

August 24, 2022
Portland, OR to Seattle, WA

We finally arrived in Seattle. A bit later than expected. But still. We arrived.

As our trip draws to a close, the work of ESTAR(SER) feels more urgent than ever. I cannot say that we learned anything definite on this research trip. Or that the speculative evidence we collected will yield anything more than hot air to further inflate the balloon of our collective research, which someday might burst with a tremendous pop.

But one thing remains certain: the Birds are real, circling out there somewhere in their clandestine coveys. Somehow, one feels that the Birds are much further away when we are looking *for* them ... and much closer when we are looking *with* them ... but it does no good to dwell on such a whimsical thought. As I suggested to Stevie and Gregory, in our frustrated efforts we might do well to remember a refrain of the Birds, “In Practice, Practice ...”

- Orrin S. Underwood



Unloading the Frye Trunk at the Frye Museum in Seattle, WA

Land Acknowledgement


We would like to acknowledge the following people whose past and present land we traversed on our cross-country journey: The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, the Cowlitz Tribe, the Clackamas, the Confederated Tribe of Grand Rone, The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, the First Peoples of the Salish sea, the Duwamish people, the Suquamish, Muckleshoot, Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, Pawnee Nation, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, the Jiwire and Nutachi peoples, the Omaha and Peoria Tribes, Sioux Nation, the Miami of Indiana, the Lenape, Osage Nation, Shawnee Tribe, the Unkechaug, and dozens of others.

As we drove through and camped in 11 different states, we observed a wide range of gestures toward engendering greater historical consciousness with respect to ceded and unceded indigenous land. For the most part, we found these gestures lacking and impossible to ignore, since historical research was a primary component of our project. While our stays were often brief, and our research focused on 20th century aesthetics, we felt compelled to create some space in our work for dwelling on the genocide and colonialism that continues to impact communities across the country today.

In Merrick County, Nebraska, where we conducted some of our research, a sign proudly commemorating the first white birth in the county still stands. We also stayed at Fort Robinson State Park, where Crazy Horse was murdered, and where 149 Northern Cheyenne were help captive by the U.S. Army and deprived of food and heat for refusing to move south in 1878. Rather than mourning the atrocities of the Fort Robinson massacre that ensued, the land now serves as a recreation site with portraits commemorating various army generals in the cafeteria. While both of these examples took place in Nebraska, we encountered countless other disturbing, if less obvious, accounts of history in every state we passed through. As amateur historians who often interpret the past generously and playfully, we want to acknowledge the spaces where that orientation remains insufficient.

The Frye Museum, where the Frye Trunk will be exhibited, sits on the ancestral homelands of the first people of Seattle, the Coast Salish peoples, specifically the Duwamish and Suquamish Tribes. We would like to honor the land and specifically the Duwamish people. If you would like to join us in honoring the Duwamish, you can sign their petition for receiving federally recognized status at the following website: <https://www.standwiththeduwamish.org>

The Milcom Memorial Reading Room and Attention Library at Mana Comtemporary sits on the original homelands of the Munsee Lenape. If you would like to learn more about the Lenape diaspora, please visit: <https://thelenapecenter.com>



Merrick County was officially approved on Nov 4, 1858. Nebraska the 37th state was approved on May 1, 1867. Western Stage Company erected the first building at The Lone Tree site. Mary Hilton operated the station from 1860 to 1861, then homesteaded across the road in 1862. The first white birth in the county was W.T. Burroughs Oct. 4, 1863. The First White Girl born was Mary Eatough, Aug. 25, 1864.

Candidates for Merrick County's first election were selected April 11, 1864 at the Brewer home. Three precincts were East, Middle & West Voting places April 18, 1864 were Eagle Island Stage Station, Jason Parker home & Shoemakers Point. Elected were Jason Parker, Jesse Shoemaker & George Gelston-County Commissioners. T.E. Parker-Sheriff, W.H. Mitchell-County Clerk, Wells Brewer-Treasurer, H.N. Lathrop-Prosecuting Attorney & J.G. Brewer-Probate Judge.