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BOOKMONGER

Intermarriages affected frontier life

Bellingham historian Candace Wellman has uncovered a fascinating chapter of Pacific Northwest history that for too long has been dismissed as inconsequential.

Nearly 20 years ago, while performing research at the Washington State Archives, she stumbled across the fact that of all the marriages that occurred in Whatcom County during the frontier period, some 90 percent were between white men and Native American women.

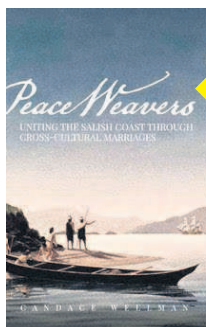
While that may have been the place where this happened with the most frequency, the practice was not uncommon in Oregon and Washington Territories throughout the mid-19th century. The phenomenon of intentional intermarriage occurred because it benefited

two different cultures during a transitional time.

Yet the stories from this era of productive and deeply intimate intercultural relations have been largely ignored.

Instead, most historical narratives place significantly more emphasis on the arrival of the first white woman in any pioneer community, or the birth of the first white baby.

Wellman challenges that convention with her new book, "Peace Weavers," which focuses on the stories of four Coast Salish women: Caroline Davis Kavanaugh, Mary Fitzhugh Lear Phillips, Clara Tennant Selhametum and Nellie Carr Lane. All four were from families of high stature in their own indigenous communities. As young brides (sometimes excessively



"Peace Weavers"
By Candace Wellman
WSU Press
302 pp
\$27.95

young, by our 21st century standards), they entered into tribal custom marriages with American military officers and government officials who had arrived in the Territory to defend U.S. interests against competing colonial powers. Some of these cross-cultural unions were further sanctioned by a lenient justice of the peace in civil ceremonies, even though miscegenation was considered a crime.

Wellman's painstaking research, conducted over 18 years, plumbed archival collections, genealogical research, court cases, published research by both professional and independent historians, oral histories and interviews with descendants. She demonstrates that the marriages involved pragmatism (the men needed someone to cook, keep house, tend the farm, etc.) and strategic relationship building between cultures. But sometimes they also involved love — and almost always, offspring.

Wellman explores how these young women, with scarce control of anything except within their own domestic

sphere, nonetheless became "mediators and interpreters of both cultures," connecting different factions, disproving negative stereotypes and weaving together a new type of integrated community.

Unfortunately, with the increasing influx of new settlers who had little tolerance for a different way of life, this model of tolerance was unable to prevail. And, shamefully, in the face of these pressures, many of the white husbands ultimately abandoned their Native American wives and mixed race children.

In this generously fact-studded work, Wellman sometimes loses control of the narrative — by neglecting to mention crucial identifying bits of information the first time a character is introduced, for example, or inundating readers with a glut of names and connections that are simply too much to process in the space of a single page.

Nonetheless, this story of four resilient peace weavers opens our eyes to a far richer and more contextualized regional history than we have been privy to before.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlink.com

COLUMBIA BAR

The Pine Derby

By RYAN HUME
FOR COAST WEEKEND

When you ask Eric Bechard, owner and bartender of Albatross and Co., for something new to drink, he will pause and think on it. The man has a veritable canon of spirits and liqueurs at his disposal, amassed through countless hours of research and outreach.

This drink, the Pine Derby, is a one-off. It will never appear on the menu or as a special, but if you ask nice, I would be surprised if Albatross and Co. wouldn't fix one up for you.

This drink has all of the notes of a summer Hefeweizen, packed with the punch of spirits. Each of these spirits and liqueurs are a pleasure to ingest on its own but find new meaning when concocted.

I was unfamiliar with the Zirbenz, which is a Stone Pine liqueur traditional to the Swiss Alps. Bechard came

across this liqueur about a decade ago in a conversation with a bartender friend. Made from the boughs, the Zirbenz adds a hoppy note to the citrus-forward Old Tom.

This is heightened by the addition of the orange bitters and don't be shy with the lemon rind. Bechard skins a hefty three-inch graft of zest off the fruit with a fairly big knife. He dusts the essence of the rind into the drink before submerging the rest of it.

The overall result is something that goes down easy and feels incredibly seasonal as the sun finally begins to warm those Doug firs and spike the air with their scent.

Pine Derby

1 ounce Ransom Old Tom Gin*
1 ounce Zirbenz**
1 ounce Carpano Bianco***
2 dashes Fee Brothers orange bitters
Lemon rind

Add all the ingredients to a cocktail glass, stir, and garnish with hefty slice of lemon peel.

—Recipe courtesy of Eric Bechard, bartender and owner of Albatross and Co., Astoria



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