HISTORY NEWS

Whatcom County Historical Society Newsletter

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Waterfront as Contested Space

by Anna Booker and David Jepsen

The history of the Pacific Northwest is a two-centuries-old story of people of all backgrounds contesting the boundaries that blocked their path to equality and justice. Few places were more contested than Bellingham Bay and the waterfronts of North Puget Sound. From a time when only indigenous people inhabited the region, to the arrival of Euro-Americans in the nineteenth century, and throughout the twentieth century, people and governments have fought for control of the waterfront and its vast natural resources. See how two historians are reimagining the past and changing how it's taught to college students.

Women packing salmon at the Pacific American Fisheries cannery in Bellingham around 1905. Washington and Oregon eventually passed laws limiting the hours women could work on their feet. A "woman's physical structure" and "maternal functions," the courts ruled, endangered her ability to produce "vigorous offspring." Image reprinted with permission from the Washington State Historical Society.

Anna Booker, history professor at Whatcom Community College, brings local history to life with the "Bellingham Working Waterfront" project. Using maps and interactive tools, Working Waterfront illustrates the ever-shifting boundaries as people vied for control over the waterfront's valuable natural resources. Booker will be joined by David Jepsen, coauthor of *Contested Boundaries, a New Pacific Northwest History*. Jepsen places Whatcom County at the center of an epic contest where people from throughout the region hurdled one boundary after another during settlement, industrialization, economic calamity, world war and globalization. Jepsen discusses the "urban pioneers," the daughters and granddaughters of the original pioneer women. Instead of venturing west into an unknown land, they ventured into the cities for the first time in search of jobs.

October 2018 Program

Waterfront as Contested Space

With Anna Booker & David Jepsen

Thurs., Oct. 11 at 7:30 p.m.

Whatcom Museum Rotunda Room
121 Prospect St.
Free and open to all