

COLUMBIA

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True Casualties of **THE PIG WAR**

**Reassessing the
San Juan Boundary Dispute
150 years later**



Royal Chinook ■ The History of Camp Long

A quarterly publication of the Washington State Historical Society



TOP: 1850s shotgun was used by Lyman Cutler, an American citizen, who shot and killed a pig rooting in his garden on San Juan Island on June 15, 1859; the pig belonged to Charles J. Griffin, a British citizen and a Hudson's Bay Company representative. The incident ignited the so-called Pig War. Washington State Historical Society, ID 1928.76.1.

ABOVE: Artist's depiction of a Fourth of July celebration at American Camp, circa 1860s. Courtesy National Park Service.

True Casualties of **THE PIG WAR**

Reassessing the San Juan Boundary Dispute 150 years later

By Melissa Baker, Eastern Washington University, and
Cyrus Forman, San Juan Island National Historical Park and

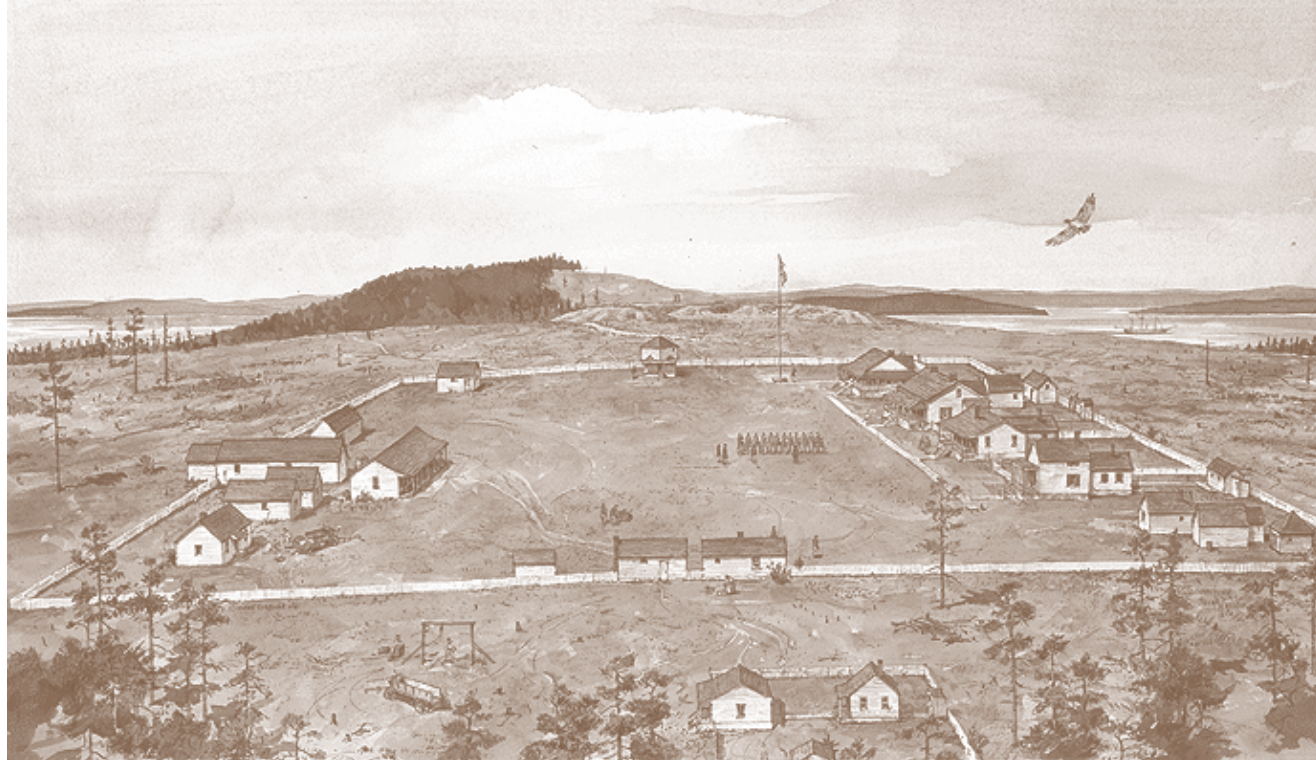
The San Juan Boundary Dispute—better known as “The Pig War”—has most often been examined as a triumph of peace over combat, in which American and British officials found ways to prevent unnecessary bloodshed in an era when both nations regularly waged wars of expansion. That viewpoint is not inaccurate; it is unquestionable that a bloody war nearly started over territorial claims to the San Juan Islands. However, obscured in this celebratory narrative are the many real people who, because of their racial and national identities, were directly and tangibly harmed by the “peaceful” end of the joint occupation of San Juan Island which had allowed British and American subjects to enjoy equal access to property and the legal system.

Since 1966, the National Park Service’s San Juan Island National Historical Park has preserved the American and British military encampments on the island, restored and preserved the surrounding ecosystems, and interpreted their history for millions of visitors. In recent years, park staff have been actively working to define the history of individuals who were harmed by the boundary settlement, and to show how specific individuals and families worked to subvert discriminatory systems and lead full and vibrant lives.

In conjunction with the October 21, 2022, 150th anniversary of the settlement of San Juan Boundary Dispute, San Juan Island National Historical Park is critically re-examining the way it interprets history to ensure the stories of individuals and communities who fought to

maintain their way of life in a racist society are included. In July 2022, a new, state-of-the-art visitor center will open at American Camp, replacing the temporary structure which has been in place since 1977 and the exhibits which were designed in 1997. The new exhibits explore a broad historical framework, and are being created in collaboration with park-associated Coast Salish Tribes that have historical and cultural ties to San Juan Island, as well as numerous artists, carvers, and subject matter experts.

The San Juan Boundary Dispute—and the military conflict which nearly erupted between the United States and Great Britain—loom large in Northwest history for the high-stakes standoff between two countries, for the hot-headed and colorful characters on both sides who often



Artist's depiction of American Camp on San Juan Island, circa 1860s. Courtesy National Park Service.

practiced anything but de-escalation, and probably even for the memorably descriptive “Pig War” moniker.

But often lost in the sensationalized telling of an intense chapter of history are those whose lives were deeply affected by the outcome and the legal ramifications of the dispute settlement in 1872. The 150th anniversary presents an opportunity to daylight some of these stories, and to create interactive exhibits which convey a sense of place and the long history and vast cultural traditions of San Juan Island.

In October 1872, 26 years of international conflict in the Salish Sea between America and Britain was settled once and for all. The San Juan Boundary Dispute started with an ambiguously worded treaty, escalated to government-sanctioned sheep rustling, climaxed in a multi-month armed standoff between Royal Navy warships and United States Army soldiers, and settled into twelve years of friendly international coexistence. This clash enmeshed a future Confederate general, Coast Salish Tribes, Opium War veterans, a future cricket star, the highest-ranking U.S. general, fur traders, Hawaiian shepherds, Afro-Scottish imperial officials, the German Kaiser, and immigrants from across the globe. This peaceful resolution also had dramatic consequences for racial minority groups such as Coast Salish Tribes and Hawaiian immigrants, subjecting them to racist United States laws that denied them citizenship and property rights.

This conflict began shortly after the 1846 Treaty of Oregon which gave the United States sole possession of the lands south of the 49th parallel in the Pacific Northwest, excluding Vancouver Island. A dispute between the two countries erupted over treaty language that created confusion about which passage or channel constituted the water boundary mentioned in the treaty, and thus which country could claim the San Juan Islands. The United

States maintained that the boundary channel described in the treaty was Haro Strait, while Great Britain believed it to be Rosario Strait. The claim to San Juan Island was aggressively pursued by the British government and the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) because they believed sovereignty over the island would buttress their commercial and military positions on the Pacific Coast. The result was a protracted dispute between HBC officials and American settlers on San Juan Island. Hostilities escalated in 1859 when a pig owned by the HBC trampled the garden of American settler Lyman Cutler, and Cutler shot it dead. That incident signaled the start of The Pig War—which British and American forces recklessly escalated, but which, with cooler and more diplomatic heads in London and Washington, DC prevailing, ultimately became a twelve-year joint occupation of San Juan Island.

The peaceful joint occupation was a temporary arrangement intended to prevent a war while the conflicting sides negotiated the boundary dispute. The idea of arbitration was suggested as early as December 1860, but it was not until May 8, 1871, that the two countries agreed that German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm would make the final binding decision – with no means of appeal. The Kaiser was directed to choose between Haro Strait and Rosario Strait. No other channel could be selected, which was a diplomatic victory for the United States.

George Bancroft, an American historian, statesman, politician and diplomat, was minister to Germany at the time and had followed the San Juan dispute from its beginning. Bancroft represented the United States at the arbitration hearing and claimed that Haro Strait was always the intended boundary. He demonstrated that the two governments would never have selected Rosario Strait as the water boundary because it was an insignificant channel

as depicted on accepted navigation charts of the time. The British representative, Admiral James C. Prevost, argued that Rosario Strait was the correct choice because it was a safer route for navigation and more commonly used. To ensure impartiality, Kaiser Wilhelm presented the evidence to the arbitration commission, a three-member panel of eminent German judges.

After reviewing the commission’s opinions, Kaiser Wilhelm decided in favor of the United States. The ruling was issued on October 21, 1872 and messages were sent to both parties via telegram. British troops were ordered to close camp immediately. English Camp had grown into a relaxing outpost, with a formal garden, orchard, billiard room, library, and recreation room. Future cricket star George Delacombe, then the twelve year-old son of English Camp’s commander, had to abandon the beautifully landscaped Commandant’s Home that his father had only recently constructed. By November 1872, British colors had been lowered and the garrison withdrawn from the island.

For the Coast Salish people, whose homeland had been jointly occupied for more than a decade by the British and American militaries, this new national boundary ran almost directly down the center of their world. What is now known as English Camp had been an Indigenous village with a 180-foot longhouse for at least 1,500 years prior to the British landing there in 1859. The Cattle Point village site, located within what is now American Camp, was also a major settlement that had sustained Coast Salish people since time immemorial. At the Cattle Point village, Indigenous Coast Salish people of San Juan Island invented technologically advanced fishing practices to harvest the salmon that came to the adjoining waters each summer. Native people who came from as far away as Alaska to what became San Juan Island to socialize, fish, trade, raid, and find marriage partners now had to negotiate an international boundary and two different sets of Western legal systems that had been superimposed on their world through violence, intimidation, and invasion.

The tribal nations and territories that exist today reflect the Euro-American treatymaking process and the international boundary as much, if not more, as they resemble the way Indigenous peoples in the Pacific Northwest likely saw themselves and their world. Unlike Great Britain and the United States, where individuals held citizenship in only one nation at a time, Coast Salish people have vibrant and complex identities based on the many lineages of their tribal ancestors. Cultural responsibilities to the land, and waterways and social functions brought individuals from many different villages together, and marriages and families were often formed with people from other Indigenous communities. Traditional access to resources and territory were owned by Coast Salish men, who could grant access and inclusion to people outside of their family group. This ownership of resource procurement sites, fishing grounds, and vegetation was a profound responsibility for the owners whose wealth



Historical marker on San Juan Island commemorating the formal end of The Pig War in 1872. Lynch/White Collection, Washington State Historical Society, ID 2007.133.147.

was measured by the food, medicine, and knowledge they provided for their community.

As British and American authorities made treaties to legitimize—from non-Indigenous perspectives—the seizure of Indigenous homelands and forcibly displace Native people, they assigned reservation territory to specific tribal groupings that corresponded to those nations that had signed treaties with them. This forced individuals with multiple identities and backgrounds that spanned the international boundary to choose which tribe they would belong to, or face a reality of violence and exclusion by white settlers. Tribes or First Nations that had signed treaties with the British government only enjoyed guarantees and protections with the British government; the United States would regard these people as foreigners who held few rights within the U.S. portion of their homelands. For the numerous people whose ancestry and culture spanned both sides of the new international border, the resolution of the San Juan Boundary Dispute meant that despite

treaty language which supposedly safeguarded their access to resources in their “usual and accustomed” places, an international boundary greatly circumscribed their ability to travel, farm, hunt, fish, socialize, and worship as they had for millennia.

The story of one Native American family illustrates how choices made in relation to legal options could result in dramatically different outcomes. Fanny Jewell and Ellen Jones were Coast Salish sisters whose history highlights the limited choices available to Indigenous women as their homeland transitioned from Salish territory to colonial borderland. For many, treaty rights with imperial governments resulted in displacement or relocation, but Fanny and Ellen remained on San Juan Island where they each married immigrant settlers. Historians did not record the specific tribe they belonged to, but it is known that they were born in the 1840s in the San Juan Islands. Fanny’s husband Peter Jewell was Danish, while Ellen’s husband Fred Jones had emigrated from Germany. Both families farmed the land. Like many other Indigenous women living on San Juan Island during the American and British boundary dispute, Fanny and Ellen established interracial households and their husbands claimed citizenship through naturalization.

Washington Territory’s 1854 legal code did not prohibit interracial marriage. This was most likely an oversight, because in 1855 the code was revised to prohibit and invalidate unions between white residents and anyone with “negro or Indian blood.” In 1865, after realizing that many citizens had violated the code, the Territorial Legislature recognized the progeny of interracial marriages as legitimate heirs without granting parental rights to Indigenous mothers. Legislatures removed the anti-miscegenation language from the marriage law in 1868, which made interracial marriage legal from that time forward, but this had no retroactive impact on marriages solemnized prior to 1868.

Registered marriages were legally valid, but Indigenous family bonds faced challenges in territorial courts. For example, when Peter Jewell died with no established will, his widow Fanny Jewell’s property claims and parental rights were at the court’s mercy. With no legal marriage on the record, she had few, if any, options. Jewell withdrew her name from the probate claim so that Nora, her eldest daughter, would gain the estate. Because Fanny had no legal rights as Nora’s mother, the 1865 law that recognized the legitimacy of mixed-race children labeled her child an orphan. As a result, the court removed Nora from her mother and placed her and her property under a white family’s guardianship.

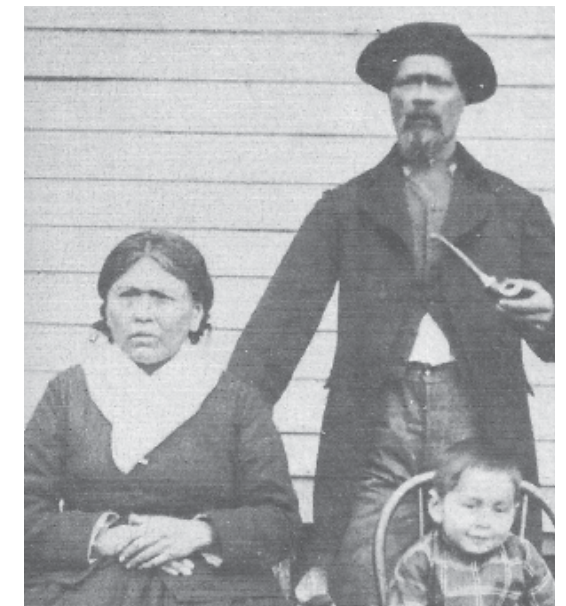
Unlike Fanny Jewell, Ellen Jones’ experience was much different because she and her husband—who had most likely learned from Fanny’s experience—registered their marriage and filed a will validating Ellen’s property rights. When her husband died, Ellen Jones’ claim could not be challenged in the courts. The difference in the sisters’ experiences

showcased how Indigenous women in the region were marginalized and their fates determined by limited legal options. In the end, Fanny Jewell’s family was legally dismantled and her story was lost to history. Meanwhile, after Ellen Jones’ husband died, she remained on San Juan Island working a successful farm situated near Friday Harbor and raising the couple’s children.

Another group of people whose lives were violently disrupted by this new international border were the Hawaiian Islanders—or Kanakas—who had called San Juan Island home since 1853, when the Hudson’s Bay Company established the Belle Vue Sheep Farm there. The farm’s initial workers comprised more than a dozen Hawaiian shepherds who were longtime HBC employees. On San Juan Island, these Hawaiian men built homes for themselves and many started families with Coast Salish women. Some Hawaiians left the company’s employment and became farmers and fishermen in their new island home. When San Juan Island became United States territory, the racist laws of Washington Territory and the United States denied Hawaiians equal protection under the law as well as access to homestead claims, forcing these settlers who had called San Juan Island home for more than a decade to move to the other side of the international border where British law treated them more equitably.

This was not the first time that this had happened to Hawaiians on San Juan Island. Fort Vancouver, in what is now Washington State, had been an HBC trading post for decades before the Oregon Treaty decided the boundary dispute in that area, making it part of the United States. Hawaiians had participated in the Northwest fur trade since 1787 and hundreds of Hawaiians worked in present day Oregon and Washington for the HBC in the 19th century. As the HBC moved its operations from Fort Vancouver to Vancouver Island, British Columbia, many of these men tried to retain the land, property, and life that they had built in the new American territory of Washington. American politicians, such as Oregon member of the United States House of Representatives Samuel R. Thurston, regarded Hawaiians as foreigners and racial inferiors, describing them as “a race of men as black as your negroes of the South, and a race, too, that we do not desire to settle in Oregon.” Hawaiian residents fought in court to retain their property rights and the right to vote, but Oregon courts ruled in the 1840s that due to their racial differences, Hawaiians held no rights in the Oregon Territory, leading many Hawaiians who had been employed by the Hudson’s Bay Company to move with the company to its new centers of operation on Vancouver Island and nearby San Juan Island.

One family that exemplified this coerced migration was that of Po`alima, also known as Peter Friday (Po`alima means ‘Friday’ in Hawaiian). A Hawaiian Islander who first came to the Pacific Northwest in 1842 at the age of 12, Po`alima initially worked at the Cowlitz Farm, an HBC agricultural center near the mouth of the Columbia



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Before he fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War, George Pickett led American forces in The Pig War on San Juan Island. Portrait of General George E. Pickett, in Confederate Civil War military uniform, circa 1860. Washington State Historical Society, ID 2011.0.206.

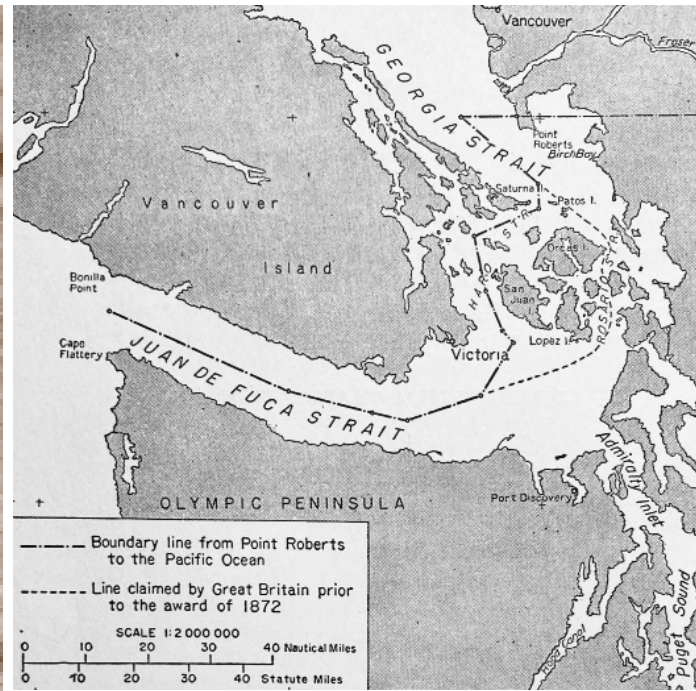
Postcard image of a Pig War-era blockhouse from the 1860s at English Camp on San Juan Island, circa 1913. Washington State Historical Society, ID 2009.33.44.

Award-winning fiddle player Charley Kahana’s parents John Kahana, Hawaiian, a Hudson’s Bay Company worker, and Mary Skqualup, Lummi, with their child Robert Kahana. Courtesy Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Western Washington University.

Watercolor of American Camp by Artist Richard Frederick Britten (1843-1910). Courtesy BC Archives.

The British garrison at San Juan Island, circa 1859, prior to construction of more formal buildings at English Camp. Photo attributed to Lieutenant Richard Roche of the Royal Navy. Courtesy BC Archives.





LEFT: Charley Kahana, an award-winning fiddler, was born to a Hawaiian Hudson's Bay Company employee and a Coast Salish mother during the joint occupation of San Juan Island. Courtesy National Park Service.

RIGHT: A U.S. State Department diagram showing the two waterways at the heart of the San Juan Boundary Dispute: Haro Strait on the west, along the dashed boundary line indicating the border as defined in the 1872 resolution, and Rosario Strait on the east, along the dotted line indicating Great Britain's boundary claim prior to 1872. Courtesy U.S. Department of State.

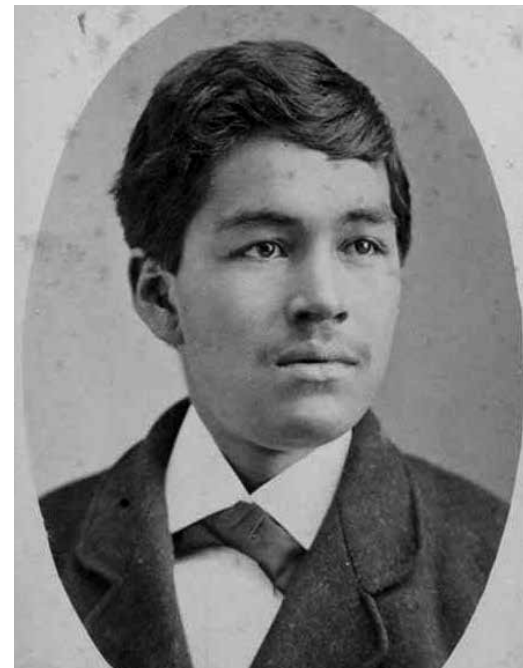
River in present day Washington. While there, Po`alima married a Coast Salish woman and they had a child named Joe Friday. In 1854, the Friday family moved to San Juan Island where Po`alima worked as one of the HBC shepherds, rearing and herding sheep from his home in what is now the village of Friday Harbor.

During his time there, Po`alima was visited by a passing American ship. Sailors on board asked him what the place he lived was called. Po`alima, misunderstanding his interlocutors, told the Americans his English name, which is how Friday Harbor got its name. In 1860, Po`alima left the Hudson's Bay Company and began homesteading independently at his former sheep station. At some point, Po`alima's wife died and he remarried a Songhees First Nations woman named Saaptenar with whom he had two daughters. When all the other Hawaiians left San Juan Island in 1872, the Friday family remained, using Po`alima's son Joe's status as an American-born citizen to claim their family homestead. Po`alima and Saaptenar were not allowed to claim under their own names because Native Americans and native Hawaiians were barred from full citizenship based on race. In his old age, Peter Friday rejoined his fellow Hawaiian HBC employees and their families in British Columbia where they had relocated after the boundary dispute resolution to enjoy equal rights.

Charley Kahana, an award-winning fiddler, was born to a Hawaiian HBC employee and a Coast Salish mother during the joint occupation of San Juan Island. Kahana's love of music was sparked at a San Juan Island dance while listening to Métis musicians who were employees of the HBC. Kahana's father moved with other Hawaiian HBC

employees to Salt Spring Island after 1872, but Charley Kahana stayed with his mother's family on San Juan Island, eventually settling with relatives on the Lummi Reservation. At the age of 13, Kahana first played for a public audience at an Orcas Island dance, beginning 60-plus years of public performances which took him to dance halls and entertainment venues across the Pacific Northwest. Kahana worked as a farm hand and a logger, and eventually became the pilot of a schooner owned by the Roche Harbor Lime Company and regularly crossed the new border to the burgeoning city of Victoria, British Columbia. But Kahana's real passion was music and at the age of 65, he won the Washington State Fair fiddling contest, an accomplishment that demonstrated the artistic skill he had mastered since he first fell in love with music during the joint occupation of San Juan Island.

Those who've read about The Pig War and visited the park have undoubtedly learned about American commander George T. Pickett, whose tactical bumbling—the first two island encampments he chose for American forces lacked water and were exposed to British fire—presaged his legendary incompetence as the Confederate commander of Pickett's Charge at the pivotal Battle of Gettysburg. What they likely did not encounter was the story of Jimmie Pickett, the son of George Pickett and a Haida mother, who was two years old at the time of The Pig War. Jimmie's mother died when he was an infant, and his father left the Pacific Northwest forever in 1861. Jimmie was raised by loving foster parents who encouraged his artistic ambitions, sending him to art schools in Olympia and San Francisco. From his childhood, visitors had admired Pickett's artistic skills; he won art competitions



TOP: Portrait of James Tilton "Jimmie" Pickett, son of George Pickett and a Haida mother, at about age 20. Washington State Historical Society, ID C1949.1265.36.

BOTTOM: Charcoal drawing on paper of a marble bust of a Greek woman, by James T. Pickett, 1885. Washington State Historical Society, ID 1995.0.136.

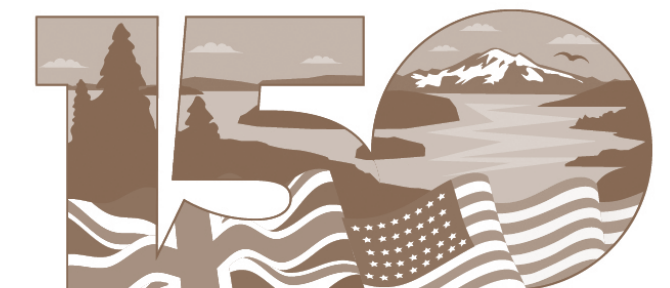
and became one of the premier working artists in the 1880s Pacific Northwest. He held a position as a staff artist at the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* and later at the *Oregonian* in Portland. Though he died at just 32, Pickett's artistic legacy lives on in the collections of museums (including the Washington State Historical Society), memories, and stories.

Stories of Anna Pike are something that guests at American Camp Visitor Center, built in the heart of Pike's homestead, have likely never heard. Pike, a Tsimshian

woman from Metlakatla, Alaska, married Christopher Rosler. He was a young German immigrant serving with the U.S. Army at American Camp when Anna's Indigenous family came to San Juan Island at the height of The Pig War. Pike and Rosler raised nine children on a 160-acre homestead and utilized old buildings from American Camp as their first home. Anna found time despite her backbreaking household duties to beautify the grounds surrounding her home with trees and daffodils, snowdrops, narcissus, and bluebells, which still bloom and grow today in American Camp. Anna's indomitable spirit ensured the family's ownership of the farm for five generations following Christopher's death in 1906 and her death in 1909. Grandma's Cove at the National Park Service's American Camp Unit is named after "Grandma" Anna Pike, and many of her descendants still live on San Juan Island.

A century and a half later, the circumstances and outcome of The Pig War rightfully command the attention of scholars as well as those with even a casual interest in history. The 2022 commemorations are likely to attract new and wider audiences, some of whom will be learning about this history for the very first time.

For those new to the story or who may have only heard earlier tellings, the more troubling and lesser known stories of the San Juan Boundary Dispute will shed more light on the complexities of Washington history. The 150th anniversary of the boundary resolution is an opportunity to explore how the past affects the present by examining the impacts of the joint occupation, racist laws, and the boundary decision on the Indigenous people who had called this place their home for millennia, as well the Hawaiian people who lived and worked in the San Juan islands. New interpretation and new exhibits at San Juan Island National Historic Park will demonstrate the continuity and change in the ways human beings have related to the island's landscape over the centuries. Visitors in this anniversary year, and in the years ahead, will gain a sense of what the "peaceful resolution" of the boundary dispute meant for different groups of people, and the global impact of our local history. 🌍



1872 - 2022 BOUNDARY DISPUTE RESOLUTION
SAN JUAN ISLAND
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

www.nps.gov/sajh/index.htm

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ON THE COVER

Belle Vue Sheep Farm, seen in its heyday in September 1859 during The Pig War, was operated by Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) on San Juan Island in the 1850s. HBC's island herd of 4,500 sheep provided a steady supply of wool and mutton for shipment around the Pacific Rim. National Park Service painting by Richard Schlecht.