

Transcript for Josh Cerretti's "Colonizing and Decolonizing Bellingham Walking Tour."

24 September 2018

JOSH CERRETTI: I can't welcome you here because I'm not from here, instead that's the task of this, the centennial pole which is a Lummi welcome pole that was given to the city of Bellingham in 1953, carved in 1952 and it's called the centennial pole because it marks the one hundredth year anniversary of the event depicted at the bottom here.

We see in the canoe with the paddles two Lummi leaders Chowitsut and Tsi'li'xw and we see two white guys, Henry Roeder and Russel Peabody. Roeder in front and Peabody in the back. What this event depicts is their arrival here as the first permanent white settlers along Bellingham Bay.

And this pole as a welcome pole tells us a lot of things, it's not just a welcome mat that says come on in, instead it tells us about Lummi Coast-Salish people and about the way they lived here. And so we can see on this pole, which in this case is meant to be read from the bottom to the top and around the other side. At the bottom the raven who begins the stories often the first bird to call in the morning and a very talkative bird. Above that the bear, a really important teacher for people because the bear taught the people how to fish salmon. And we're going to talk a lot more about salmon at a further stop down the way. Above that we see the wolf that taught the people songs and dance we notice the wolf we can see the moon up there, we can also see on the moon above a flea, and that tells us about the pestilence that had been amongst the Lummi people in the decades prior to Roeder and Peabody's arrival.

And so, for a about 60 years prior to their arrival in 1852 white visitors from the Hudson's Bay Company, the British Empire, Russian and Spanish Empires as well as American Whalers had all visited and sent disease about Coast Salish people and severely decimated their population. And unfortunately, as we'll see as we start kind of turning around the pole at the top, there were more threats and dangers to come. We see a serpent kind of looking creature at the top of the pole and that creature there represents the danger and threats that came along with the arrival of these men, we can see that that snake is or that serpent is kind of wrapped around a series of reeds of cat-of-nine tails, and that's an important symbol there because it says that they're under threat but they're brought together by this as well, and we know well some of us know that the cat-of-nine tails is a very enduring plant it endures through the winter out there in the water it doesn't die and fall away. Much like the threat of colonialism brought together Lummi people and their traditions endured to this day.

Below that we see a series of baskets that represent the labors of Lummi women who threw a series of feasts down in Mukilteo in January 1855 not long after the arrival of

these two men and that was to celebrate or to mark the treaty of Point Elliot which is going to be a really important talk eh at a little further stop down, but that treaty is going to then bring an onrush of more and more Euro-Americans to this area, they're going to vastly and rapidly change the area.

Below that we see the sun god, this kind of setting winter sun figure that tells us when the treaty happened and below that a figure that, depending on who's story and who's kind of telling of this whole that you've heard you might hear some different ways, but this figure at the bottom this kind of stylized figure we see he has a drum and he has a series of kind of bone dice, right a bone dice game called Slahal it's a Coast Salish game that goes back a long time.

One version of the story would say that he represents that the people still had their traditions they had games they had song and dance amidst all this struggle and difficulty. Another interpretation says that we see the bone dice game being played because, though this marks a certain history the future like any gambling game, is uncertain.

So over the next about ninety minutes I'm going to take us on a walk around the mouth of Whatcom Creek and we're going to talk a little bit more about the events kind of depicted here, as well as about focus on the next the following fifty years of the history of Bellingham and a little bit of Whatcom County.

We'll have lots of stops we'll take up a number of different topics and there will be chances to ask questions throughout, but before we move onto our next stop does anybody have any questions?

WOMAN IN GROUP: Yes in 1953 when the pole was commissioned

JOSH CERRETTI: Yeah

WOMAN IN GROUP: How was the story told? And and also were the Lummi people asked to design and and bring the pole or did they offer it? I ask because I'm just in 1953 parts of the story would not have been very welcome with the white people

JOSH CERRETTI: Sure in 1953 when the story was told in the cedar and so the interpretations of the pole telling it in oral format come afterwards. Joe Hillaire who was the Lummi carver who did this pole was commissioned to do this work, was asked by the city to carve a pole to kind of represent the message from his people to the city. It was originally actually at the post this so this isn't the original position it was installed in here it's been restored once. The two main versions oral telling's of the interpretation or the story of the pole does not, it's not necessarily just interpretations it's a it's attempting to tell the story come from his daughter Pauline Hillaire and then Felix Solomon the carver restored it in 2007.

Yeah but Joe Hillaire like a lot of carvers the his story here himself he didn't necessarily give us a literal version of what this meant and that that's the way a lot and a lot of you know non-native artists also don't like to explain their work too much.

WOMAN IN GROUP: Yeah, I know I'm more just interested in the story of how the pole came to be here

JOSH CERRETTI: Right

WOMAN IN GROUP: And the relationship between the city and the Lummi nation over time

JOSH CERRETTI: Not very favorable, and so we'll talk about a number of those kind of negative interactions but, hopefully this can be you know this was intended to be by a number of people one step in evolving that relationship by sort of centering the Lummi people and their presence here first, which is what we're going to try to do we're going to and I'll refer back to this a few times the kind of message implicit in what we see at the bottom here. Because again, this isn't just depicting events it's providing us a lesson about them.

And we can see that the two Lummi men have paddles and the white men don't, and that's because these white men came here without knowledge of how to live here, right and relied upon the generosity the knowledge of these Lummi men and they're only welcome to be here for as long as they're good passengers, as long as they didn't rock the boat too much and so, we want to think about this philosophy, this idea that for those of us who are non-native we are here as visitors without a paddle and that we have to accept that leadership and that knowledge that the direction to set by native people who were here first and know this land best.

So, we're going to walk along we will cross a couple busy streets and so I want everyone to be aware when we're doing that and so one of one of the first things were going to do is cross Dupont it would ruin this tour forever if anybody ever got hurt on it so please don't get hit by a car that is my primary worry for your safety out there okay? So, we'll head to our first stop.

JOSH CERRETTI: So as hard as it may be to believe up until 1911 this was the shoreline of Bellingham so that whole area down there Maritime Heritage Park was all a big title flat until the Whatcom Creek waterway was dredged and we'll talk a little bit more about that later down the road. For now, the question is, why do Roeder and Peabody come to this area? They came here for the waterfall. They came up from San Francisco in search of a place known as 'xat-coom' which in the local Lhaq'temish language meant place of noisy waters, as I said out on the bridge, we gotta go somewhere less noisy for this talk. So Roeder and Peabody were looking to build a sawmill, and the waterfall would power that.

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They negotiated with Chowitsut and Tsi'li'xw to get access to what was most likely a former village site, of which a group of Lummi men were paid to construct a saw mill powered by that creek.

The question is then, we should ask and isn't always asked, why were the Lummi people here? Well they were also here for the creek, because for this whole area this whole area of the Salish Sea, Coast Salish people lived along the creeks and streams where they would gather every fall and winter to get the salmon run. A little, we'll get into a little bit of environmental knowledge here, right? Salmon are a really crucial resource here. In the Pacific Northwest we have plentiful rainfall, we have plentiful sunshine but the main limiter to growth is a substance called nitrogen there's a lot of nitrogen out in the sea not much in the land, but salmon are thankfully born in freshwater streams and then spend their lives out at sea eating little creatures and growing fat on that marine nitrogen and then when they're mature they return to the stream or creek or river in which they were born and they go back to spawn. After they spawn their body would be washed back out to the sea unless some enterprising mammal is there to swoop them up. Bears do this otters do this, wolves other creatures do this. Once humans start doing it though, right? It creates this symbiotic relationship, because the humans living among the creeks are relying upon those salmon are then depositing that marine nitrogen on the banks which makes for healthy banks, wooded banks, and that's where salmon like to spawn so the salmon keep coming back every winter year after year. So, every creek and stream on which the salmon ran were really crucial and were the winter home for a band of Coast Salish people. They would, the Lummi people would often spend their summers out in what are now called the San Juan Islands before returning here right around this time of year as the salmon start to run in the creeks. The population stress of those introduced European diseases though, had probably made it so that they had concentrated in fewer sites by the time these men show up in the 1850s.

So they build the mill here and begin this process of tilling Whatcom Creek because the creek is going to become more and more industrial and have more and more initially saw dust and then sewage and other pollutants dumped into it.

The creek is also changed by making it so that there is a big drop to turn the water wheel on the mill and so that the salmon can't run up the creek anymore, this process is exacerbated by the construction of culverts which then roads are put over and so, those salmon have returned to a somewhat restored mouth of Whatcom Creek now that there is a salmon hatchery here they can't get all the way up because of the series of culverts and other impassible barriers. Just in the past year, there has been an order that's come down through the courts to disassemble these culverts but, it's a very slow process because none of the organizations responsible for the culverts really have the funds to do this and it is an unfunded mandate from the courts. And also because there is a lot of resistance to all the big changes that would have to happen. Even removing one or two culverts off

of Whatcom Creek isn't going to help anything, they have to clear the entire path of every single one of them and so it's going to be a slow process but it's a process that needs to happen in order to bring salmon back to more creeks and rivers around the Salish Sea which will also help save our endangered Orca population.

We're going to continue on and we're going to talk a little bit more about the 1850's and at a few sites over on the other side of things in Old Town. Before we go do we have questions?

WOMAN IN GROUP 2: I have a question.

JOSH CERRETTI: Yeah

WOMAN IN GROUP 2: You said that the Lummi men that built the saw mill were paid?

JOSH CERRETTI: Yes

WOMAN IN GROUP 2: Well, what currency were they paid in?

JOSH CERRETTI: Well they so they were not for the building, they were not paid in currency, they were paid in a number of different things most likely a number of different gifts but the main sum of the payment was in blankets. Um the in this area at the time, the primary kind of instrument of exchange were the blankets that the Hudson's Bay Company made, and they were kind of a standardized measurement of value. Um, I mean I'm not going to get the number right if I tell you but they were paid a sum of blankets. Again it might have been literal or it might have been some other trade goods that were of equivalent value.

Alright so we're going to walk along, yes?

WOMAN IN GROUP 3: Would you repeat the questions because the voices were going this way but [INDISTINCT]

JOSH CERRETTI: The question was what were the Lummi men paid in? And so the and again the Lummi were not paid directly for the land there was no exchange of deeds or anything like that, they negotiated for that access and didn't pay for it but the labor was paid for to build the initial saw mill.

Alright, so we're going to walk a little bit up Dupont. It's not necessarily the most scenic stretch of the walk, right but as we do take a look down at Maritime Heritage Park and know that that whole area about a hundred years ago was all a tidal flat and then for most of the twentieth century it was a sewage treatment plant and the city dump. And so it is an enormous aesthetic improvement that it's undergone in recent decades.

[INDISTINCT CHATTER]

JOSH CERRETTI: So, I know it was not a very scenic walk, but I will say this is my favorite view in the city of Bellingham. Please be careful with the cord that is across here, it is pretty low, but it can be visually tricky and I would hate for somebody to trip over it so please be careful. And, you can feel free to wander a little bit, but I will say a lot of people walk their dogs here and are not necessarily diligent about picking up, so just be careful if you get into the tall grass.

We're standing here in a site that's part of Maritime Heritage Park and some people call it Peabody Bluff, but it became a very important site in 1856, when the U.S. Military selected it as a site on which to build a block house. Remember I told you back at the first pole 1855 the treaty of Point Elliot is signed. The U.S. Military came in 1856 to enforce two important revisions of that. One the treaty of Point Elliot said that all native people living south of the 49th parallel were now under charge of U.S. Indian Agency and any living north of that were under the charge of the Hudson's Bay Company. They were in the British Empire what would then become Canada. Except, that line was cooked up thousands of miles from here and no one knew exactly where it lies and so a boundary commission was established and at Semiahmoo, British and American officials met up and began to survey. Where the 49th parallel lays and on which side different individuals who had lived here long before this border idea was cooked up, and which side they belonged on.

The other important part, and one of the main reasons the army lands here is because the treaty of Point Elliot said that Lummi people had to confine themselves to their reservations. Right, so really quickly right 1852 Roeder and Peabody negotiate for access to a little rectangle of land and everything else you see is Coast Salish territory. But, in 1855 this treaty flips the script, it says no Lummi people you have a small rectangle over there and everything you see is open up to settlement and anybody who was white male and here can take a hundred sixty acres, three hundred and twenty if he's married. And so we start to see-

WOMAN IN GROUP 4: All for him

JOSH CERRETTI: All for him, we start to see an onrush, in August 1856 Captain George Pickett in a company of the ninth infantry arrive at Maria Robert's farm over on the eastern

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side of Bellingham right at the mouth of the Nooksack river edge of the reservation. And they tell a very pregnant misses Roberts that she has to go because the federal government has claimed her homestead and is taking it over for a fort. They came further up the road and here they built their block house. You can see it's obviously a nice natural rise for a little bit of a watch tower, the block house was also the first house of

incarceration here in Whatcom County. It was a place where, for the most part, most of the people incarcerated in it were deserters from the U.S. Army. Hey, almost a third of the men that Pickett landed with, deserted at some point in their time here. Most of them were really freshly arrived Irish immigrants who had been scooped up and conscripted in the U.S. Army and then sent out here.

In 1859 as a product of that border dispute, the U.S. Army kidnapped a Nooksack headman who they said belonged on the northern side of the border wasn't American he was he was British or he was a British subject and they incarcerated here him here up until the point that the block house gets deconstructed, a little later in 1860. We'll talk about what happened with that across the street.

WOMAN IN GROUP 5: Is a block house something... Is there a definition of a block house?

JOSH CERRETTI: Yeah so a block house is essentially is a cube of logs that's built to be secure and then a tower is put atop of it. And so, it was, and I would not necessarily say it has anything to do with that that square carved area like that but it I because this area was kind of regraded and there was a barn on it for a long time. But sitting right in the middle of this there would have been kind of kind of a stout log cabin with then a watch tower on top of it.

So, we're seeing right, very quickly that as Americans arrived here they begin to really seize the paddle to not be good passengers. And as we when we go across the street, we're going to talk about one particular significant character in this, that would be George Pickett. And we have some more people joining us. Hey, welcome.

So, we're going to head across the street here, I will warn everyone be careful about the cord again, and we're going to go across the street and up the hill a little bit the sidewalks are not so useful in this part of town because of all the regrading.

This building in its original place in all of Washington State not just Whatcom County, but all of Washington State in 1856 a cabin was constructed here for George Pickett and his new wife and eventually his new son. Up at Semiahmoo where that border commission met they had a conference, where all of these U.S. officials and British officials met with native people from up and down the northwest coast, to divvy up who they thought belonged on which side of the border, right. The border is going to cut right through the Lhaq'temish speaking northern straight's coast Salish people who are the ancestors of today's Lummi as well as of Esquimalt Songhees people who live over in what's now Victoria BC. They tended to be one group together in the islands in the summer and then during the fall and the winter for the runs head to their respective main lands to the creeks and streams for that run but the border now divided that.

At that conference, whether because they were love struck or whether it was to secure some sort of alliance, Pickett married a Haida woman from the northern coast from

what's now BC or what's now Haida Gwaii. She was named Sâkis Tiigang translated as morning mist, and soon after bore him a son in December 1857. Jimmy Pickett would come to spend a lot more time in the northwest than his father. Jimmy's mother died soon after child birth, his father took a leave of absence to Virginia and soon after his return the ninth infantry packed up both the block house and Fort Bellingham and brought their supplies to the San Juan Islands where a growing conflict called the Pig War with the Hudson's Bay Company lead them to mostly abandon this post.

Soon after, in 1861, George Pickett would resign his commission in the U.S. Army and return to Virginia where he swore the fight for the confederacy and the lost cause of white supremacy. He did not bring his mixed-race son with him, instead leaving him in the care of another family of Virginia slaveholders who endured him.

George Pickett goes on to be a hero of that lost cause, of the people who attempt to redeem the cause of the confederacy and try to sanitize that legacy and make heroes out of these men who famously take and lead this bloody charge and failed charge at Gettysburg.

Jimmy Pickett on the other hand is a much more interesting figure and one that a building like this could really retain the memory of much more strongly. Jimmy Pickett unlike his father, lived his whole life in the Pacific Northwest. He painted a number of scenes of these hills as well as a painting of Mt. Hood, it hangs down in Olympia, in the capital gallery. When his father died in 1875, he fought a legal battle with his father's widow to gain ownership of this home as well as some of his father's possessions, right. So, George Pickett abandoned this home and abandoned his family here, Jimmy Pickett fought for it. Unfortunately, this building is still the George Pickett Memorial House, it is a confederate memorial in 2018 in Washington State. But it's changed before, the building originally had a Douglas Fir foundation and it was jacked up and given a modern foundation. The porch as well as the kitchen and bathroom that are in that addition on the left are also not original, right? This we're not looking at a pure 1856 log cabin here, cause there's a lot of potential to change this site, save it from itself and think about reorienting it around somebody who really wanted to be here in the northwest, and tells us a much more compelling and laudable story about it.

Any questions before we move on to our next stop?

WOMAN IN GROUP 6: You said the city built this?

JOSH CERRETTI: No, it's privately owned by the Daughters of the Washington Pioneers.

WOMAN IN GROUP 6: And did somebody mark out the George part on the picket sign?

WOMAN IN GROUP 6: Did somebody white out the George or?

JOSH CERRETTI: It would seem that that has recently been done I hadn't even noticed that. Yeah, so I believe that has recently been done you can still see the stone has that, but yeah. I actually had not noticed that yet so, you learn something new every day.

MAN IN GROUP: Hey talk a little bit, about, slavery in the Western Territory.

JOSH CERRETTI: Well so, Jimmy Pickett his legal name is James Tilton Pickett. And he was named after the Tilton's, a family of Virginians who have the kind of infamous honor of being the first slave-holders in Washington Territory, they would rob and enslave a man with them to Olympia when they moved even though the territory was not a slave territory. That man somewhat famously was helped by a group of abolitionists and escaped to Victoria where there was a big abolitionist community, but the Tilton's remained a very prominent sort of leaders here. A lot of the initial settlers up here in Whatcom County, were of Southern extraction famously the kind of ticket to ride in the U.S. Army at the time, felt like he got maneuvered out by all of these southerners conspiring against him. So the local Indian Agent EEdmund Fitzhugh a number of other officials in the area were all former slave owners and were from slave-owning families, they came out here and they expressed a lot of the same attitudes towards indigenous people. And attempted in a lot of ways to really, you know, treat them like slaves. A lot will be made if you happen to take a tour in here of the idea that northwest coast people particularly the ones who live north of here, were exceptionally brutal, savage and slave-owning slave-trading sort of people. The system of slavery on the Northwest Coast was vastly different than the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and was a system that, one really picked up only after all this population stress from disease and all of these kind of rapid changes from colonialism. Additionally, the system of slavery that was practiced, or the version of slavery that was practiced by say the high dollar deception people

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were non-transferrable so an enslaved woman gave birth the child was not enslaved whereas in the US tradition you follow the womb, and so the children of enslaved women were always enslaved.

Did that maybe get it close?

MAN IN GROUP: So there is no evidence that whites coming from the south and having slaves here?

JOSH CERRETTI: In Whatcom County no, not that I know of.

MAN IN GROUP: But in the broader territories?

JOSH CERRETTI: Yes, in the broader territories, and by the time the Tilton's came up there, here their slave had already, the man they had brought with them already escaped. There are definitely a few of you know there the one of the things was at this time, a black

person was so conspicuous here that normally and you know not that I'm sure you notice today that can still be the way but especially then, it was it was so conspicuous that for the most part there are a lot of mention anytime a black person shows up and so it's not so likely but it definitely could have happened for a little while.

So, we were just at the oldest building in its original location in Washington State, pretty significant. This is also pretty significant it's the oldest brick building in all of Washington State, okay? And so, oldest building in its original location 1856, oldest brick building in Washington State, this is built in 1858 two years later. It is built as a fireproof warehouse by a merchant named Richardson and it was built during the first boom in what was the village of Whatcom. The village of Whatcom remember, named after that little waterfall there 'xat-coom' and Lhaq'temish. It became the sight of this boom around the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush. Fraser Canyon way up there in BC, fastest way to get there in 1858 was to take a boat right up to the dock here and remember we're down now in the tidal flat area that hill was the shoreline. You would come here and you could camp for a couple of days and that whole hill was covered in white tents from the thousands of miners that showed up. There were only six hundred people living in Whatcom and thirty thousand miners showed up that summer. Incredible rush of people, they would take what was known as the Nooksack Trail roughly what goes along today's Mt. Baker Highway take that to the Sumas trail. The Sumas are another tribe up along the border there and you could take that up to the Fraser River and then take that to the gold fields.

That boom very quickly turns to bust that same summer though when the British government says no, every miner arriving at the gold fields needs a permit that they pick up in Victoria. So, Victoria becomes the new booming town and Vancouver also boomed see because you have to land in Victoria and then take another boat to the mouth of the Fraser where the city of Vancouver now sits.

Richardson is then got a very expensive warehouse and nothing to put in it, so he becomes the first of not the last Whatcom County business men to seek a government bail out and he gets the territory to buy his warehouse and turn it into the courthouse. It then becomes the seat of law it becomes the place where trials are held and where on occasion in the basement prisoners are held.

This building then goes through a number of iterations after that, it's the courthouse seat of law for a number of decades as this area grows quite slowly. After that 1858 boom and bust, the Civil War soon comes and really slows down any new arrivals and any economic activity here. The mill that Roeder and Peabody had built, burns down and it burns while Russell, and soon before Russell dies and his kids can't agree over exactly how to deal with it so his property is all locked up in probate for a number of years. And things are very slow here in a number of ways. This building eventually gets passed on

it's bought by a taxidermist, Carl Akers, who erected this historical marker. There are some questionable assertions here, namely the idea that the bricks were made in Philadelphia. Somebody did a contemporary mass spectrometer analysis and they're pretty sure that the bricks, like all of the old brick in the northwest came from the San Francisco brick yards. That there was no need to ship them around from Cape Horn, but still, acres is the one who built the wooden kind of top to this you can see his name still along the side if the trash isn't piled too high. He then rented it out to a number of tenants and it was home to the Northwest Passage, a radical newspaper here in the late 60s and early 70s a number of different tenants many of whom have noted the issue with this building. And it's that it was initially constructed on a series of wooden piers to have a dock on the side and boats could come right up to it. Then the street level was raised, when the water way was dredged they brought the street up, you can see right here the old skylights for the vault underneath and you can see that this doorway is actually an old second story window that was then cut down to make the new entryway when the street level was raised up.

But, when the tide is big and the weather is wet, which, you know, happens in Whatcom County, the basement still floods. The Historical Society owned this for about a decade, but they found that it's under attack from water. From below, from the top and they didn't have the money to make the improvements and so it's recently been sold to a private owner, who's a member of the Historical Society and is interested in preserving the site. They're trying to figure out how to make it work and preserve this piece of history. You'll see as we go by that there is a number of embankments that have been done to try to protect it some from the water, but it is a real challenge as I said, under attack from the rain and the tides.

Any questions before we turn the corner?

WOMAN IN CROWD 7: Is the rent me sign true? Can you rent this?

JOSH CERRETTI: Yes, you can rent it for events, and so for a little while the Historical Society was renting it out then the flood came and ruined the floor, the floor is fixed again the new owner is renting it out for events and so it is a very interesting building a lot of stories a lot of history

[INDISTINCT CHATTER]

JOSH CERRETTI: Right, I know, being surrounded by the recycling plant is not super aesthetically pleasing and kind of detracts from this area to some degree, but the building has lot of potential for sure.

MAN IN CROWD: Sounds like something that industrial crap ruined.

[LAUGHTER]

[INDISTINCT CHATTER]

JOSH CERRETTI: It was used as the point up to about 30 years and so, from the 1860s into the 1880s.

WOMAN IN CROWD 8: How many people can you get in there?

JOSH CERRETTI: I'm thinking you, when we come around the corner you get a sense of the size of the building. I think you could probably get about seventy-five a hundred people in there.

[INDISTINCT COMMENT FROM WOMAN IN CROWD]

So, we'll head this way now, just a little bit.

Growth was very slow here in the village of Whatcom and its surrounding area. The one big economically productive thing was the Bellingham Bay [INDISTINCT] Companies coal mine. So that hill up there, that lump of trees you see, Sehome Hill, was literally used as a coal mine in the 1850s and 1860s. Once the hill was tapped out of coal it then got logged, once it was logged then the owners passed it over to the territory to open up the Normal School there, that eventually evolved into Western Washington State College and Western Washington University.

The coal mine there was run by a man named Edmund Fitzhugh, Fitzhugh was the Indian Agent, he was appointed by the U.S. government to be the guardian to the Lummi people. And the way he saw that role was very paternalistically he married two native women who reputedly hated him a great deal. He also didn't want Lummi people to work, he didn't want them to hire out, even though there was an enormous demand for labor as was shown

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by them working at the initial mill. He refused to allow them to hire out, so to find workers for his coal mine they went all the way to the Olympic Peninsula and recruited a group of S'klallam men from the S'klallam tribe.

But neither of those men was a man named Sehome, in his name remains on the hill to this day. It also gave the name to of the village that kind of sprouted around that coal elevator that went down the path of what is now Loral Street. And went out to a dock for coal exports, but this area was really focused just on extraction. There was very little refinement, there were logs being taken down and shipped elsewhere, there was coal being taken out of the hills and shipped elsewhere but not a lot of development in the 1860s, 1870s.

Things start to pick up a little bit in the 1880s as that old mill site gets some new use. A group that called the Washington Colony came from Kansas, they were a group of

Utopian Socialists they believed in creating an equitable workplace, having plural marriages, they were mostly vegetarians and they opened up a very successful, though briefly lived lumber mill in the site of that original one. They also built the dock, the Colony Wharf, the name's on it to this day.

They succeeded where the men before them never had. They actually sold boards down in San Francisco, but they didn't last too long because one of the men who was in an investor in the Bellingham Bay Improvement Company when they gave it over he kind of cashed out his shares when they gave it over to the Normal School. And that man gave JJ DONOVAN started a new modern hydroelectric mill up at Lake Whatcom. So, the mill down here on the creek was direct drive, the creek turned the water wheel, the water wheel turns the saw you can run as long as the creek is flowing. Up at Lake Whatcom they create the mill, a hydroelectric mill to run twenty-four-seven three sixty-five. And that very quickly that Donovan Mill put the Colony Mill out of business. It also lead to a lot of growth here along the waterfront that we're going to start seeing as we head along here. So, very quickly in the late 1880s the area starts to pick up in a number of different ways. So, we'll make a few small stops as we start heading along the waterfront. Any questions before we do?

MAN IN CROWD: Help me with hydroelectric, I mean, how early in history was that?

JOSH CERRETTI: So they started the mill in about 1895 and it was pretty cutting edge technology but was kind of the direction that industrial mills had gone in was to create a steady supply of water through a dam and then do that to power a larger system rather than that direct drive.

[INAUDIBLE QUESTION FROM THE CROWD]

JOSH CERRETTI: 1911

MAN IN CROWD: What was the question?

JOSH CERRETTI: When was this area filled and paved? Was 1911. And so, until that time this area would have been the tidal flat. There was, but at a there was a wooden walkway that kind of went along about level with the court house and so there was a wooden pathway that kind of went right along the sort of above low tide but right where high tide lapped up to. Which was kind of, just as the hill starts to pick up.

So we'll head this way.

The Great Northern Railroad is going to come to the finest deep-water port in the Pacific Northwest, and if you know anything about the cities of the Northwest there were different boosters, and everyone thinks their town is the best. A lot of people thought Bellingham Bay would be the terminus. And so in the 1880s early 1880s we see a huge building boom in what is now the Fairhaven area.

Hundreds of Chinese laborers are brought in for rapidly constructed downtown to be the terminus of a railroad that never arrived here and instead went to Tacoma and Fairhaven was out of luck. Leading to a really quick decline here a lot of disappointment. Fairhaven would stick around as a rival to these villages, to the North Whatcom, Sehome and eventually a fourth village in between them called Bellingham, that's in the area of what's now Boulevard Park. These four villages all separate at the beginning of the 1890s are all kind of buying for the boom. That seems to always be just out of reach and so growth is somewhat allusive and it's cyclical right there's a big boom 1883 into 1885 but by September of that year, residents were circulating what they called the Chinese Deadline they said by the end of the construction season everyone of Chinese decent needs to be out and we won't let them stay here, we won't let them work for us, and we won't buy anything from them. Okay, so we start to see really quickly right? Remember, this is all in one relatively young person's lifespan that in 1852 these two men show up and have to negotiate for their presence here and they're told you're welcome here as long as you're a good passenger, as long as you don't rock the boat and try to seize the paddle. And we can see already just thirty-three years later, people being evicted saying you don't belong here you can't live here. Okay, and that's not going to be unfortunately the last eviction we see.

We'll head a little further down the line.

Railroad we start to see two big industries pop up here on the waterfront, anybody know what were the two big industries down here. Canneries, so salmon canneries and, shingles. Shingles cedar shingles that people put on their roof all over this country were produced here in Bellingham so Bellingham was home to the largest salmon cannery in North America and the largest shingle mill in North America finishing that wood down here at the waterfront, so up at Lake Whatcom they process the big logs they send them down the hill, here they're finished turned into boards, turned into shingles. And that salmon that comes in, most of it coming down from Alaska in this huge fishing fleet is canned here in a time before tuna was the canned fish of choice. So, this area starts becoming really industrial in the 1880s and into the 1890s. The towns of Whatcom, the villages of Whatcom and Sehome merge and build this city hall for New Whatcom in 1892. Around that same time the villages of Bellingham and Fairhaven merge into Fairhaven and the showdown is set between New Whatcom and Fairhaven for who will consume the other.

Down here on the waterfront there is again a huge demand for labor, and that demand for labor again overlooks local native people and focuses much further appeals. So we start to see a growth of labor coming from around the world. A lot of Norwegians and Swedes, people coming from Nordic countries also a lot of Slavs coming from Yugoslav- coming from Croatia and the area of what's formerly Yugoslavia. We also see a lot of labor coming over from Asia, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and South Asian labor coming to

work here. We see people coming from the North East and from California. People coming from really all the four corners of the world to work in this booming industrial waterfront.

That industrial waterfront has had its heyday, okay and in some ways it's in a big moment of transition so, in our next few stops we're going to kind of see three different spaces of that waterfront realignment. This is the first space behind us, the former site of Bellingham Sash Indoor, kind of like a local Home Depot. And this site is currently owned by the city, it's in need of remediation there's a lot of dirty stuff in the soil, a lot of work needs to be done. It's in the most protean stage, okay? And so what we're going to do, is we're going to walk past that, and we're going to walk towards Maritime Heritage Park and we can see a kind of completed stage in that redevelopment, that realignment. And then we'll finish up up top on the hill looking at the former Georgia Pacific site, that somewhere in between this and Maritime right now, okay? Along the way we'll make a couple brief, little stops there. Any questions before we go?

WOMAN IN CROWD 9: Yes are they working on rehabilitating this?

50:00

JOSH CERRETTI: Not yet, no there is no work being done to rehabilitate this yet it's mostly used as a parking lot for DPW for some of the bigger projects down here, but it as soon as the other waterfront project is done, is pretty high, I think, in the in the potential area. But there's currently and again it's at that kind of the most basic protean level. There's a long way to go on this site, so it looks pretty dismal right now, but one should remember that that's what beautiful Maritime Heritage Park looked like in the 70s okay and it didn't take until now to make it beautiful either.

[INDISTINCT CHATTER, LAUGHTER]

JOSH CERRETTI: So, we'll head this way

[INDISTINCT CHATTER]

JOSH CERRETTI: So, here we crossed back over Whatcom Creek and you can get a little bit of a sense of the falls up there that have drawn a lot of attention to this area over the years, you can also see that this area of the creek through a tremendous amount of effort has been restored to a much more natural state. As you go along Whatcom Creek further up around say Iowa Street behind those car dealerships, you'll see that the banks are straight, and the banks are channeled with riprap this rock that is kind of in cages that makes for good flood control, it makes for an economical use of area and it makes for very few salmon. Salmon like a bank with grasses that's uneven that has a natural bend, that has trees that overhang it. And so the restoration of this bank has been a slow process. Whatcom Creek was an industrial dump way, an untreated sewage mess-pit,

and it really needed a lot of work to come back to this level. The hatchery here and the restoration of the creek means that this November if you come here you will see all along that fence on that wall lined with people, as the creek will be teeming with fish. Now the fish can't get up very far the run is not entirely natural restored in any way you're going to see fish, you're going to see birds, you're going to see marine mammals, you're going to see life coming back to the creek, and so we want to remember that the damage that has been done, can be undone. It can be turned back and we can do a lot, if we commit and have the will and if we want to see this creek come back to life.

So, you can see if we look out this way the Whatcom Creek Waterway in 1911 the U.S. Army poured engineers dredged this area to create a deep water containerized port here. For almost a hundred years big ships loaded and unloaded here, starting in the early 2000s we see a real big draw down in the port traffic. It's in part because the aluminum smelter the Intalco Plant stops receiving large shipments through here and then a few years later the Georgia Pacific Paper Mill shuts down. This is motivated, this big transition we're not a big industrial port anymore. There's still activity a lot of work happening down here but the volume of container traffic is gone, and so we're adjusting and figuring out what it means to have this waterfront and how we can best use it so that's a process that I'm sure a lot of you are involved in already but I encourage everybody to pay attention to and get involved in. So we're going to head up past Maritime Heritage Park, make sure you take a look at how beautiful it is and how beautiful other places could be and then we're going to cross Holly Street and it's going to be a little hectic, but I think it'll be alright. Alright? Come with me.

So, we can see behind us here the ongoing waterfront renewal project there and right now they are laying in these two roads, Greenery Ave and the Laurel Street extension will eventually allow a lot more access to this site you can see the six digester eggs where the wood pulp used to sit and be bleached when we go a little further up the hill you'll be able to see the acid ball where the leak was acidified helped to be acidified.

This big building up front the white building was the first part of the waterfront renewal so that building that's called the Granary even though it never held grain is the first part of the project that hopefully is going to invite a lot more people in there. Just a few years ago that was pretty decrepit, there were no windows the outside was peeling it was falling apart. So, that Granary building was originally built as a chicken egg storage facility for the Whatcom Farmers Co-op. That was founded around 1920 and grew into a really large Co-op that made an incredible amount of dried egg product for U.S. Troops during World War two and it was a really large successful farmers co-op. Unfortunately in the post-World War two era paranoia about communism was especially high in this area and co-ops came under suspicion of being too communistic and so the co-op owners were encouraged to sell out to one of the farmers who very rapidly mismanaged the co-op into ruin and had to sell the Granary in the fifties to Georgia Pacific. Who

opened a giant paper facility in here. That facility defined Bellingham's waterfront for about eighty years, did an enormous amount of damage to the natural environment and was sold to the city for one dollar and kind of left in the cities hands to do what they can with it and so the southern end of the site is where all of the kind of polluted top soil has been scraped up to and this end the site is being redeveloped more and more for public access.

It's another opportunity to get involved even though a lot of things have been decided about it, a lot of things are still up in the air and the port commissions is a great place to get involved if you want to have more of a say in it.

In the meantime, thinking about our main timeline here in the early twentieth century this area in general was booming rapidly and that industrialization was leading to that work front again drawing workers from all over the world and giving this area down here in New Whatcom a really vibrant light. It was a place where because the factories ran twenty-four hours a day there were three shifts of workers that got out and hit the streets every day and so this whole area was lined with businesses that catered to these communities a lot of different immigrant restaurants a lot of different fraternal organizations like the Sons of Norway. Organizations like the industrial workers of the world had offices on this street. One of the few remaining buildings from this era is the Oakland Block, which was constructed in the 1890s in the early twentieth century it was also home to Whatcom Counties first black owned business and so out of that building a restaurant called the High Flier or the Mobile was run by an African American family for about four or five years. Somewhere in between 1900 and 1910 they were running it. We also see people again from all over the world in this area, but we see growing tensions around the identity of this place and growing fears about the sort of power white supremacy to stay in control here, okay and so we're going to talk a little further up the road about a really major event in that history.

We're going to go up and cross back over Holly alright and so be careful again as we do that and you can also take note as we go up right before we cross there's a marker if you've ever been in downtown Bellingham and wondered 'hey whys my road like turning forty-five degrees?' that's because of our multiple road grids, our four different grids that were laid down here and them all crashing together right? In 1892 we see that new Whatcom was formed right the merger of Old Whatcom and Sehome. And I said Bellingham and Fairhaven had merged into Fairhaven. Well in 1904 they finally decide, you know what? This whole two cities, two city halls, two administrations it's silly. Let's get together and merge.

1:00:00

But Fairhaven says, 'I don't want to be Whatcom' and Whatcom says 'I don't want to be Fairhaven' so they compromise, and they pick that old village of Bellingham. The name

that George Vancouver had given to this bay and they applied that to their new city when they conglomerated all those four villages into the city we know today.

So we'll head up the hill.

MAN IN CROWD: A lot of you folks know this. In the Old Town Café which I think was the restaurant the same place. There's a picture on the wall in there of a couple black people standing out front were probably the owners. Next time you're standing in line waiting to eat, ask them about it. They'll point it out to you.

JOSH CERRETTI: Yeah, and so next time you're in there, and yea they've got a couple other old pictures of construction yeah and one of them so, keep your eyes open.

[INDISTINCT CHATTER]

JOSH CERRETTI: So this was the line between Whatcom and Sehome, keeps the creek all in Whatcom and then you know you're in Sehome when you're in any of the streets that follow the alphabetical pattern they laid down so not all of the streets remain to this day, but counting back from the top of the alphabet, let's see if I can do it, it goes Pasco, Otis, Newell, Mason, Liberty, Key, Jersey, Billy Frank which was formerly Indian, then High Street, Garden Street, Forest, State was originally Dock and then Cornwall, Bay and then Army Street, which was never constructed it would have been here. And so that's the Sehome pattern, it crashes into the Whatcom pattern here giving us this kind of angle emerges.

[INDISTINCT]

JOSH CERRETTI: Yes, so the Lettered Streets were the Whatcom streets. Alright we're going to head across the road.

So, this will be our last big stop on the tour. And we stop here for a couple reasons. One, this building again built in the early 1890s as the New Whatcom City Hall out of Chuckanut sandstone and locally produced bricks they didn't have to come in from San Francisco anymore we've got our own brick yards over by Squaticum Creek, this building here serves as city hall until the new one is built and opens around 1940 and then it becomes the Museum of History and Art. So, it's a place where they way in which Bellingham and Whatcom County perceives itself and perceives its history is shared with the world. And that's a story that we always need to be thinking about and questioning and revising and this is also a really significant site because in addition to being city hall the basement of this building was the jail for a number of decades. And in 1907 it became a really significant site because of a labor day rally held by a group called the Asiatic Exclusion League they had an early September Labor Day rally that got the men who arrived a little drunk a little angry with these stories about a dusty peril and that the idea that men that they called Hindus even though most of them weren't

Hindu most of them were from the Punjab and follow the Sikh religion, but they were working in those board mills and those finishing mills at the waterfront, a few hundred of them and the Asiatic Exclusion League said that they were going to keep coming and they're going to take your jobs and so those men went to the lettered streets to the boarding houses where those Sikh or Punjabi men live and they aroused them out. And there was a riot, a pilgrimage an attack on these men. The city official's kind of put their hands up they said there's nothing we can do we can just put you in the jail for the night and the only place we can keep you safe is under lock and key. And so, many of those men spent the night in the basement in the jail crammed in shoulder to shoulder before the next morning being fired out of town, being sent out. And thus begins or marks another important this process of changing Bellingham of making Bellingham a place where white people think that only white people are welcome and allowed. So we see after the Chinese exclusion of 1885 the Salvation exclusion of 1907 into in 1942 a dozen Japanese and Japanese American families here in Whatcom County are taken and are sent off to a camp in Minidoka up in Idaho [correction: Tule Lake], their farms are seized and sold without their profit and they for the most part as far as we can tell don't returned to Bellingham. At the close of World War Two the cannery, Pacific American Fishery, shuts down and most of the Filipino families that remained in town then left at that point. And we see, by 1950 a very white Bellingham, in fact a ninety-nine percent white Bellingham okay. And a city that's so white that when the famous singer black singer Marian Anderson comes to town to give a concert, she can perform, but she can't spend the night. She has to go back to Seattle to find a hotel in which she can stay.

1950 Bellingham ninety-nine percent white, we know from the start of this tour 1850 Bellingham zero percent white. So in a hundred years a process happened, a process that if happened anywhere else in the world we would acknowledge was ethnic cleansing, okay. A process where very rapidly white people came as guests, as visitors and were very bad guests and very bad visitors right. Seize that paddle, rock the boat, decided really quickly that people who look like me are in charge here and only people like me belong here.

Now we're starting to see that change a little bit, but not everyone is comfortable with that change a lot of people express that in a lot of different ways sometimes standing around against the change other times asking or demanding that it slowed down standing in the way of it in a lot of different ways what I take from this history is that even though a lot of really awful things happened here we can see that level of transformation and how rapidly things can transform for the worse sure in many ways but we know then that things can transform that rapidly for the better if we put our hearts and minds and feet behind it and if we make the effort to think about what it means to be somebody who arrived here without a paddle someone who's a guest someone who needs to take the lead of indigenous people but those of us like me who are white here to think about

what it means to be in a place where your presence was proceeded by all this exclusion where if you feel welcome and comfortable here you have a responsibility to acknowledge why some other people might not feel welcome and comfortable here.

This is the point at which we wrap up the kind of formal tour, I'll take any questions we have I'll kind of walk us back towards where we started before we break off and if there are any questions you don't get answered here, or anything that comes up after, you can always go to Kay who has my contact info and can get at me. So are there any questions about anything from the tour. Yeah, Johnathan?

JOHNATHAN: Half of the Chinese in the sixties were expelled, did they go elsewhere on the West Coast?

JOSH CERRETTI: Yeah so in the case of the Chinese people who left in 1885 is a little hard to say for sure exactly where they went though a number presumably went down to Seattle and Tacoma which retained, they did but there was always a population that stayed in both of those cities in the case of the South Asian men there was kind of with the Chinese exclusion it happened over a longer period so it's a little harder to track. With those South Asian men you know at least some of them ended up down in Newman, Arizona in another Sikh community some of them went to Everett cause there was later another riot in which some of them were targeted but most of them probably went north back to B.C. where they had migrated here from.

JOHNATHAN: And there is no kind of social map

JOSH CERRETTI: No, so in in B.C. they had starting in 1911 they didn't allow any more Asian migration

1:10:00

but up until that point that well nobody who had already got there was expelled but if they left they couldn't get back in and so it would for a lot of them who you know a lot of these men were soldiers who would work they were born in the Punjab and they worked as policemen in Hong Kong for the British Empire and then they would come to B.C. and that was kind of like a series of steps up in your economic kind of potential that a lot of them took was to take a job as a policeman in Hong Kong and then use that to get passage to Vancouver and then some of them came down to the states but they had an even harder time down here.

WOMAN IN CROWD 10: Did these men come with families?

JOSH CERRETTI: So in the case of almost all of the Asian migrants that come here, almost all of them are men. Even before the United States passes the Chinese exclusion act in 1882, in 1875 they pass something called the page act to ban Chinese women and they interpreted Chinese very broadly when coming to the United States and so even before

they were really cracking down on the immigration of male labor migrants, they have already attempted to totally freeze out any women from migrating. That's in part because the fourteenth amendment says that if a child is born within the borders of the United States, that child is an American citizen. That was done as a kind of work around to ensure citizenship for African Americans who are born as Americans. But it lead to the idea that then Asian people would have a route to citizenship. Because they weren't allowed to go through the normal naturalization process, but birthright citizenship would be another way.

Alright so I will kind of walk us back towards where we started and if you have any other questions ask them along the way but thank you to Kay for putting this together and all of you for coming out.

[THANK YOU'S, APPLAUSE]