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A Tale of Two Sisters: Family Histories from the Strait Salish Borderlands

Katrina Jagodinsky

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Abstract

Based on legal and genealogical records, this microhistory chronicles the difficult choices between whiteness and Indianness made by two Salish sisters and their biracial children in order to maintain their kinship networks throughout the Salish Sea borderlands between 1865 and 1919. While some of these choices obscured individual family members from historical records, reading their lives in tandem with other family members' histories reveals remarkable persistence in the midst of dramatic racial and political transformation. Focused primarily on San Juan Island residents, this article suggests that indigenous and interracial family histories of the Pacific Northwest and other borderland regions in the North American West can be more fully understood when examined collectively rather than in isolation. Such a model emphasizes the importance of personal borderlands histories and allows historians to overcome the archival silences so common among people living on the margins.

Family histories from the San Juan Islands are as distinctive as the slow-growing Garry oaks native to the valleys and meadow slopes of the island chain. One of those knotted and gnarled oaks stands near the center of San Juan Island, on a slight rise that yields a panoramic view of the valley farmed by Danish immigrant Peter Jewell and his Strait Salish wife, Fanny, in the 1860s and 1870s. (See figure 1.) Standing beneath its more than sesquicentennial branches, one can imagine the laughter of Fanny's daughters as they played in its shade with maternal cousins who lived a mile or so away. Fanny might have served lunch under the tree to day laborers between chores in the surrounding fields; perhaps she sought council and kindness there from her sister Ellen when her husband passed away in 1876. After Fanny's daughter sold the farm in 1886, island children would swing from the tree's branches between classes at the No. 2 Schoolhouse. The caring stewardship of the current property owners, the Sundstrom family, has ensured that this humble marker of Jewell family history remains on the island where they made significant contributions to the community's territorial settlement.¹



Fig. 1. Garry oak on Nora Jewell's property, c. 2012. Photograph courtesy of Guard Sundstrom.

This tale of two Salish sisters, Fanny Jewell and Ellen Jones, demonstrates two models for indigenous women's family histories in the second half of the nineteenth century. Fanny, the elder of the two, made choices to preserve her family that obscured their place in San Juan Island's history, while Ellen and her family remained prominent in that community throughout her lifetime. Their stories help to illuminate the limited choices available to indigenous women who lived through the region's transition from Strait Salish territory to settler-colonial borderland to nation-state. To better understand those often undocumented choices, this article places Fanny's and Ellen's family histories within the legal and social contexts that shaped the San Juan Island chain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Taking such a microhistorical view allows us to consider the personal histories of political borderlands in the Pacific Northwest, where we may find that obscurity and stability are deeply intertwined for figures dependent on kinship networks undergoing dramatic racial and political transformation.²

The Gulf and San Juan Island chains that included the Jewell and Jones family settlements had escaped the notice of those negotiating the boundary line between British and American territory in the Oregon Treaty of 1846. Although the British claimed Vancouver Island, and both sides agreed on the mainland boundary between Oregon Territory and British Columbia, jurisdiction over the islands between Haro and Rosario Straits remained in dispute until 1872. American interests in the islands increased with the establishment of Washington Territory, carved from Oregon Territory in 1853. British concerns about preserving their claim to nearby Vancouver Island prompted the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) sheep farm on San Juan Island the same year. Many of the men who flocked there were immigrants who had spent little time in Britain or the United States, making national identities among them rather fluid and ambiguous on the "disputed island," where not all white men spoke the same language. When an American resident shot a trespassing pig owned by the HBC, American and British officials used the local and interpersonal dispute

1 This essay focuses primarily on Fanny and her sister Ellen, and so some aspects of Jewell family history are not discussed at great length. A more in-depth discussions of Jewell family contributions to Washington Territory and Indigenous women's legal histories can be found in Katrina Jagodinsky, *Legal Codes & Talking Trees: Indigenous Women's Sovereignty in the Sonoran and Puget Sound Borderlands, 1854–1946* (New Haven, 2016).

2 Innovative trends in borderlands and western historiography have recently been discussed in Kelly Lytle Hernández, "Borderlands and the Future History of the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 42 (Autumn 2011): 325–30 and Margaret Jacobs, "Western History: What's Gender Got to Do With It?," *Western Historical Quarterly* 42 (Autumn 2011): 297–304. Models of borderlands histories that emphasize the personal as well as the political include David Wallace Adams and Crista DeLuzio, eds., *On the Borders of Love and Power: Families and Kinship in the Intercultural American Southwest* (Berkeley, 2012); Albert L. Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (Albuquerque, 1999); and Anne F. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A History of the North American West, 1800–1860* (Lincoln, 2011).

to spark the “Pig War,” in which not a hostile shot was fired. Nonetheless, both sides established military forts on opposite sides of the island that remained staffed until 1872, when Kaiser Wilhelm I mediated the boundary dispute. The kaiser’s act declared Haro Strait the international boundary line between the United States and Canada and designated the island chain as American soil, even if its inhabitants remained marginal citizens inclined to marry Indian women.³

Peter Jewell, who would become Fanny’s husband, arrived in the Strait Salish borderlands from Denmark no later than 1864, while Ellen’s husband, Fred Jones, emigrated by 1866 from Holstein, a region claimed by both Danes and Germans during his lifetime.⁴ In a strange coincidence fitting of a borderlands family history, Wilhelm I would mediate the British-American dispute over the island on which Jones lived and incorporate his Holstein homeland within the German empire. In addition to their marriages to Salish sisters, the immigrant brothers-in-law shared intertwined European ethnicities. For inhabitants like them, island occupation by troops from Great Britain (primarily Irish, Scottish, and German) and the United States (similarly divided between Confederate and Union loyalties) throughout the 1860s ensured a market for garden vegetables and potential dance partners for their daughters. The presence of soldiers may also have comforted island residents concerned about the increasing presence of itinerant and disruptive miners who had swarmed to the region after the 1858 Fraser River gold rush and turned their failed mining ventures into permanent settlement in the Strait Salish borderlands.

3 Robert E. Ficken, *Washington Territory* (Pullman, WA, 2002); Tim Knudsen and Bo Rothstein, “State Building in Scandinavia,” *Comparative Politics* 26 (January 1994): 203–20; Brian Vick, “Liberalism, Nationalism, and Gender Dichotomy in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Germany: The Contested Case of German Civil Law,” *Journal of Modern History* 82 (September 2010): 546–84; Scott Kaufman, *The Pig War: The United States, Britain, and the Balance of Power in the Pacific Northwest, 1846–72* (Lanham, MD, 2004); John A. Hemphill and Robert C. Cumbow, *West Pointers and Early Washington: The Contributions of U.S. Military Academy Graduates to the Development of the Washington Territory, from the Oregon Trail to the Civil War, 1834–1862* (Seattle, 1992), 186–96; and Daniel P. Marshall, “No Parallel: American Miner-Soldiers at War with the Nlaka’pamux of the Canadian West,” in *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies*, ed. John M. Findlay and Ken S. Coates (Seattle, 2002), 31–79.

4 Immigration records have proven impossible to find, but the 1870 federal census lists Peter and Fanny’s oldest child, born in 1865, and Fred and Ellen’s oldest child, born in 1867, marking their arrival in the San Juan Island chain at least that late. The same census indicates Peter was born in 1826 and Fred was born in 1835. Fanny was born around 1843 and her younger sister Ellen was born around 1846. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States—1870, Washington*, Population Schedules for Whatcom County, The Disputed Islands, San Juan Island, microfilm, reel 1683, M593, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives and Records Administration (Washington, DC) (hereafter 1870 federal census, county, NARA). Fanny and Ellen’s relationship as siblings is documented in the criminal case in which Fanny’s daughter, Nora, charged her court-appointed guardian with sexual assault. *Territory of Washington v. James F. Smith*, JEF-1055, 1088 (1880), Jefferson Frontier Justice, Northwest Regional Branch, Washington State Archives, Olympia (hereafter Smith case).

Fanny and Ellen's tribal origins remain obscured in the records, but for generations, Strait Salish peoples had resided along coastal and mainland tributaries and occupied islands throughout the Gulf of Georgia and San Juan Island chain that Britons and Americans would claim as their own. Born in the mid-1840s, the two sisters witnessed the transnational contest over Salish lands. Ignoring the international boundary disputes that suddenly transected their traditional homelands, many families who now call themselves members of the "Songhees, Saanich, Lummi, and Samish tribes and nations" relied on seasonal visits from Vancouver Island and the American and Canadian mainland to harvest camas, a potato-like tuber, in fields maintained and inherited matrilineally on San Juan Island. Evidence suggests that other nineteenth-century Strait Salish families inhabited a winter camp on the northeastern portion of the island until English Camp soldiers dismantled their longhouse and displaced indigenous residents. Despite pressure to relocate, many indigenous people remained on the island and intermarried with immigrant newcomers like Peter Jewell and Fred Jones. Others continued to visit the island for seasonal harvests and social calls but settled permanently on nearby Vancouver Island or along the mainland British Columbia and Washington Territory borderlands.⁵

In the midst of these conflicting American, British, and indigenous claims to San Juan Island, Fanny and Ellen established their interracial households, perhaps purposely "on the edge of empire," where scholars have argued that residents could find relief from Victorian and imperial restrictions on personal and political behavior. In relying on intimate and economic bonds with indigenous women, Peter and Fred repeated a pattern carried throughout the British, French, and American Wests from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.⁶ Census counts from the period indicate that in the first three decades of American settlement on the island, immigrant men commonly cohabited with indigenous women. When the Jewells had their first child in 1865, and the Joneses followed in 1867, interracial households were the norm on their island; and yet, shifts in social attitudes and legal structures would mark these households as being outside the mainstream by the end of the nineteenth century.

5 Julie K. Stein, *Exploring Coast Salish Prehistory: The Archaeology of San Juan Island* (Seattle, 2000), 6, 4–6, 49–56; Wayne Prescott Suttles, "The Economic Life of the Coast Salish of Haro and Rosario Straits," in *Coast Salish and Western Washington Indians* (New York, 1974), 51–100, 115, 271; and Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto, 2010).

6 Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto, 2001); Jean Barman and Bruce M. Watson, "Fort Colvile's Fur Trade Families and the Dynamics of Race in the Pacific Northwest," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 90 (Summer 1999): 140–53; Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver, BC, 1980); Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus, eds., *One Step Over the Line: Toward a History of Women in the North American Wests* (Edmonton, AL, 2008); and Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Norman, 1983).

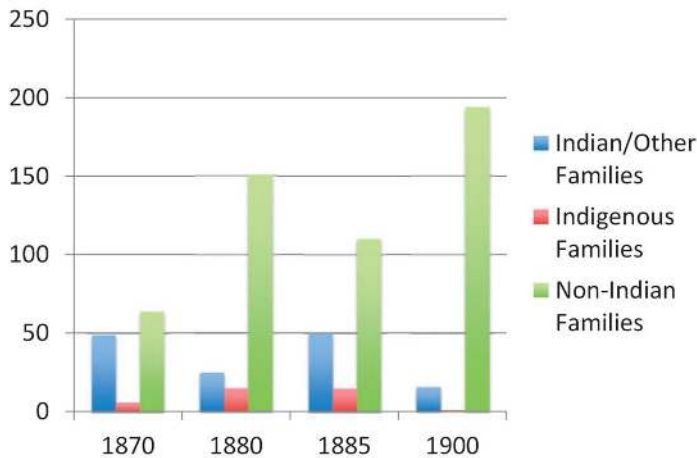


Fig. 2. San Juan Island households by race, 1870–1900. Data by: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States—1870, Washington*, Population Schedules for The Disputed Islands, Whatcom, microfilm, reel 1683, M593, Records of the Bureau of the Census, RG 29, National Archives and Records Administration (Washington, DC) (hereafter NARA); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States—1880, Washington*, Population Schedules for San Juan Island, San Juan, reel 1397, T9, NARA; *Washington State and Territorial Census—1885*, Population Schedule for San Juan, microfilm, M1, Washington Territorial Census Rolls, 1857–1892, Washington State Archives, Olympia (hereafter WSA); and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States—1900, Washington*, Population Schedules for San Juan, reel 1749, T623, NARA. Table by author.

Census data indicates that between 1870 and 1885, interracial and indigenous households constituted a significant portion of the island’s population: nearly half in 1870, almost a quarter in 1880, and more than a third in 1885. (See [figure 2](#).) The 1900 census reveals a precipitous decline in nonwhite households, but at least three of the white households listed in that decade included Ellen Jones’s mixed-race children, who were counted as white, and others likely passed for their own reasons as well. Although not completely accurate because of inconsistent reporting choices made by San Juan Island census enumerators and the residents who answered their questions, this data illustrates the normalcy of families like Ellen’s and Fanny’s on the island through the end of the nineteenth century.⁷ The dramatic increase in white

⁷ Data drawn from the 1870 federal census, Whatcom County, Disputed Islands, NARA; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States—1880, Washington*, Population Schedules for San Juan County, San Juan Island Township, microfilm, reel 1397, T9, NARA (hereafter 1880 federal census, county, NARA); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States—1900, Washington*, Population Schedules for San Juan County, San Juan Island Township, microfilm,

households also reflects a shift in the social acceptability of interracial households on the island that caused some to change their racial-ethnic affiliations. The sisters' children remained close to their immigrant fathers and Salish mothers until 1900, but the opportunity to enroll in area tribes convinced some of them to reclaim the indigenous identities of their mothers, while others sought the status of whiteness that their fathers' European roots made possible.

Ethnographic interviews conducted with Salish elders in the 1970s likewise included numerous accounts of intermarriage on the island and described intertribal and interracial family ties that linked island households to mainland communities throughout the American-Canadian borderland. Sarah Williams James had grandparents from British Columbia and Washington Territory and her children were born in their father's First Nations Cape Mudge community, but she reported that her "children are now Americans; they gave up their Canadian rights." Dora Williams Solomon described the difficulties indigenous women faced when they married white men: "I had four aunties that was married to the white people. I got some first cousins I don't know where they are. You become lost . . . The white men never brought their womens along when they came to this country . . . That's why there were so many Indian womans married to white men." Elders also remembered that indigenous women who married white men on San Juan Island served as important intermediaries between tribal and white communities while still upholding roles as spiritual visionaries and healers and transmitting resource rights matrilineally. Others recalled that early in the twentieth century, Native families yielded to immigrant and American newcomers, slowly but steadily resettling among family members on Vancouver Island, on the Lummi Reservation, or in intertribal communities distributed throughout the Washington mainland. Although not named explicitly in published interviews, Fanny's and Ellen's family histories are remarkably similar to those remembered in the late twentieth century by their Salish friends and neighbors.⁸

Although Fanny and Ellen could count many indigenous wives as neighbors, they could not necessarily count on courts to acknowledge their spousal rights as wives to American husbands. When territorial Washington legislators proposed their first legal code in April 1854, they allowed interracial marriages. That this may simply have

reel 1749, T623, NARA (hereafter 1900 federal census, county, NARA); *Washington State and Territorial Census—1885*, Population Schedules for San Juan County, San Juan Island Township, microfilm, M1, Washington Territorial Census Rolls, 1857–1892, Washington State Archives, Olympia (hereafter WSA). Single-sex and/or non-familial households are not included in figure 2. The 1860 census failed to indicate race and was therefore not included, although it does list families later recorded as Indian and white.

8 Ann Nugent, ed., *Lummi Elders Speak* (Lynden, WA, 1982), 69, 70; Suttles, "Economic Life," 41–570; Nugent, *Lummi Elders Speak*; and Jean Barman, "Invisible Women: Aboriginal Mothers and Mixed-Race Daughters in Rural Pioneer British Columbia," in *Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia*, ed. R. W. Sandwell (Vancouver, BC, 1999), 159–79.

been an oversight, and not the work of a racially progressive legal community, is suggested by lawmakers' move in January 1855 to revise the marriage act and prohibit unions between white residents and partners with "one-fourth or more negro blood, or more than one-half Indian blood." A decade later, territorial legislators strengthened their proscription of marriages "when either of the parties is a white person and the other a negro or Indian, or a person of one-half or more negro or Indian blood." Recognizing that many of their citizens had transgressed this racial and sexual boundary, legislators demonstrated juridical creativity by making the progeny of interracial unions legitimate heirs of their parents' property, even if their parents could not legally be married. While this 1865 provision benefited mixed-race children—and the state, by preventing illegitimate children from becoming public wards dependent on charity—the act continued to deny indigenous wives and mothers like Fanny Jewell and Ellen Jones the right to inherit their husbands' estates. On 18 January 1868, territorial legislators removed racial language from the marriage law, making interracial marriages legal without the benefit of positive or retroactive legislation. Although Indian-white unions registered with the state became legal, it would thereafter remain difficult for indigenous women to maintain family bonds in court, and archival territorial newspapers reveal that the legal move did not ensure social approval of interracial families.⁹

Washington's territorial residents could keep up with marital legislation in local newspapers, whose coverage reveals just how contested the miscegenation codes were among Fanny's and Ellen's contemporaries. When legislators first invalidated unions between Indian women and white men in 1855, the editor of the *Puget Sound Courier* acknowledged that he would never "marry any one who comes within the provisions" but that he protested "against this wholesale unmarrying of persons whose tastes or necessities have induced them to form such alliances." His view seems to reflect the increasingly middle-class settlement population, who viewed interracial unions as the legacy of a frontier past now deemed inappropriate for their settler-colonial future.¹⁰ Despite his personal reservations toward indigenous marital partners, the journalist in Steilacoom echoed many of his readers' concerns that the 1855 marriage act revision invalidated the interracial unions that had been legal for the previous eight months—which would have been just enough time to make the first generation of territorial Washington biracial children illegitimate heirs to white fathers'

9 "An Act to Amend an Act, Entitled, 'An Act to Regulate Marriage,'" *2nd Regular Session Laws of Washington, 1854–1855* (Olympia, [1856?]), 33; *Statutes of the Territory of Washington*. . . . (Olympia, 1866); *Code of Washington: Containing All Acts of a General Nature, Revised and Amended by the Legislative Assembly of the Territory*. . . . (Olympia, 1881), 184; E. S. Greene, "Judicial Review of Marriage Law," *Puget Sound Weekly Argus*, 26 June 1879, 1:1; and Katrina Jagodinsky, "'I'm in Family Way': Guarding Indigenous Women's Children in Washington Territory," *American Indian Quarterly* 37 (Spring 2013): 160–77.

10 "Pocahontas at a Discount," *Puget Sound Courier*, 31 May 1855, 2:6 and Phoebe Goodell Judson, *A Pioneer's Search for an Ideal Home: A Book of Personal Memoirs* (1925; repr., Lincoln, 1984).

property. This would become a concern for voting residents whose neighbors' mixed-race children could not inherit property and thus became potential wards of the state. As discussed above, legislators resolved this problem through the 1865 provision legitimating mixed-race children.¹¹

In the wake of the 1855–1856 Puget Sound Indian wars and the increase of northward migration due to the 1858 gold rush on the Fraser River, territorial Washington residents asked themselves why Indians had not taken up arms against their British neighbors. Some found the answer “quite apparent . . . [With] few exceptions, amalgamation with the Indians is practiced. British subjects have come here single, without families; the American pioneers have brought families with them, to settle up the country . . . This we regard as the grand though simple secret by which that [Hudson's Bay] Company, which holds nominal possession of so large a tract of country inhabited by Indians, are enabled to maintain their posts with so little molestation from the savage tribes.”¹² Although census records, Lummi oral histories, and contemporary settlers' accounts reveal the lie in this editor's claim that Americans only settled as families, his argument illustrates the prevalent antebellum view that Americans should not intermarry with Indians and should instead practice the settler-colonial imperative of monoracial, heterosexual reproduction to “settle up the country.”¹³

If the 1855 ban of Indian-white unions roused critique, so did the 1868 reversal of the antimiscegenation law. That year, a newspaper editor in Walla Walla, Washington, complained that the legislature had legalized interracial unions to accom-

11 Victoria Freeman, “Attitudes Toward ‘Miscegenation’ in Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia, 1860–1914,” *Native Studies Review* 16 (July 2005): 41–69; Ariela J. Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge, MA, 2010); Martha Menchaca, “The Anti-Miscegenation History of the American Southwest, 1837–1970: Transforming Racial Ideology into Law,” *Cultural Dynamics* 20 (November 2008): 279–318; Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York, 2009); and Patrick Wolfe, “Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race,” *American Historical Review* 106 (June 2001): 866–905.

12 “The New Indian War,” *Puget Sound Herald*, 8 October 1858, 2:2; Brad Asher, *Beyond the Reservation: Indians, Settlers, and the Law in Washington Territory, 1853–1889* (Norman, 1999); Ficken, *Washington Territory*; Alexandra Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities around Puget Sound* (Berkeley, 1998); Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham, 2005); and Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *Indians of the Pacific Northwest: A History* (Norman, 1981).

13 Stuart Banner, *Possessing the Pacific: Land, Settlers, and Indigenous People from Australia to Alaska* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); Jean Barman, “Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in British Columbia, 1850–1900,” *BC Studies*, nos. 115–116 (Fall/Winter 1997–1998): 237–66; Victoria Haskins and Margaret D. Jacobs, “Introduction,” *Frontiers* 28, nos. 1–2 (2007): ix–xvi; Frederick E. Hoxie, “Retrieving the Red Continent: Settler Colonialism and the History of American Indians in the US,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31 (August 2008): 1153–67; and Tracey Banivanua Mar and Penelope Edmonds, eds., *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity* (New York, 2010).

moderate Reconstruction Republicans in the Northeast: “The republicans of course are responsible for the adoption of this immensely ‘great moral idea.’ This is an advance step toward white-nigger-Indian equality and social miscegenation.” Although families like Fanny’s and Ellen’s had become sanctioned under the law, they would not necessarily benefit from social sanction among those dissatisfied with the racial equality measures taken up in federal amendments and territorial legal codes. The Salish sisters could not have been unaware of their family’s tenuous dependence on legislators’ and neighbors’ unpredictable racial tolerance. That territorial Washington jurists and citizens still felt conflicted over the issue was made clear in the 1878–1880 adultery and fornication indictments and trials against “the Whatcom Nine.” In what would become a notorious chapter in Washington’s legal history, prosecutors charged nine American men cohabiting with indigenous women in Whatcom County, which included the Lummi Reservation and, until 1873, San Juan Island. Historians have argued convincingly that antimiscegenation jurists used such charges to target and harass interracial couples who still held considerable social and political sway over settler-colonial and tribal communities along the American-Canadian border.¹⁴

As ethnographic, census, and newspaper reports indicate, San Juan Islanders and Puget Sound residents maintained strong ties to business partners and family members on American and British soil. Studies of British Columbia’s colonial and early incorporation periods demonstrate that residents there also disputed the official sanction of unions between Salish women and newcomer men. The American system of coverture, antimiscegenation, and federal Indian law intersected to ensure that Indian women and mixed-race children could not inherit the property of white husbands and fathers, though these wives and descendants could sometimes return to their Native communities to occupy tribally held lands and/or allotments. The 1876 Indian Act passed in Canada—still in development within the sisters’ lifetime—ensured that indigenous women who took Anglo husbands had their First Nations political status and claims to reserved lands revoked, so that they might be able to inherit husbands’ and fathers’ lands, but they could not bequest or reclaim their indigenous identity and status.¹⁵ Thus, Strait Salish women who married American citizens faced a racially transformative and impoverishing border crossing if they followed what became a pattern of moving off San Juan Island late in the nineteenth century. If they chose to join family on Vancouver Island, northward along the British Columbia coast, or

14 “Marriage Law,” *Walla Walla Statesman*, 14 February 1868, 2:1 and Peyton Kane, “The Whatcom Nine: Legal and Political Ramifications of Metis Family Life in Washington Territory,” *Columbia Magazine* 14 (Summer 2000): 39–44.

15 Jean Barman, *Maria Mahoi of the Islands* (Vancouver, BC, 2004); Jean Barman, *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto, 2007); Carlson, *Power of Place*; Hamar Foster, Benjamin L. Berger, and A. R. Buck, eds., *The Grand Experiment: Law and Legal Culture in British Settler Societies* (Vancouver, BC, 2008); and Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver, BC, 2002).

along the Fraser River, they became non-Indian, legally and politically dispossessed of Strait Salish territory. If they joined relatives on the Lummi Reservation, sent their children to federal Indian boarding schools, or married tribal neighbors, they became federal Indian wards dispossessed of Strait Salish territory. In the family histories and personal choices made by Fanny Jewell and Ellen Jones, the complexity and pervasiveness of the legal and social boundaries transecting their Strait Salish borderlands world become even more apparent.

As he enumerated the families of San Juan Island from late June to early July 1870, Assistant Marshall Edward Eldridge must have known most of the people who answered his questions. In the interdependent households that made up the island chain and mainland port towns, most faces were recognizable and most pasts were familiar. Fanny and Peter Jewell told Eldridge that they were married and had three children: Nora, born in 1865; Roma (elsewhere, possibly Rose), born in 1868; and Eliza, born in 1869. Nora's year of birth, prior to the repeal of the territorial miscegenation ban, indicates that she had been born illegitimate but that her sisters had not. There is no evidence that the Jewells legally recorded their marriage after 1868, though Eldridge listed Fanny as Peter's wife when he posted "keeping house" as her occupation, a category reserved for wives to distinguish them from hired "housekeepers."¹⁶

Ellen and Fred Jones also described their household to Eldridge that summer. Only a short walk separated the Jewells's farm, almost exactly in the center of the island, and the Jones home, closer to the Friday Harbor port, which would become the island's commercial and social hub. Both families supported themselves through farming and husbandry, as did most of their neighbors. Agricultural census schedules and estate records indicate that Peter and Fred achieved middling success in their exploits, so their wives enjoyed relatively comfortable, if still modest, homes. In 1870 Ellen had two children: Jennie, born in 1862 from a previous union, and George, born in 1867.¹⁷ Fred, aged thirty-five, and Peter, aged forty-four, both claimed American citizenship, though proof of their naturalization is difficult to find; and while the island was still under international dispute, they may have claimed Americanness whenever U.S. officials did the asking. Peter always gave Denmark as his birthplace; Fred reported Holstein in 1870 and then claimed Germany after unification under Wilhelm I some years later. For their parts, twenty-seven-year-old Fanny claimed British Columbia as her birthplace, while twenty-five-year-old Ellen claimed Washington Territory; she would change her story repeatedly in future enumerations.¹⁸

16 Carroll D. Wright, *The History and Growth of the United States Census, Prepared for the Senate Committee on the Census* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1900), 159 and 1870 federal census, Whatcom County, Disputed Islands, San Juan Island, NARA.

17 George Jones would not appear in census or vital records again, and his death is undocumented.

18 1870 federal census, Whatcom County, Disputed Islands, San Juan Island, NARA.

The sisters reported national origins that reveal several borderlands characteristics: shifting political boundaries, indigenous mobility, and transnational identities. First, it is possible that these sisters shared the same birthplace but that they recognized the significance of the 1846 Oregon Treaty that shifted the political boundaries within their homeland. Thus, at the time of Fanny's birth in 1843, San Juan Island was part of the British colony that would become British Columbia by 1866, while Ellen's birth in 1845 fell under the shadow of American jurisdiction. Second, it may simply be that they were born on different sides of the political boundary that transected the vast Strait Salish territorial claims to British Columbia and Washington Territory. Ethnographic and settler-colonial accounts reported widespread mobility and intermarriage among Salish peoples throughout the strait and coastal mainland. Finally, Fanny might have claimed stronger kinship connections to family members on the British side of the border dispute, while Ellen preferred to acknowledge her American networks and identity. Their husbands' choices to claim Americanness may, in fact, have given the sisters more flexibility to choose a national identity that suited their personal preferences, since any economic benefits of U.S. citizenship would have been established through their husbands. Demonstrating the fluidity and contingencies of transnational identities even further, Fanny and her daughter, Nora, would consistently claim British Columbian or Canadian descent after 1870, while Ellen and her children would alternate between American and British/Canadian origins for the next five decades. These choices, seemingly insignificant when examined only within census schedules, reveal much when considered in light of probate records.

Although she never appears in the historical record after 1870, Fanny would confront head-on the tangled legal webs that determined her rights as an indigenous and British Columbian wife to an American citizen after her husband's sudden death in November 1876. Peter left no will, which put Fanny's inheritance, and that of her children, at the mercy of courts working with laws and values that left interracial families vulnerable. Her combined status as Indian and illiterate made it impossible for her to administer Peter's estate, and Israel Katz—local merchant and lender—stepped forward to claim the position, no doubt motivated by an interest to collect debts on the estate. In probate court, Katz presented twelve-year-old Nora, Fanny's oldest daughter, as the only legitimate heir to the Jewell estate and made no mention of Fanny, Roma (eight years old in 1876), or Eliza (six in 1876). While some historians might read their absence from the probate and census records of the 1870s as an indication of their death, the prevalence of historical amnesia and invisibility among indigenous wives of immigrant Pacific northwesterners suggests that Fanny made a series of choices that removed her and her youngest, most vulnerable, children from the record. Knowing her options in 1876 helps to understand the possible choices hidden in such notable evidentiary silences.¹⁹

19 Paige Raibmon, "Unmaking Native Space: A Genealogy of Indian Policy, Settler Practice, and the Microtechniques of Dispossession," in *The Power of Promises: Rethinking Indian Treaties in the Pacific Northwest*, ed. Alexandra Harmon (Seattle, 2008), 56–85 and Barman, "Invisible Women."

When legislators made mixed-race children legitimate heirs in 1865 without recognizing the rights of Indian wives and mothers, they essentially made orphans of interracial children whose white fathers had died, and they put them under the administration of the territory's guardianship system—another category of family law. Even when jurists sanctioned interracial marriages in 1868, they only removed racialized language and did not act to grant Indian mothers or wives explicit rights within family law as heirs to husbands' estates and custodians of their biracial children. Fanny may have chosen to put her eldest daughter forward as the single heir of Peter's estate because she knew that the 1865 law granted Nora inheritance rights as his child, while the 1868 law only made Fanny a wife and heir if there was a marriage record—and there was not. Withdrawing herself from probate ensured that the court would grant the title to Nora and have no chance to withdraw the property from Fanny if it felt she was incompetent, which was a move made by other courts in Washington Territory throughout the 1870s.²⁰ Fanny might have hoped that Nora, in need of a guardian to oversee her inheritance until she reached eighteen, would be placed in her sister and brother-in-law's care while she and her other daughters awaited a chance to reunite on their San Juan Island homestead. As Fanny likely anticipated, Probate Judge Henry Tenschau acted on the 1865 marriage law when he recognized Nora Jewell as the legitimate heir of her white father's estate. What Fanny could not have expected is that Tenschau also followed the increasing trend among territorial jurists to place Indian and mixed-race wards in white homes that served as domestic sites of assimilation when he placed Nora in James F. Smith's home rather than with her Jones relatives.²¹

Although Nora's uncle Fred Jones acted as a bondsman in her 1876 probate hearing, he did not manage to make himself her guardian. Without explaining himself, Judge Tenschau placed Nora into a guardianship system that historians would recognize as child removal, if not indentured labor. In addition to performing field labor and mending fences, Nora suffered repeated sexual assaults at the hands of Smith, her court-appointed guardian, and by 1880 found herself pregnant at just fourteen years old. With the help of her maternal aunt's family, Nora filed sexual assault charges against Smith in what became the first nonwhite woman's challenge to white male sexual violence in territorial Washington's history. Jurors acquitted Nora's guardian

20 Jagodinsky, "I'm in Family Way."

21 Territorial Washington's guardianship and inheritance laws and subsequent revisions can be found in *Statutes of the Territory of Washington*. . . . (Olympia, 1855), 132, 286, 297, 305–7, 309–10, 407; *2nd Regular Session Laws of Washington*, 14–6; *Acts of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Washington*. . . . (Olympia, 1860), 225–30; *Statutes of the Territory of Washington*, 81, 85; and *Laws of Washington Territory*. . . . (Olympia, [1879?]), 136–7. Fanny's and Nora's particular encounters with these laws are illustrated in Peter Jewell Estate, Case No. SJU-4, 1876, San Juan Frontier Justice, Northwest Regional Branch, Washington State Archives, Olympia (hereafter Jewell estate).

and she married another white resident of the island chain a month later, though his ties to her are undocumented.²²

Traumatic in many ways, Nora's premarital pregnancy and early marriage coincides with ethnohistorical accounts of indigenous women's experiences in this period. Elders claimed that young Salish women with unnamed fathers married men from lower social classes, which would describe Nora's marriage to a middling immigrant homesteader named Edward Hitchens in 1880. Others explained that suffering—like the loss of one's father, separation from one's mother and siblings, and sexual assault—gave individuals considerable spiritual power that others feared and sought. It is possible that Nora gained authority through these difficulties and earned the esteem of her Salish and mixed-race neighbors and relatives.²³

Nora never reported her child or divorce to colonial census counters after charging her guardian with rape, but she left her husband sometime around 1883—a sign of strength, to be sure, and an indication that Nora could still rely on a network of kin for support. That Nora's child never appears in the documentary record may indicate infant mortality—another loss that might have given Nora power in the eyes of her Salish relatives—but may also reflect the choice to put her infant in a relative's home, a common practice in the period and region. Many borderlands households included children with surnames different from household heads, and twentieth-century Lummi recalled particular families that “fostered” children for friends and family members. When Nora left her husband, she had also reached the age of majority—eighteen—and became eligible to manage her father's estate without a husband or guardian. As in Fanny's case, records do not reveal where Nora went immediately after leaving her husband's home, but she most likely returned to the childhood home she had inherited from her father. Three years later, the land office recorded that Nora Jewell—not Hitchens—sold her father's land for \$1,000, with payments scheduled quarterly for two years, and thus providing Nora substantial income in her early adult life. Shortly after selling her father's homestead in 1886, the mixed-race woman took up residence in the nearby household of Danish immigrant Ole Wold, along with her maternal cousin Jennie Jones. Although Fanny's family was no longer intact by the time her eldest daughter reached twenty-two years of age, Nora had nonetheless managed to remain within a mile of her original San Juan Island home, and she still benefited from lateral kinship ties to her aunt Ellen Jones and her family.²⁴

22 Jagodinsky, “I’m in Family Way”; Jagodinsky, *Legal Codes & Talking Trees*; 1880 federal census, San Juan County, San Juan Island, NARA; Jewell estate; and Smith case.

23 Jewell estate; Smith case; 1880 federal census, San Juan County, Orcas Island, NARA; San Juan County Marriage Records, vol. 2, 18, San Juan County Auditor, Marriage Records, 1864–1939, Northwest Regional Branch, Washington State Archives, Olympia; and Suttles, “Economic Life,” 105, 394–411, 500–17.

24 Guard Sundstrom, current owner of the Jewell family property, provided copies of land sale records to me. *Washington State and Territorial Census—1883*, Population Schedule for Orcas Is-

Enumerated with remarkable consistency in territorial, state, federal, and Indian census records between 1870 and 1930, the Jones family represents a model of adaptation and persistence that stands in contrast to the model of amnesiac invisibility typical among women like Fanny and her daughters, who faced disruptive events in their family history. More stable than the Jewells because Fred and Ellen lived longer and because Fred filed a will that validated Ellen's inheritance of his property, the two sisters' tales demonstrate the interplay between agency and contingency in borderlands family histories.

The Joneses farmed just outside of Friday Harbor, which would emerge as the most prominent town on the island, giving them access to the developing trade, transportation, and communication networks that were part of Washington's state formation process and making their homestead a particularly sustainable one on the island. Their home might have attracted Salish mainlanders visiting friends and kin on the island in the late nineteenth century, and perhaps they embraced the diverse expansion of Friday Harbor and Puget Sound fisheries that linked island and mainland families to economic growth early in the twentieth century. While Fanny and Nora Jewell practically disappear without a trace after 1887, Ellen and her children's tales continue into the twentieth century. Tracing three of Ellen's children—Jennie, Caroline, and William—through the records makes apparent some of the choices available to biracial descendants on San Juan Island at the turn of the nineteenth century.²⁵ (See figure 3.)

The Joneses reported to H. W. Whitener—a man who had known the Jewell family well. The 1880 federal census showed that Ellen's first-born daughter, Jennie, worked as a house servant while living with her mother and stepfather. Fred claimed he was from Hamburg and Ellen disclosed that she and her indigenous parents had been born in British Columbia. The couple's household of six children included their biracial niece Rose Bradshaw, whose father was born in Canada and whose mother was born in British Columbia, a distinction that suggests the Joneses gave an incomplete report on their niece's parentage. Rose was the same age as Fanny's daughter Roma, and it seems plausible that the eleven-year-old might have been Nora's younger sister. In 1885 Fred reported that he was from Germany and Ellen continued to claim British Columbia as her place of origin; the couple included only five children—Caroline, William, Sarah, Ellen, and Fred—in their household. Although Rose left no trace after

land, WSA; *Washington State and Territorial Census—1887*, Population Schedule for San Juan, WSA; and Nugent, *Lummi Elders Speak*, 74.

25 Daniel L. Boxberger, "In and Out of the Labor Force: The Lummi Indians and the Development of the Commercial Salmon Fishery of North Puget Sound, 1880–1900," *Ethnohistory* 35 (Spring 1988): 161–90; Daniel L. Boxberger, "Ethnicity and Labor in the Puget Sound Fishing Industry, 1880–1935," *Ethnology* 33 (Spring 1994): 179–91; and Tom Schroeder, "Rediscovering a Coastal Prairie near Friday Harbor," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 98 (Spring 2007): 55–63.

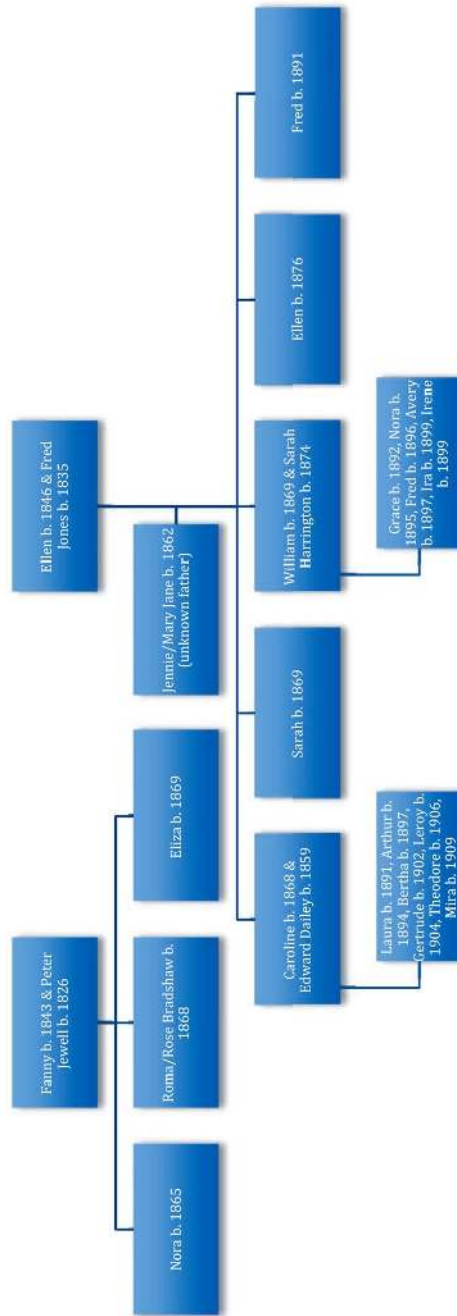


Fig. 3. Jewell and Jones family tree up to third generation. Data by: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census . . . 1870*, NARA; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States—1880*, *Washington*, Population Schedules for San Juan Island, San Juan, reel 1397, T9, NARA; *Washington State and Territorial Census—1885*, WSA; *Washington State and Territorial Census—1887*, Population Schedule for San Juan, WSA; *Indian Census Rolls—1896*, Grand Ronde Agency, microfilm, roll 169, M595, Indian Census Rolls, 1885–1940, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, RG 75, National Archives and Records Administration (Washington, DC); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States—1900*, *Washington*, Population Schedule for San Juan, reel 1749, T623, NARA; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States—1910*, *Washington*, Population Schedules for Tacoma Ward 3, Pierce and San Juan Precinct 2, San Juan, reel 1667, T624, NARA. Table by author.

1880, Jennie Jones and Nora Jewell's steps can be retraced with a careful reading of available federal and territorial records.²⁶

In the 1887 territorial census, twenty-six-year-old Jennie Jones and her twenty-five-year-old cousin, Nora Jewell, appeared in the Ole Wold household. The young mixed-race women likely provided domestic service in exchange for their board in the household that included the Danish patriarch, his wife—also from Denmark—their five Texas-born children, and a daughter-in-law, Addie Boyce Wold. Addie's parents, Lucinda and Stephen Boyce, would have known Nora's father, Peter, prior to his death, because Peter had served as San Juan County's first road supervisor in 1873 and Stephen was the county's first assessor. Lucinda reportedly offered midwifery services to island women—indigenous and newcomer—and would likely have known of Nora's troubled pregnancy in 1879–1880. With these connections to Addie Boyce Wold, and perhaps also because of their shared Danish immigrant heritage, Nora might have been very glad to find employment and shelter in the Wold household with her maternal cousin.²⁷

For her part, Jennie seemed to be undergoing a transformation, which was not uncommon among indigenous and mixed-race women in the region, since her recorded name is scribbled as “Mary,” written over “Jenny,” with a middle initial of *J*, followed by the surname “Jones.” After 1887 she is difficult to track without the assistance of oral histories or family memories, since Indian and biracial women named Jenny Jones and Mary J. Jones continue to appear in San Juan Island and Lummi Reservation records into the twentieth century. A likely match, however, seems to be “Mary Jane Jones,” who in 1890 married Peter Archambault, the interracial son of San Juan Island parents J. C. Archambault, born in “French Canada,” and Mary, marked as “Indian” and born in Washington. The Archambault family shared intimate connections to the Jewell family, appearing as witnesses, creditors, and bondsmen in Peter Jewell's estate records. These connections would have made them familiar with Jennie as well as Nora. Perhaps Nora underwent a name change more radical than her cousin, since she does not reappear in San Juan Island records after 1887, though her Jones cousins would remain on the island and move to the Washington mainland thereafter.²⁸

Like her older half-sister, Jennie, Ellen's daughter Caroline remained on San Juan Island after leaving her parents' household. In 1889, at the age of twenty-two, she married Edward Dailey, son of immigrant parents from England and Ireland. Racial ambi-

26 1880 federal census, San Juan County, San Juan Island, NARA; John Keddy (Cady) v. Peter Jewell, JEF-913, 925 (1875), Jefferson Frontier Justice, Northwestern Regional Branch, Washington State Archives, Olympia (Keddy case); and *Washington State and Territorial Census—1885*, WSA.

27 *Washington State and Territorial Census—1887*, WSA and Mike Vouri et al., *San Juan Island* (Charleston, SC, 2010), 9, 17.

28 *Washington State and Territorial Census—1887*, WSA; San Juan County Marriage Records, vol. 2, 31, San Juan County Auditor, Marriage Records, 1864–1939, Northwest Regional Branch, Washington State Archives, Olympia; Mike Vouri et al., *Friday Harbor* (Charleston, SC, 2009), 17; 1900 federal census, San Juan County, San Juan Island, NARA; Keddy case; and Jewell estate.

guity characterized Caroline Jones Dailey and her family, each of them listed as “W” (white) in twentieth-century federal census records, even though San Juan County birth registers described Caroline as the “mixed” mother of Edward’s “mixed” children in 1899, 1902, and 1904. Such discrepancies indicate the difficulties that county and federal officials faced in chronicling the racial-ethnic identities of an island population that continued to form interracial families that crossed international, state, and tribal borders well into the twentieth century.²⁹

In 1900 the Daileys lived next door to Caroline’s brother William, who had married a mixed-race woman, Sarah E. Harrington, nine years earlier. Although the 1900 census enumerator recorded Sarah Harrington Jones and her four children as “W” and their father as “1/2W,” it is possible that Sarah’s Oregon-born mother came from the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Reservation. William and Sarah appeared in the July 1896 Grand Ronde Indian census with daughters Grace and Nora. William no doubt named his second-born daughter after his close maternal cousin. The 1900 San Juan Island census schedule did not include Nora as part of William and Sarah’s household, but Grace was there, along with three younger siblings, and Sarah reported that she had lost two of her six children. The time the couple spent on the Grand Ronde Reservation might have acquainted William with the “benefits” of Indianness in the era of allotment, since he, like many other interracial San Juan Islanders, also established a home on the Lummi Reservation on the Washington mainland. Sarah and her children were thus enumerated as “Ind” on the Lummi Reservation and as “W” on San Juan Island in the same census schedule.³⁰

Ellen’s children, like those of her sister, saw many shifts in racial, national, and family identities among their island neighbors, but they managed to stay close to home and maintain extended kinship networks. Fred Jones died sometime between 1887 and 1900 but Ellen would live until 1919, and the federal census enumerator noted that she still remained on her San Juan Island homestead in 1910. Ellen’s inheritance of her deceased husband’s estate produced no probate contest, indicating that Fred had learned from his brother-in-law’s mistake and left a will for his vulnerable mixed-race family. Fanny’s aging and widowed sister must have been glad to have so

29 San Juan County Marriage Records, vol. 2, 41, 52; 1900 federal census, San Juan County, San Juan Island, NARA; Record no. 191, 5, San Juan County Auditor, Birth Registers, 1878–1907, Washington State Archives, Olympia (hereafter Birth Registers, record, page); Birth Registers, 251, 7; Birth Registers, 318, 8; Andrew H. Fisher, *Shadow Tribe: The Making of Columbia River Indian Identity* (Seattle, 2010); Alexandra Harmon, “Lines in Sand: Shifting Boundaries between Indians and Non-Indians in the Puget Sound Region,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 26 (Winter 1995): 429–53; Alexandra Harmon, “Tribal Enrollment Councils: Lessons on Law and Indian Identity,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 32 (Summer 2001): 175–200; and Kristin T. Ruppel, *Unearthing Indian Land: Living with the Legacies of Allotment* (Tucson, 2008).

30 1900 federal census, San Juan County, San Juan Island, NARA; *Indian Census Rolls—1896*, Grande Ronde Agency, microfilm, roll 169, M595, Indian Census Rolls, 1885–1940, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, RG 75, National Archives and Records Administration (Washington, DC) (NARA); and 1900 federal census, Whatcom County, Lummi Indian Reservation, NARA.

many of her children living near her after her husband passed away. Daughter Caroline, her husband, Edward Dailey, and their seven children lived on the Jones property with Ellen. Seven doors away (in the census schedule), Caroline's older stepsister, Jennie, now Mary Jane Jones Archambault, managed a farm while her husband, Peter, worked elsewhere—perhaps in one of the many Puget Sound fisheries that employed seasonal indigenous and immigrant laborers.³¹

The 1910 enumerator who recorded this close-knit family scribbled a “W” to categorize the Daileys’ race but left Jennie’s race blank. For matriarch Ellen Jones, the official wrote “W” in the blank for race but also added in the occupation blank, “Descended from the So—g tribe,” in a frustratingly illegible hand, an innovation that suggests Ellen’s direction. Although she had been reporting her Indian identity to colonial counters since 1870, the 1910 census marks her effort to document a tribal affiliation. Tribal associations for San Juan Island indigenous women varied widely, but the census taker might have been trying to spell *Saanich* or *Songish*, both Strait Salish bands with early twentieth-century settlements on nearby Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. In choosing to assert her tribal identity in 1910, Ellen may have been privy, through children and other relatives who had maintained networks among mainland tribes undergoing allotment, to the federal government’s heightened effort to allot Puget Sound Indians not enrolled on reservations. Her status as a “full-blooded” Indian granted her five surviving children an opportunity—if they chose to also become federal wards on tribal rolls—to claim allotments on tribal reservations in the coming years. Indeed, many San Juan Island families faced the choice in the 1910s of claiming Indian “status” or of being “white” islanders on territorial-era homesteads.³²

William Jones and his family did not appear on the island in 1910, though there are other signs that they maintained seasonal connections on the mainland Lummi and Puyallup Reservations in addition to calling San Juan Island home, as did many other Puget Sound and Strait Salish Indians who worked in the hop trade in the early twentieth century. Remarkably, a Nora Jewell with a father from Denmark did declare herself a resident of Tacoma, Washington, that year—the first Nora Jewell to appear in a Washington census since Fanny’s daughter was included in Ole Wold’s household

31 U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States—1910, Washington, Population Schedules for San Juan County, San Juan Island*, microfilm, reel 1667, T624, NARA (hereafter 1910 federal census, county, NARA).

32 1910 federal census, San Juan County, San Juan Island, NARA and Karen Jones-Lamb, *Native American Wives of San Juan Settlers* (Kent, WA, 1994). Ellen Jones, her surviving five children, thirteen grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren would appear together on the 1 January 1919 “Schedule of Unenrolled Indians” of Friday Harbor, San Juan Island, taken by Charles Roblin to aid the federal government in documenting off-reservation Indians in northwestern Washington. Charles E. Roblin, *Application for enrollment and allotment of Washington Indians, 1911–1919* (Washington, DC, n.d.), microfilm, roll 1–6, M1343, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1793–1999, RG 75, NARA–Northern Region (Seattle).

with cousin Jennie in 1887. Although the Tacoma enumerator classified Nora as “W” in 1910, Nora’s mixed-race kin on San Juan Island also appeared repeatedly as “W.” There are other discrepancies that do not rule out the possibility that Fanny’s daughter moved to Tacoma. The recorder wrote “California” for Nora’s mother’s birthplace in 1910, but with an increasing regional usage of the abbreviation “CA” for both California and Canada, there may have been some confusion—or ambiguity—that Nora took advantage of to claim “whiteness,” if it served her to do so. The racially ambiguous woman reported herself as seven years younger than she should have been, though among a generation of borderland dwellers born prior to statehood and institutional record keeping, exact birth years were frequently forgotten. Nora also described herself as a widow in 1910, which would have masked her premarital pregnancy and divorce with a veil of respectability, attainable in a city that granted more anonymity than she could achieve on San Juan Island, if she wanted to sidestep the vulnerability of her mixed-race status.³³

In the years Nora Jewell avoided census takers and Ellen Jones opened doors to them, Washington had matured into statehood and settler colonists from Europe and Canada had, by and large, become American citizens, assured of their membership in the national body politic, even if equally convinced of their exceptional borderlands history. In 1887 interracial families like the Jewells and Joneses lived in close proximity with Anglo families in the island chain, but citizens and subjects divided by cultural and physical boundaries in 1910 made it difficult for women from disrupted families like Nora’s to leverage the sociopolitical authority that had once been widely acknowledged throughout the region. In the late nineteenth century, for instance, Seattle and Victoria had both passed codes denying residency to indigenous wards and relegating Indians beyond municipal boundaries.³⁴ Such statutes, though not enacted in every Puget Sound city or always effectively maintained (hop workers’ camps are an example of lax enforcement), worked as much to discourage Indianness within urban spaces as to affect the physical removal of Indians from cities. Nora and her family members, however, overcame the sometimes subtle and often overt racism directed at mixed-race Puget Sounders by choosing between Indianness and whiteness to secure legal and social privileges, which explains the racial ambiguity so evident in vital records.

Being American Indian in 1910 gave individuals access to extended kinship networks, educational and medical services delivered at Indian agencies, and eligibility for valuable tribal allotments. Being First Nations in 1910 likewise granted individuals access to extended kinship networks, but intertribal marriages limited Native

33 1910 federal census, Pierce County, Tacoma, NARA. William Jones and his children’s links to Puyallup are documented in Roblin, *Application for enrollment*. That no other Nora Jewell appears in the Washington census records for this period convinces me that the woman appearing in the 1910 Tacoma schedule is the same Nora Jewell born and raised on San Juan Island.

34 Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories From the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle, 2007) and Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*. Thrush discusses Seattle’s prohibition of Indian residents and Perry analyzes a similar ban in Victoria.

women's ability to claim status under the Indian Acts, which in turn curtailed their access to tribal landholdings and services. Given the shockingly low quality of educational and medical services provided to tribal members on both sides of the U.S.-Canadian border, and the difficulty in maintaining allotments or achieving self-sufficiency on reserved lands, such "benefits" of indigeneity did not always appeal to biracial people like Nora Jewell. Claiming whiteness did not necessarily grant individuals greater access to education, land title, or medical care; but claiming whiteness did expand mixed-race peoples' access to portions of the Puget Sound world increasingly reserved for citizens, not subjects. Those who chose to claim whiteness likewise resided in off-reservation spaces designated for citizens, while those who claimed Indianness resided in spaces allotted for subjects, each making choices about the privileges and risks these racial-ethnic categories offered.³⁵

In 1919 Nora's cousin Fred Jones (named after his father) lived in Puyallup, which bordered Tacoma, with his son, Fred Jones III. Nora's cousin William Jones had a daughter and three grandchildren living there as well, and the Joneses surely continued to enjoy each other's company on the mainland as well as on the island for family and seasonal gatherings.³⁶ With her family living so near, Nora's possible declaration of whiteness did not indicate that she had severed relations with indigenous kin from San Juan Island or in other parts of Strait Salish territory. In fact, it is possible that her status as a renter in Tacoma, and her mobile profession as a dressmaker—particularly well-suited to urban settings—allowed her to travel along routes that her Strait Salish kin had used throughout her lifetime but which were increasingly closed off to Indians under pressure to enlist on tribal rolls and take up permanent settlement on federally established reserves.

The Joneses declared their Indianness on the 1919 Roblin Rolls, intended to enumerate the remaining off-reservation Indians of northwestern Washington. Charles Roblin described the biracial San Juan Island families he found in his survey as the "larger class" of Indians he enumerated and called them "descendants of Indian women who married the early pioneers of the country and founded families of mixed-blood 'Indians.'" Roblin explained that many of these descendants wanted to ensure they could claim allotments, though they belonged to communities that had not treated with the federal government in the nineteenth century. Of the San Juan Island families in particular, Roblin wrote, "These Indians are inextricable mixed with the Indians from British Columbia, Vancouver Island, and from Alaska." With

35 Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities* (Vancouver, BC, 2010); Bettina Koschade and Evelyn Peters, "Algonquin Notions of Jurisdiction: Inserting Indigenous Voices into Legal Spaces," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 88 (September 2006): 299–310; Sherene H. Razack, ed., *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (Toronto, 2002); and Wendy S. Shaw, R. D. K. Herman, and G. Rebecca Dobbs, "Encountering Indigeneity: Re-Imagining and Decolonizing Geography," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 88 (September 2006): 267–76.

36 Roblin, *Application for enrollment*, roll 1, 4.

connections so spread out, it is no wonder that Fanny, Eliza, and Roma Jewell were impossible for colonial counters to track after Peter Jewell's 1876 death. Nora Jewell stayed behind to keep their homestead but faced head-on the increasing vulnerability of indigenous and biracial women in the transition of San Juan Island from Strait Salish homeland into U.S.-Canadian borderland. With her maternal aunt's family so well established on the island, Nora could afford to sell the painful reminder of her abuse and loss and move to the Washington mainland. Once in Tacoma, she established an anchor that connected the Jones and Jewell families between Friday Harbor and Tacoma for another generation.³⁷

For the sake of their own privacy and dignity, the experiences of twentieth- and twenty-first-century descendants of Fanny Jewell and Ellen Jones are left for themselves, not an outsider academic, to tell. This article, though, should help to strengthen the roots of family histories like theirs, linking them to a diverse and fluid period of interracial intimacy and mixed-race predominance that is no longer obvious on San Juan Island. While other families familiar to the nineteenth-century Jewells and Joneses continue to be remembered in popular histories by local storytellers and family historians, it is only a lone Garry oak that stands witness to the history of the Jewell and Jones family.

This forgetful act is problematic because the historical experiences of Fanny Jewell and Ellen Jones reflect those of hundreds of other indigenous women in the Strait Salish borderlands at the turn of the twentieth century. This microhistorical tale of two sisters reveals that episodes of rupture—like the death of a citizen patriarch—could prompt indigenous women to rely more heavily on a transnational network and to adopt a racial and national ambiguity that made them difficult for colonial counters and modern historians to trace. Historians cannot assume, however, that such episodes made them disappear. Using ethnographic and contemporary sources more broadly, piecing legal records together more creatively, and reading vital statistics data more critically can help to recover acts of historical amnesia or make apparent the “invisible” indigenous women of the Pacific Northwest. Pairing Fanny's family history with that of her sister, Ellen, also suggests the importance of thinking of indigenous women within lateral kinship networks. The communal persistence and contingent stability that Ellen and her children enjoyed likely aided others who sometimes called themselves white and not Indian, who sometimes changed their name or sold property to shed a painful or regrettable memory, and who crossed international borders but knew they could always come back to family. As with the Garry

37 *Ibid.* Roblin's records and those of the Northwest Federation of American Indians, founded in 1916, indicate that several indigenous and interracial San Juan Island families participated in intertribal activism that helped to prompt several tribal claims for land rights before the Indian Claims Commission. Box 259, Tribal Operations Branch General Correspondence (Old Taholah/Tulalip), ca. 1914–51, Records of the Western Washington Indian Agency, RG 75, NARA–Northern Region (Seattle).

oaks on the island, one branch of the tree may wither and still another grows new leaves every spring.³⁸

These family histories are not likely a mystery to those who lived them or retell them in living rooms and kitchens today, but they should also not be a mystery to historians who recount the history of Strait Salish borderlands in classrooms and conference rooms. Together, the tale of two sisters reveals the frustrating fallibility and promise of historical evidence in recording the presence and significance of borderlands family histories that continue to rustle in the breezes of Garry oaks throughout the San Juan Island chain. Fanny's and Ellen's histories, in tandem with many others cited here, should raise doubts about common tropes in histories of the North American West: that miscegenation dwindled in the late nineteenth century, that Native people yielded to pressures to move onto reservations, that hardening national and racial borders slowed the geographic and social mobility of indigenous people in the twentieth century. These metanarratives are like invasive species that can dominate borderlands family histories the way English ivy can choke out a stand of Garry oaks. Pruning back such assumptions and cultivating borderlands family histories like this one are an important step in identifying the personal and political histories of the North American West.

38 Barman, "Invisible Women"; Fisher, *Shadow Tribe*; Harmon, "Lines in Sand"; and Raibmon, "Un-making Native Space."