenberg was trying to flee Aberdeen and Gohl, by sailing down to Santa Rosalia on a lumber vessel called the *A.J. West*.²⁶⁴ Chief of Aberdeen Police Dean and his investigation squad were able to learn about Klingenberg's departure.²⁶⁵ Dean notified the Slade Lumber Company of Klingenberg's passage on the *A.J. West* and asked that Captain Smith of the *A.J. West* should not allow Klingenberg to set foot on Mexican soil, but to bring back Klingenberg to Aberdeen.²⁶⁶ Surprisingly Klingenberg was happy to be arrested and put into custody of Aberdeen police, for Klingenberg feared that his return to Aberdeen would only result in his funeral by the hands of Gohl.²⁶⁷

When giving his confession to police officers, Klingenberg was so distraught over his actions that he “cried like a child.”²⁶⁸ He even confided to one news reporter and told of his haunted existence since the murders:

I have never slept a peaceful night since the terrible crime was committed. I would lie in my bunk and when fast asleep would be awakened by the faces of our victims over me, and in my ears would be ringing Hoffman’s death words: ‘For God’s sake don’t kill me, Billy, don’t kill me.’²⁶⁹

Klingenberg’s testimony started with Gohl sending some of his henchmen to tell Klingenberg that Gohl wanted to talk to him.²⁷⁰ Upon meeting with Gohl at his office at the Sailors’ Union Hall, he told Klingenberg that Hatberg had been talking to a police informant about a cow that Gohl had killed on a Finish immigrant’s farm on the coast at Ocean Shores.²⁷¹ Not only did Gohl, Hoffman, and Hatberg kill that Fin’s cow but they also raped his daughter.²⁷² Thus, Gohl thought that Hatberg knew too much about the crime and was spouting his misdeeds to the local authorities and needed to be taken out of the way.²⁷³ Klingenberg tried to change Gohl’s mind, saying there was an alternative to killing Hatberg, but Gohl declined stating: “No there’s no other way to do it: I’m starrng right into the penitentiary.”²⁷⁴

So on that night of the 22nd of December 1910 Klingenberg and Gohl entered a deadly pack which was sealed with Gohl handing Klingenberg a revovler. But this was not the night of the murder of Hatberg (according to Klingenberg’s testimony). Gohl and Klingenberg first met John Hoffman on the evening of December 23rd, 1910.²⁷⁵ Hoffman was a 28 year old cigar salesman by trade and one of Gohl’s cronies and henchmen.²⁷⁶ The excuse that brought Hoffman was that the three were going to remove the sails and repaint a sloop that Gohl owned and moored in the local bay, preparing to sell the vessel.²⁷⁷ The three entered Gohl’s own boat, a gas powered launch known as *Patrol*.²⁷⁸

Gohl was hesitant to take his own craft but Hoffman insisted and Gohl complied.²⁷⁹ Once in the boat and outside of Aberdeen's bay, near an old mill called the Michigan Mill, Hoffman said "it's a fine night boys" whereupon Gohl replied "Yes, it is a damn fine night, and there are no fishermen near."²⁸⁰ Then as Hoffman scanned the seashore Gohl asked him, "What is that?", and as Hoffman turned his back to Gohl and looked at the shore, Gohl opened fire and hit Hoffman three times in the back.²⁸¹

Upon being shot Hoffman cried "Oh Billy, Billy" and begged for his life.²⁸² As Hoffman screamed in agony, Gohl yelled at Klingenberg to restrain Hoffman and tie an anchor to him.²⁸³ But, Klingenberg was paralyzed with shock and couldn't even touch Hoffman as he bled and hollered.²⁸⁴ Gohl threatened to kill Klingenberg if he didn't take the wheel to the *Patrol* while Gohl finished Hoffman off.²⁸⁵ As Klingenberg recalled to the police in his testimony, Gohl then lunged towards Hoffman grabbing him by the throat to cut off his air supply: "[Gohl] then deliberately placed the gun against [Hoffman's] temple and put a shot through his brains, making the remark, "I guess now you'll shut up."²⁸⁶ Klingenberg now fearing for his own life after witnessing Gohl's brutality firsthand, testified to assisting Gohl tie a 35 pound anchor to Hoffman's body and helping Gohl drop said body into the Chehalis River.²⁸⁷ The only substantial reason that Gohl shot Hoffman in cold blood was strictly monetary.²⁸⁸ According to sources at the time Gohl owed Hoffman \$400 and instead of paying back his "friend" Gohl decided to end the relationship permanently along with his debt.²⁸⁹

Next, Klingenberg testified about the events before and after his slaying of Charles Hadberg.²⁹⁰ Klingenberg stated upon dumping John Hoffman's lifeless body in the bay, the two headed towards Hadberg's dwelling on Indian Creek, situated on

southern bank of the Chehalis River due south of the city of Aberdeen.²⁹¹ As soon as Gohl and Klingenberg reached Hadberg's house, Gohl's boat got stuck in the middle of a muddy bog outside of Hadberg's house.²⁹² Gohl yelled over to Hatberg onshore to come and get them, Hadberg complied and brought the two to shore.²⁹³ Hadberg then let Gohl and Klingenberg stay the night.²⁹⁴ Ironically Gohl slept in the bed of the man he had just shot and murdered hours before, while Klingenberg slept in the bed of Hadberg- the man he would kill the next day. Hadberg slept on the ground.²⁹⁵

Klingenberg's testimony took an interesting turn when he admitted to having a prior acquaintance and conflict with Hadberg.²⁹⁶ Klingenberg stated that Hatberg had promised to build him a cabin on Indian Creek like Hadberg's.²⁹⁷ Klingenberg also assisted Hatberg in robbing August Anderson's cabin, disassembling his dwelling and taking the lumber from it to build another cabin on Indian Creek.²⁹⁸ Klingenberg testified to having "walk[ed] with [Hadberg] for four weeks" thus Klingenberg did not kill an unknown person.²⁹⁹ What severed the relationship was Klingenberg's refusal to kill a "wild cow" for Hatberg.³⁰⁰ Also, Hadberg eventually built that second cabin and, in need of money, sold it to John Hoffman instead of Klingenberg.³⁰¹ Hoffman then told Klingenberg of the purchase: "I paid \$20 for [the] cabin, and put two new logs underneath."³⁰² Upon learning of the purchase and sale of his promised cabin, Klingenberg sought out Hatberg, but Hadberg pointed a six gun at him and said "if you want this cabin you have to fight", whereupon Klingenberg responded "next time I am coming down here [(Indian Creek)], we got to fight."³⁰³ Thus, it is amazing that neither Klingenberg nor Hadberg assaulted one another on the night of their sleep-over.

Klingenberg could not sleep that night for Gohl's brutish and murderous acts clogged and haunted his mind.³⁰⁴ Yet Gohl slept fine, for killing of Hoffman was necessary and just another to addition to his death journal.³⁰⁵ The following morning Gohl had Hatberg check on Gohl's boat and Hatberg found not only that it was still stuck but that now the engine wouldn't work.³⁰⁶ As Hatberg was rowing in from Gohl's boat, Gohl went to Klingenberg inside the cabin and said, "You take him. If you don't take him, I take him."³⁰⁷ Thus, Hadberg was going to be killed either by the hands of Gohl or Klingenberg's.

After freeing the *Patrol*, Gohl, Klingenberg, and Hadberg decided to row the launch back to Aberdeen.³⁰⁸ Before boarding a boat to row to the *Patrol*, Hadberg stuffed a revolver in his pocket and brought along a 50 pound anchor that he and Gohl had stolen from the gas powered launch the *Logger*.³⁰⁹ Hadberg had been told the same story that Hoffman was told by Gohl about his sloop.³¹⁰ Thus, Hadberg brought along an anchor for one needs an anchor at some point in transporting a vessel.³¹¹ Another ironic turn in this case is minutes later that very anchor would be tied to his lifeless body and carry him down into Indian Creek.³¹² As they rowed to the Gohl's vessel, Gohl had situated himself in the stern; Hadberg was rowing in the middle, and Klingenberg free in the bow.³¹³ Gohl had motioned to Klingenberg multiple times to shoot Hadberg but he could not bring himself do it.³¹⁴ Finally Klingenberg capitulated to Gohl's wishes and pulled the trigger and shot Hadberg.³¹⁵ Although Gohl wanted Klingenberg to shoot Hadberg in the back, Klingenberg chose not to, claiming he "didn't want to act so coward."³¹⁶ The only reason Klingenberg shot though, was because if he had not he knew that "Gohl would have shot the pair of us."³¹⁷ In a sense, Klingenberg murdered Hadberg in self-defense from Gohl.

After Klingenberg shot Hadberg, the two men tied the stolen anchor to Hadberg's body and dropped it into Indian Creek.³¹⁸ Not only did Gohl and Klingenberg throw Hadberg over the side of the boat, they also disposed of Hadberg's tools, some clothing, and three guns which Gohl, Klingenberg, and Hadberg had been carrying.³¹⁹

After getting rid of the evidence of Hadberg's murder, Gohl and Klingenberg headed back to Aberdeen.³²⁰ Mooring Gohl's boat, the two followed the train tracks into town.³²¹ Gohl told Klingenberg that if he had not pulled the trigger he would have and killed Hadberg himself.³²² While walking back, Gohl sparked a morbid conversation with Klingenberg about his exploits and previous murders.³²³ This attempt to console or boast brought Gohl's brutish and sadistic mindset to light. Klingenberg stated he told Gohl that he wouldn't have been able to kill Hadberg if it wasn't for Gohl and that he would never had shot Hadberg in the back as Gohl had done to Hoffman.³²⁴ Gohl immediately responded coldly and heartlessly to Klingenberg's comments stating Hoffman was a "... [and] deser[ved] it."³²⁵

Gohl's next comments were very interesting, as he stated, "We had to do this, I am staring right into the penitentiary."³²⁶ Gohl seemed to have looked at the murdering of Hoffman and Hadberg as a team effort.³²⁷ A worthy effort or mission to spring Gohl right out of the jaws of justice. But through this teamwork murder it created an invaluable witness.³²⁸ Gohl soon recognized this and wanted to take care of as he had done with Hoffman.³²⁹ Klingenberg realized this when Gohl asked him if he had mentioned to anyone before the crime that he was with Gohl. Klingenberg replied he had and "could see in [Gohl] the he was trying to put me out of business because I knowed too much."³³⁰ For his remaining time in Aberdeen before shipping off to Mexico on the lumber ship

A.J. West, Klingenberg was extremely wary of Gohl.³³¹ He stated in his confession “all the time I had my eyes on Billy Gohl.”³³² This was rightfully so and Gohl tried twice to get Klingenberg alone with him so he could finish him off. The first instance occurred after visiting Aberdeen, when Gohl wanted Klingenberg to come with him down to his boat but Klingenberg refused. Then, after becoming intoxicated at the Eagle gambling and dance hall, Gohl was “over-anxious for to get me alone, and had some good idea in my head that Billy Gohl wanted to try to get me alone into a place where he could put lead into me.”³³³ Thus, Klingenberg promptly boarded the *A.J. West* in hopes of evading Gohl and his murderous actions in Aberdeen.³³⁴ Klingenberg ended his confession by agreeing to show authorities the exact area where he and Gohl dumped Hoffman’s body.³³⁵

Klingenberg’s testimony gave the prosecution a strong case against Gohl. Surprisingly this testimony was published in local newspapers (April 9, 1910) and around the nation before the trial even had begun in May of 1910.³³⁶ But Klingenberg’s testimony alone had not yet sealed the judicial fate of Gohl; a trial would be the only solution for justice. The judge selected to oversee the trial, was 67 year-old Chehalis County Superior Court Judge Ben Sheeks.³³⁷ Sheeks was better known for winning a major case in Tacoma concerning water supply and prevailing in an alimony case for one Brigham Young over Young’s 19th wife.³³⁸

Selecting the jury to determine Gohl’s fate was a three day process beginning on May 1st and coming to a close on May 3rd.³³⁹ On the first day of jury selection, Monday, May 1st, 1910, believing the process of selecting a proper jury would be an arduous task, state officials called up over 300 prospective jurors to the county seat in Montesano.³⁴⁰ On the first day, only 28 men were interviewed and four were selected for further

examination.³⁴¹ The other 24 were dismissed for a number of reasons: opposition to capital punishment, contrary opinions that only evidence could disprove, physical disability and age, acting as witnesses, and expressing radical beliefs.³⁴² The first two men chosen were a dentist and handyman from Montesano, O.C. Moak Jr. and E. Paulsfoot.³⁴³ The other two jurors were from Hoquiam--- carpenter J.E. Philbrick and salesman J.F. Tracy.³⁴⁴ On Tuesday May 2nd, 40 more men met examination standards.³⁴⁵

By Wednesday the state had interviewed 90 prospective jurors.³⁴⁶ Both the state prosecution and the defense used peremptory challenges on six juror applicants.³⁴⁷ These prospective jurors were questioned, challenged, and ruled out because of union ties in Hoquiam/Aberdeen, having served on a previous jury, or working in guest services in Aberdeen.³⁴⁸ The defense even sought out Gohl's thoughts on certain jurors and who they should challenge or try to exclude from the jury.³⁴⁹ On Wednesday May 3rd at 4:35 in the afternoon, the jury was selected and approved by both the defense and prosecution.³⁵⁰ Twelve ordinary men now held the future of a most unordinary man. Half of the jury was made of up ranchers: W.T. Neeley of Oakville, G.W. Wood of Satsop, L.O. Stewart of Oakville, J.N. Simpson of Elma, J.H. Foster of Montesano, and O.L. Murray of Elma.³⁵¹ Four jurors were laborers: William Isaac a mill worker from Elma, H.A. Smithson a Hoquiam logger, Ned Hackett a Summit logger, and W.L. Byng Aberdeen's city dump manager.³⁵² Finally, two had more skilled employment: O.C. Moak Jr. was a Montesano dentist and J.E. Winston was an engineer hailing from Oakville.³⁵³ During the trial all twelve jurors stayed in an undisclosed location under the watchful eye and protection of five county bailiffs.³⁵⁴ Gohl seemed to look at the selection process for his jury as

somewhat of a game; for after the final selection was made he lit a ceremonial cigar and puffed on it all the way back to his county cell.³⁵⁵

Yet as soon as the jurors had finished swearing into the court case, Gohl's defense team objected to the jury.³⁵⁶ The defense believed that the jury was not composed of Gohl's peers, and was not evenly proportioned from the county in which Gohl had been arrested.³⁵⁷ For instance, only one juror lived in Aberdeen, where he was arrested and the rest were from towns at least 11 miles away from Aberdeen.³⁵⁸ Thus, Gohl's attorneys believed that the jury was not in accordance to Article 1 Section 22 of Washington State's Constitution specially: "to have a...trial by an impartial jury of the county in which the offense is alleged to have been committed."³⁵⁹ Also, the defense argued that the jury violated to the 14th Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.³⁶⁰ Judge Sheeks overruled the defense's claim and kept the jury in place.³⁶¹

The last time a grand jury had been called in Chehalis County was 1884, over 25 years earlier.³⁶² All other previous attempts to call a grand jury were cut off on the presumption that the price-tag of such a venture would be too high to justify.³⁶³ However, trying Gohl by a grand jury was considered worth the cost.³⁶⁴ Gohl's trial incurred a great following and excitement in Grays Harbor.³⁶⁵ Hundreds of Hoquiamites and Aberdonians came to witness the court trial of Gohl at the Chehalis County's seat Montesano.³⁶⁶ Some drove cars, others traveled by steam boat to Montesano via the Chehalis River.³⁶⁷ During the trial, over 40 automobiles were used to shuttle persons/attendants to and from Montesano to their homes around Grays Harbor.³⁶⁸ Others steamed up and down the Chehalis River on the *Fleetwood* and *The Harbor Belle*.³⁶⁹ On May 5th after the selection of the jury, the majority of court room spectators, witnesses, and jurors took these two

vessels home back to Hoquiam or Aberdeen.³⁷⁰ *The Harbor Belle* had thrown the gang-plank ten minutes earlier than the *Fleetwood* and barreled towards Aberdeen.³⁷¹ Upon seeing their position second to *The Harbor Belle*, the *Fleetwood* sped up and made the once casual sail back to town into a steamer race.³⁷² As these two steamers came up on the town of Cosmopolis (north of Aberdeen), a lone patron wanted to get off, but neither boat was going to succumb to customer service in the heat of competition, so this passenger had to wait until the race was over.³⁷³ The other passengers “passed the hat” and produced a \$5.00 fund so that Cosmopolis rider could taxi back to Cosmopolis once the steamer landed in Aberdeen.³⁷⁴ Once in sight of Aberdeen, the two boats were neck and neck and eventually the *Fleetwood* was able to surpass *The Harbor Belle* and arrive first at the loading docks in Aberdeen.³⁷⁵ Even amidst a scathing murder trial, citizens of Grays Harbor were, thus able to lighten the mood with a simple show of friendly competition.³⁷⁶

Gohl’s official trial date was Thursday May 7th, 1910, and Gohl was on trial for the murder of Charles Hadberg only, for the body of John Hoffman was never recovered by authorities.³⁷⁷ The first witness to take the stand was Gohl’s former confidant, undercover police agent, drinking buddy, and bar tender/owner of the Grand Saloon, Paddy McHugh.³⁷⁸ McHugh testified “that Gohl [had] premeditated the murder of Hadberg.”³⁷⁹ McHugh stated that the accused had told him on the night of December 21st that he and Klingenberg were leaving to go and kill Hoffman and that he and Klingenberg would kill Hadberg by the morning of December 22nd.³⁸⁰ A few days latter Gohl boasted to McHugh: “We have landed those fellows. Johnny Klingenberg and I

killed Hoffman and Hadberg. We planted the bodies in the waters of Grays Harbor with anchors for pillows.”³⁸¹

In an effort to cast doubt on McHugh’s integrity, the defense cross-examined him about a number of monetary questions involving Gohl.³⁸² They charged McHugh with allegedly trying to blackmail Gohl by requesting \$7,000 to not testify in the trial, but McHugh strongly denied this claim to the defense and the court.³⁸³ Next, Gohl’s lawyers then tried to insinuate that McHugh had embezzled \$325 of the Sailors Union fund, but McHugh fought off this attack on his moral character as well.³⁸⁴ McHugh stated that Gohl often gave him money to hold, and he always returned the sum given; and that Gohl had demanded the \$325 from him when in actuality McHugh had never even been given the money in the first place.³⁸⁵

The next charge against Gohl took the form of a section of skin taken from the forearm of Hadberg’s dead body.³⁸⁶ This exhibit grabbed the attention of Judge Sheeks and the entire court room.³⁸⁷ The portion of skin was 3 inches in width and 8 inches long and bearing two tattoos. The first tattoo was of a rose with a Turkish dagger stabbing through the rose.³⁸⁸ The second was of a heart with a Turkish dagger as well going through a heart with the initials H.H. for Herman Hadberg underneath the tattoo.³⁸⁹ Hadberg’s tattoos together were about five inches long and two inches wide.³⁹⁰ The tattoo had been removed and preserved with formaldehyde and was pickled in a jar for examination in the courtroom.³⁹¹ The state prosecution and Chief Dean removed Hadberg’s tattoo to prove that Hadberg’s dead body had been found, for one of Gohl’s main arguments against the charge of murdering Hadberg was that the body found in the lower tide flats near Indian Creek, was past recognition because of decomposition.³⁹²

Gohl adamantly professed through out the whole trial that Hadberg and Hoffman were not dead, but in Alaska working at a lighthouse earning \$75 a month.³⁹³ Gohl even had the bravado and audacity to request a warrant be issued for Hoffman, accusing Hoffman of stealing \$400 from him.³⁹⁴

The State prosecution followed up the display of Hadberg's "physical" evidence by displaying yet more material evidence.³⁹⁵ First, the court was shown a pile of clothes, a tool set, and three guns: two revolvers (one owned by Hadberg the other Klingenberg) and a Colt automatic pistol owned by Gohl.³⁹⁶ These three weapons were proven to be Hadberg's, Klingenberg's, and Gohl's through referencing the manufactures and their registrations.³⁹⁷ Furthermore, the prosecution showed the court the 50- pound anchor which found tied to Hadberg's lifeless body.³⁹⁸ Once the physical evidence was displayed, the prosecution called the witnesses who found Hadberg's body.³⁹⁹ The Lightfoot brothers, George and William, were brought to the stand and both testified to finding Hadberg in 18 inches of water at the mouth of Indian Creek on February 1st, 1910.⁴⁰⁰ George Lightfoot testified that when he found Hadberg's body that "it lay on its back with the head pillowed on an anchor."⁴⁰¹ The medical examiner Paul Smits also testified to the cause of death, finding two bullet holes on the back of his head with the bullets being lodged in the forehead of Hadberg's skull.⁴⁰² Next, one of Aberdeen's undertakers who examined Hadberg's body confirmed of the clothing he was wearing and the 50-pound anchor that was tied to Hadberg's body.⁴⁰³ Finally, Chief of Police Dean and Ira Smits, the captain of the boat that carried the investigation team to Hadberg's body, both testified to finding the revolvers, Gohl's Colt, and the tool case thirty feet from where Hadberg's body was discovered.⁴⁰⁴ Pictures of Gohl's boat *Patrol*

from multiple angles were also shown to the courtroom.⁴⁰⁵ Gohl's defense team objected to every piece of material evidence against their client, but were repeatedly overruled by Judge Sheeks.⁴⁰⁶

After seeing the great cloud of concrete evidence arrayed against him, Gohl soon lost the bravado (and charisma) evident at the beginning of his trial and jury selection.⁴⁰⁷ Gohl's whole body changed during the trial as well, as he became thinner and his face was glossed with a pale hue.⁴⁰⁸ At the onset of the trial, he used to smile at his wife in an encouraging manner, but his smile turned to a "ghastly kind [one] that frightens rather than reassures."⁴⁰⁹ Gohl could not sleep during the duration of his trial.⁴¹⁰ When a fellow cell mate Ralph Stargent told Gohl of his lonely feeling, Gohl simply replied "I so too."⁴¹¹

Friday May 8th, 1910 marked day two of Gohl's trial.⁴¹² The prosecution began again with seven more witnesses attesting to the validity of the tattoo taken from Hadberg's body.⁴¹³ Of all the witnesses, two stood out.⁴¹⁴ First, was Oswald Bell who knew Hadberg by the tattoo on his arm, and after examining the body in the city morgue, confirmed to the court that the body was Hadberg.⁴¹⁵ Then, the most important and concrete witness to acknowledge the tattoo as Hadberg's to the court, was Emil Olsen.⁴¹⁶ Olsen sailed with Hadberg on the *F.M. Slade* from San Francisco to Grays Harbor in early 1908.⁴¹⁷ Olsen testified to remembering Hadberg having tattooed the daggers, rose, and heart on his arm to conceal a scar he received during a knife fight.⁴¹⁸ Therefore, the prosecution solidified the fact to the court, and even the defense, that the body found near Indian Creek on the first of February was indeed Charles Hadberg.⁴¹⁹

Friday's biggest witness, though, was John Klingenberg.⁴²⁰ Before Klingenberg could take the stand, the jury was escorted from the courtroom to allow the State to argue the cause for letting Klingenberg testify to Gohl's murder of Hoffman.⁴²¹ This would prove that Gohl should be tried for murdering two men and, that after witnessing the murder of Hoffman, Klingenberg became an accomplice to murder, and was forced by Gohl to shoot Hadberg.⁴²² The State also argued that since Hadberg was with Gohl and Klingenberg on the night of December 23rd, shouldn't it be made known what became of Hoffman and his sudden disappearance?⁴²³ The defense vehemently opposed Klingenberg's testimony.⁴²⁴ Upon hearing both sides, Judge Sheeks decided to allow Klingenberg to testify, but to tread lightly in regards to the murder of John Hoffman.⁴²⁵

Klingenberg took the stand in the early afternoon.⁴²⁶ He then gave the same testimony he had to the police, and confessed to killing Hadberg in fear of his life.⁴²⁷ When Klingenberg began to tell of the murdering of Hoffman, the defense immediately objected in uproar.⁴²⁸ The defense was so adamant for Klingenberg not to mention Hoffman that Judge Sheeks ruled that "all references to the shooting of John Hoffman [be] excluded in the present trial."⁴²⁹ Klingenberg expressed his remorse once again wallowing in his own tears when he retraced his shooting of Hadberg.⁴³⁰ Gohl's attorneys barraged Klingenberg with questions about his testimony and confession. But Klingenberg held strong to his story and as one paper stated, he "was[n't] once tripped."⁴³¹ Following Klingenberg's testimony was William Griggs a shop-keep in Aberdeen.⁴³² Griggs' testimony was significant because he was able to verify that the Colt automatic pistol found by Hadberg's body belonged to Gohl.⁴³³ Looking through store purchase records and numbers, Griggs was able to trace to the purchase of weapon

to Gohl.⁴³⁴ Griggs' sales information further validated Klingenberg's testimony and the prosecution's argument for a murder conviction of Gohl.⁴³⁵ The prosecution also brought to light that Gohl had purposely swamped his boat the *Patrol* when it failed to start at Hadberg's.⁴³⁶ Gohl did this by tying the mooring line to the stern instead of the bow, swamping his boat, whereupon all of Hoffman's blood and possibly his brains were all washed away.⁴³⁷ Once stating this point, prosecutor Campbell congratulated Gohl "for being one of the finest schemers in Chehalis County."⁴³⁸

Throughout the whole trial Gohl's defense rested on very flimsy, shallow, and circumstantial evidence and arguments.⁴³⁹ When confronted with the prosecution's 49 witnesses, the defense had little chance of success.⁴⁴⁰ Gohl gambled his freedom on two witnesses.⁴⁴¹ G.W. Ranck who swore he saw Gohl on the sidewalk in Aberdeen on the day of the murder, and Mrs. Gohl's brother Bob Hager were going to testify to the court of Gohl's rock solid alibi.⁴⁴² But despite three extra allotted hours, Hager never showed.⁴⁴³ Neither Gohl nor his wife took the stand themselves.⁴⁴⁴ Mrs. Gohl could have testified to being told by her husband that he was going to a logger's club meeting in Aberdeen's Eastside but she did not.⁴⁴⁵ But, Mrs. Gohl never took the stand to defend her husband.⁴⁴⁶ It is amazing that after all those hours of studying law in his county cell, that Gohl did not come up with a more impressive defense of his "innocence".⁴⁴⁷ Instead, he adamantly argued that Hadberg and Hoffman were fine and well in their new home of Alaska.⁴⁴⁸ The prosecution fired back at this argument with simple logic.⁴⁴⁹ State lawyers asked the basic question: wouldn't the two men have chosen a more suitable time to travel to Alaska than the dead of winter?⁴⁵⁰ Furthermore, Gohl's lawyers argued that the portion of skin brought in could not have been from Hadberg because of the initials

above the tattoo being H.H.⁴⁵¹ The defense argued/believed that the initials should have been instead of C.H. for Charles Hadberg not H.H.⁴⁵² Prosecuting attorney Hutchinson then explained since Hadberg was Danish, “Hjalmar” is the Danish version of Charles thus the initials were H.H., Hjalmar Hadberg, instead of C.H.⁴⁵³ Gohl and his defense team finally rested their case on Monday, May 11th and awaited the jury’s decision.⁴⁵⁴

Two sensational events also occurred during Gohl’s trial. First, on the morning of May 10, fisherman O. Peterson claimed to have caught the body of John Hoffman in his nets.⁴⁵⁵ While drawing his nets that morning, Peterson felt an unusual weight; believing he had wrangled up a stump in his net he drew the net up.⁴⁵⁶ But as the fishing net came up, a human head breached the surface.⁴⁵⁷ Peterson was astonished at his catch and the appearance of the body.⁴⁵⁸ Peterson stated that the man’s eyes and mouth were wide open.⁴⁵⁹ He found this odd, as he told the *Grays Harbor Post*, “for when men die in water their mouths always shut up...[but] when life went out of this man, he must have been screaming for help.”⁴⁶⁰ Peterson was unable to recover the body because it slipped from his grasp and fell back into the Chehalis River.⁴⁶¹ If Peterson only had a gaft, he said he could have recovered the body.⁴⁶² When shown a picture of Hoffman, Peterson confirmed that the man he saw in the water was the man in the picture.⁴⁶³ Six hundred dollars had been offered, in total from both the police and former mayor, to find the body of Hoffman.⁴⁶⁴ This pretty purse only helped fuel the excitement and magnitude of Gohl’s trial in Grays Harbor.⁴⁶⁵

The second event, like the latter, dealt with a fleshly surprise. On the island of Laidlaw (out towards Bay City and Westport), a severed male’s head was found.⁴⁶⁶ Ironically, it was on the same day that Peterson’s nets pulled in Hoffman.⁴⁶⁷ The head

had been cut off “artificially...with flesh still clinging in shreds to the skull.”⁴⁶⁸ This head had belonged to Gus Miller, a former friend of Gohl.⁴⁶⁹ Miller had been missing since last being seen rowing with Gohl.⁴⁷⁰ One can imagine that the discovery of Miller’s lone head on the beach roused just as much excitement as Peterson’s yarn of raising Hoffman’s body from the depths of the Chehalis.⁴⁷¹

Gohl’s fate was finally sealed on May 12, 1910.⁴⁷² At 12:35 a.m. the jury came to the conclusion that Gohl was guilty of first degree murder.⁴⁷³ Gohl was technically charge with murder because he helped aid and abet the killing of Charles Hadberg.⁴⁷⁴ The court summoned Gohl to hear the jury’s decision.⁴⁷⁵ Gohl entered the courtroom looking sullen, weathered, and pale.⁴⁷⁶ Upon hearing the verdict, Gohl talked briefly to his attorney, then was rushed back to his cell by authorities.⁴⁷⁷ Even at half past midnight, the crowds were still present at Chehalis County’s Superior Court to hear the fate that was to befall Gohl.⁴⁷⁸ Of all the people attending, the only person missing was Mrs. Gohl.⁴⁷⁹ Most likely fearing the worst, a verdict of guilty, she was not at the midnight verdict.⁴⁸⁰ This was surprising because during the whole trial Mrs. Gohl was known to never leave the courtroom while court was in session and even paced the halls and sidewalk of the Superior Court when the jury would recess.⁴⁸¹ Gohl could now only wait for his sentencing by Judge Sheeks.⁴⁸²

Judge Sheeks sentenced Gohl on May 24, 1910 at 11:00 a.m.⁴⁸³ On Gohl’s day of sentencing, both the defense and Judge Sheeks spoke on three points.⁴⁸⁴ First, the defense tried to have the court pass one of three outrageous motions, in a ploy to keep Gohl from being sentenced.⁴⁸⁵ The motions brought to the court were, first to acquit Gohl of all charges; second, “an arrest of the judgment”; and third, to induce a retrial.⁴⁸⁶ These three

“alternatives” to sentencing Gohl were swiftly overruled by Judge Sheeks.⁴⁸⁷ After overruling the defense’s last attempt to free Gohl, Sheeks went into his sentencing.⁴⁸⁸ Sheeks built his sentence of Gohl to “confinement at hard labor in the state penitentiary for life”, on three points: first, Gohl was sentenced to life imprisonment instead of the death penalty because of the high number of talesmen who did not agree with the death penalty.⁴⁸⁹ Sheeks ruled in favor of life imprisonment for Gohl, since the “disbelief of capital punishment...continually recurred to the mind of the court.”⁴⁹⁰ Second, Sheeks met with the jury and had seen their want for life imprisonment over the death penalty.⁴⁹¹ Sheeks took the jury’s convictions to heart and chose life over death.⁴⁹² Finally, Sheeks acknowledged the fact that the majority of the case and charge against Gohl relied on the confession of John Klingenberg, who confessed to killing Hadberg.⁴⁹³ Noting this, Sheeks saw fit to tread lightly on Klingenberg’s testimony and his act of blaming Gohl solely for the death of Hadberg.⁴⁹⁴ Therefore, Sheeks ruled that since Klingenberg was the only witness besides Gohl to what happened that December night, then the logical ruling would be to avoid the extreme (death penalty), and subscribe life imprisonment for Gohl.⁴⁹⁵ Once hearing the sentence, Mr. and Mrs. Gohl both smiled and Gohl even bowed to Judge Sheeks and the court.⁴⁹⁶ Gohl’s own visage changed again from a pale and weary look of an impending doom to an appearance of relief and gratitude.⁴⁹⁷ Thus, justice was served but at a heavy price-tag for the County.⁴⁹⁸ For, Gohl’s trial cost nearly \$10,000.⁴⁹⁹ Chehalis County Auditor Fred Rosmond explained to the *Grays Harbor Post* where all this money was invested.⁵⁰⁰ First, \$3,175.57 was used to collect evidence.⁵⁰¹ Then, \$977.45 was spent trying to find the body of Hoffman, while \$791.35 employed additional officers and security during the trial and investigation.⁵⁰² The trial itself cost

\$4,481.70 and finally \$347 was spent on a number of needed items and services.⁵⁰³ In total, \$9,774.04 was spent to arrest, convict, and sentence Gohl.⁵⁰⁴

Gohl was transferred to Walla Walla State Penitentiary in June of 1910.⁵⁰⁵ Gohl had his head shaved before leaving for Walla Walla, stating “[I] was not going to let the ---- at Walla Walla shave [my] head first.”⁵⁰⁶ In one last interview with the press, Gohl vowed his innocence and that he would soon be free.⁵⁰⁷ Furthermore, Gohl accused Klingenberg and McHugh of blackmail, and said that Klingenberg was the true culprit for he had “fix[ed] me” with his false testimony.⁵⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Gohl was brought to Walla Walla and became inmate 5779.⁵⁰⁹

Mrs. Gohl followed her husband to Walla Walla.⁵¹⁰ She planned to live with her brother while training to be a nurse, or as an alternative, open a boarding house there in town.⁵¹¹ But, Mrs. Gohl did not stay long in Walla Walla-- or as Mrs. Gohl-- when Gohl was incarcerated.⁵¹² For she only lived in Walla Walla from the time Gohl was first imprisoned (June 1910) until 1912, when she finally filed for divorce.⁵¹³

As a convict, Gohl lost his freedom, marriage, and eventually his sanity and life. Of the later the first to go was his sanity. While serving his sentence at Walla Walla, Gohl witnessed a brutal stabbing wherein an inmate was killed.⁵¹⁴ This incident greatly affected Gohl and he went insane as a result.⁵¹⁵ It has been suggested that Gohl couldn't stand the sight of blood, which is why when he killed, he used a pistol, blunt objects, or even his hands to choke, but never a knife or edged instrument.⁵¹⁶ But more so, his mental state at this point was wavering.⁵¹⁷ For Gohl suffered from syphilis, and perhaps this mental breakdown from witnessing the stabbing was only the high water mark of megalomania and manic occurrences due to syphilis.⁵¹⁸ Either way this brought about his

admittance into the Sedro Woolley mental hospital.⁵¹⁹ Gohl's condition, mentally and physically, did not improve for he was inducted into the State Hospital at Medical Lake in Spokane Washington in the spring of 1927.⁵²⁰ Finally on March 3, 1927, William F. Gohl left this earthly scene.⁵²¹ Dying from complications of syphilis, primarily "lobar pneumonia, erysipelas, and dementia paralytic", Gohl died at age 53, while only serving 17 years of his life sentence for the death of Charles Hadberg.⁵²²

Upon Gohl's conviction and admittance to the State Penitentiary, changes began to take place in the city of Aberdeen. First of all, the man who spearheaded the investigation and conviction of Gohl, George S. Dean, resigned from his role as Aberdeen's Chief of Police in November 1911.⁵²³ This must have come as a shock to the city, for he was only the Chief of Police for two years.⁵²⁴ But those two years were devoted to ending the reign of Gohl and serving justice to a nefarious citizen.⁵²⁵ Dean chose to resign and pick up civilian life because he purchased "the Fan cigar and billiard room on Heron Street."⁵²⁶ Ironically, Dean was entering into the same occupation that first drew Gohl to Aberdeen, the cigar business.⁵²⁷ Furthermore, Dean's "Fan cigar and billiard room" would be on the same street as Mr. and Mrs. Gohl's former boarding house, the Capital Lodging House.⁵²⁸ Coincidence perhaps, but a more reasonable explanation would be that Aberdeen and Grays Harbor chose to go on without Gohl and not linger on their dark past.

Another paramount change to occur in Aberdeen after Gohl's departure was in regards to the city's saloons.⁵²⁹ These establishments were a black eye to the city and its port centric commerce.⁵³⁰ Gohl preyed on the patrons that walked the boulevards housing these businesses of refreshment and vice.⁵³¹ During the age of Gohl (1902-1910), 45

saloons were “serving” Aberdeen.⁵³² But once Gohl was imprisoned, Aberdeen’s city council slashed that number and only allowed the operation of 26 city saloons.⁵³³ This was enacted through a new Aberdeen city ordinance.⁵³⁴ This new city law gave only one license to run a saloon per 700 people, denied lunches to be served at saloons, and put a limit on operating hours (6 a.m. to 1 a.m.).⁵³⁵ These saloon codes were in place to help clean up the town and its image on the West Coast.⁵³⁶ Furthermore, like the resignation of Chief Dean, the closing down and new restrictions on saloons helped further distance Aberdeen and its citizens from Gohl and the memories of his escapades.

Five months into Gohl’s life sentence in Walla Walla, John Klingenberg was put on trial for the murder of Charles Hadberg.⁵³⁷ Confessing to the crime of killing Hadberg in full regret and remorse, Klingenberg still had to receive justice for his actions.⁵³⁸ Thus, on October 12, 1910 Klingenberg was tried for the murder of Charles Hadberg in Montesano, just like Gohl.⁵³⁹ The prosecution tried to sway the jury into thinking that since Klingenberg had a rough friendship and falling out with Hadberg that his murder, was premeditated and devilish in motive.⁵⁴⁰ Klingenberg’s defense stood firm, affirming that he had killed Hadberg but under the duress and fear of being killed by Gohl if he had not.⁵⁴¹ Furthermore, the defense argued that Klingenberg “is of weak intellect and was controlled by Gohl.”⁵⁴² After hearing both arguments, the jury recessed to produce a verdict.⁵⁴³ Taking only 2 hours and 40 minutes, the jury came the conclusion and verdict of guilty of murder in the second degree.⁵⁴⁴ Since he was convicted of second degree murder, Klingenberg was exempt from the sentence of death or life imprisonment.⁵⁴⁵ So, the Court ruled for his punishment to be 15 years in prison.⁵⁴⁶ Upon his release from

prison, he became a model reformed citizen, working as a tailor for the remainder of his life.⁵⁴⁷

In conclusion Gohl's tale is both an intriguing narrative and a broad history. Gohl's life was interweaved with public history, the development and growth of the city of Aberdeen, San Francisco's port life, sailors' unions, tension between union sailors and non-union sailors, Crimps and Shanghaiing, serial killings and murder, investigation and conviction of Gohl, trial drama, capital punishment, and the aftermath in which Gohl left on a city. Gohl's story though dark and nefarious tells of the pitfalls and horrors in which one man can incur upon an unsuspecting public. The research and work on Gohl is sparse but has grown over time. Furthermore, Gohl's tale is a hidden history, a history that has been lost in the annals of Washington State History. Thus, one could ask what other engaging and exciting historical figures or events are waiting to be explored or reexamined?

¹ Elizabeth Gibson, *Outlaw Tales Of Washington: True Stories Of Washington's Most Nefarious Crooks, Culprits and Cutthroats* (Guilford: TwoDot and imprint of The Globe Pequot Press, 2002),130.

² Pamela Dean Aho, "Billy was the Ghoul of Grays Harbor," *The Daily World*, July 29, 1989.

³ *Ibid.*,

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- ⁴ Gibson, *Outlaw Tales of Washington*, 130.
- ⁵ Aho, "Billy was the Ghoul of Grays Harbor."
- ⁶ *Ibid.*,
- ⁷ *Ibid.*,
- ⁸ *Ibid.*,
- ⁹ Morgan, *The Last Wilderness*, (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1955), 124.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, and Gibson, *Outlaw Tales of Washington*, 141.
- ¹¹ Murray Morgan's *Skid Row* is a Seattle history. *The Last Wilderness* is a history of Gray Harbor.
- ¹² Morgan, *The Last Wilderness*, 122.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 122.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 122-126.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 128-152.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 142-146.
- ¹⁸ Van Syckle, *They Tried To Cut It All*, 241.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 242-243.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 241-247.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 244-247.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 244-245.
- ²³ Van Syckle, *The River Pioneers: Early Days on Grays Harbor* (Seattle: Pacific Search Press, 1982), 350.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 330-331.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 332.
- ²⁶ Ryan Teague Beckwith and John C. Hughes, *On the Harbor: From Black Friday to Nirvana* (Aberdeen: The Daily World, 2001), 25-26.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 27-31.
- ²⁹ Gibson, *Outlaw Tales Of Washington*, 132-135.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 133-135.
- ³¹ Beckwith and Hughes, *On The Harbor*, 21, and Gibson, *Outlaw Tales Of Washington*, 132,.
- ³² Lance S. Davidson, "Shanghaied! The Systematic Kidnapping of Sailors in Early San Francisco," *California History*, no.1 (1985): 10-17.
- ³³ Van Syckle, *They Tried To Cut It All*, 241.
- ³⁴ Louise Schafer, "Report From Aberdeen," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, no.1 (1956):9.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*,
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*,
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*,
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 10 and 14.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*,
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*,
- ⁴² *Ibid.*,
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*,
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*,
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*,
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*,
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*,
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*,
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*,
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*,
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*,
- ⁵² Aho, "Billy was the Ghoul of Grays Harbor."
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*,
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*,
- ⁵⁵ Morgan, *The Last Wilderness*, 137.
- ⁵⁶ Aho, "Billy was the Ghoul of Grays Harbor."

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- ⁵⁷ Ibid.,
⁵⁸ Schafer, "Report From Aberdeen," 11.
⁵⁹ Morgan, *The Last Wilderness*, 137.
⁶⁰ Ibid.,
⁶¹ Ibid.,
⁶² Aho, "Billy was the Ghoul of Grays Harbor."
⁶³ Ibid., and Gibson, *Outlaw Tales Of Washington*, 130.
⁶⁴ Ibid., and Murray Morgan, *The Last Wilderness*, 123.
⁶⁵ Schafer, "Report From Aberdeen," 14.
⁶⁶ Aho, "Billy was the Ghoul of Grays Harbor."
⁶⁷ Ibid.,
⁶⁸ Ibid.,
⁶⁹ Ibid.,
⁷⁰ Ibid.,
⁷¹ Ibid.,
⁷² Ibid.,
⁷³ Ibid.,
⁷⁴ Ibid.,
⁷⁵ Lance S. Davidson, "Shanghaied! The Systematic Kidnapping of Sailors in Early San Francisco," *California History*, no.1 (1985):10-17.
⁷⁶ Ibid., 11.
⁷⁷ Ibid., 13.
⁷⁸ Ibid., 10-11.
⁷⁹ Ibid., 13.
⁸⁰ Ibid.,
⁸¹ Ibid.,
⁸² Ibid, 15.
⁸³ Ibid.,
⁸⁴ Ibid.,
⁸⁵ Ibid.,
⁸⁶ Ibid.,
⁸⁷ Ibid.,
⁸⁸ Ibid.,
⁸⁹ "BRIEF MENTION.", *Aberdeen Herald*, July 13, 1903.
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⁹¹ Morgan, *The Last Wilderness*, 124.
⁹² Ibid., 124-125.
⁹³ Ibid.,
⁹⁴ Ibid., 125.
⁹⁵ Aho, "Billy was the Ghoul of Grays Harbor."
⁹⁶ Ibid.,
⁹⁷ Ibid.,
⁹⁸ Morgan, *The Last Wilderness*, 124.
⁹⁹ Aho, "Billy was the Ghoul of Grays Harbor."
¹⁰⁰ Ibid.,
¹⁰¹ Ibid, and Morgan, *The Last Wilderness*, 124.
¹⁰² Ibid.,
¹⁰³ Ibid.,
¹⁰⁴ Ibid.,
¹⁰⁵ "Agent Of Union Is Held For Trial," *The Evening Statesman*, August 28, 1906. and Gibson, *Outlaw Tales of Washington*, 132.
¹⁰⁶ Gibson, *Outlaw Tales of Washington*, 132.
¹⁰⁷ "Tales of the Town Tersely Told.", *Aberdeen Herald*, November 15, 1906.
¹⁰⁸ Gibson, *Outlaw Tales of Washington*, 132., Van Syckle, *They Tried To Cut It All*, 242., and Morgan, *The Last Wilderness*, 125.

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- ¹¹³ Ibid.,
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid.,
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- ¹¹⁷ Ibid, 131-132.
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid, 131.
- ¹¹⁹ Ibid.,
- ¹²⁰ Ibid.,
- ¹²¹ Ibid.,
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- ¹²⁴ Aho, “Billy was the Ghoul of Grays Harbor,” Morgan, *The Last Wilderness*, 125, and “Coast Shipping News. Items of Interest to Mariners of the Pacific.”
- ¹²⁵ Gibson, *Outlaw Tales of Washington*, 131.
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- ¹³⁶ Ibid, and Morgan, *The Last Wilderness*, 124.
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- ¹⁴⁰ Ibid, Davidson, “Shanghaied! The Systematic Kidnapping of Sailors in Early San Francisco.”¹⁵, and Gibson, *Outlaw Tales of Washington*, 130-131.
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