



Library podcast

Jack Nisbet discusses *The Dreamer and the Doctor*

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[00:00:36] Good evening everybody. Hi thanks for being here tonight. I'm Stesha Brandon and I'm the Literature and Humanities Program Manager here at The Seattle Public Library. And as we begin this evening I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered together on the ancestral land of the Coast Salish people. We honor their elders past and present and we thank them for their stewardship of this land. Welcome to this evening's event with Jack Nisbet presented in partnership with Elliott Bay Book Company. Thank you to our author series sponsor Gary Kunis and to The Seattle Times for generous promotional support of library programs. Finally we're grateful to The Seattle Public Library Foundation private gifts to the foundation from thousands of donors help the library provide free programs and services that touch the lives of everyone in our community. So it's a library foundation donors here with us tonight. We thank you very much for your support tonight's program will be a talk by Jack Nisbet followed by Audience Q and A and then a book signing. Elliott Bay Book Company has books available for purchase and the book signing will take place at this tall table right over there.

[00:01:43] Now without further ado I do. I'm delighted to introduce Jack Nesbitt. Jack is the author of several collections of essays that explore the human and natural history of the northwest including *Purple Flattop*, *Visible Bones* and *Ancient Places*. He's also written award winning biographies of fur agent and cartographer David Thompson. That book called *Sources of the River* and naturalist David Douglas which was the collector which I gave to my mother the year it came out for Christmas and she loved it. He's here tonight to talk about his newest book *The Dreamer and the Doctor* a forest lover and a physician on the edge of the frontier the dreamer and the doctor tells the story of an American physician and her Swedish naturalist husband who shop who helped shape the human and natural history of our region. Writer Kim Barnes says about the book part history part adventure tale part love story part futuristic foreshadowing. This book fascinated me from beginning to end with its eloquence urgency and quiet intensity. Can't wait to learn more. Please help me welcome Jack Nesbitt

[00:02:54] Thank you Stesha.

[00:02:56] So we can have an informal evening tonight but I do want to tell you some things about this couple John and Carrie Lee Berg who I've been chasing around for some time of a wide variety of people who've been after me to look more closely at them for maybe 20 years some of them were museum people some of them were historians but the majority were botanist and silver cultural lists and fire ecologists and physicians. So they cover a lot of ground and I guess all I want to do tonight is show you some of the visuals that they get out their story and let you hear some of their voices. They left behind some writings that are really get out the way it was in their world which was they spent a couple of decades in north Idaho on lake pond a ray and another decade on the Mackenzie River out of Eugene.

[00:03:55] And then Kerry went down to Oakland California after that. But their story really to me epitomizes a lot of the land issues of the west right around the run up to the Forest Service and they had a lot to do with that. And then a lot of the problems and issues that we struggle with today especially public lands and public health that we've never dealt with at all with any sense they were trying to do that then and they had ideas about how to do it. It's still work. I think they still work so we can restart run it on here.

[00:04:37] It's a railroad story as any of these are John's. Timing is impeccable. He's a Swedish kid who immigrates over by himself at age 15. There's a big gap in his life. He shows up again in Iowa working for a small railroad as a grain inspector and he's married and soon has a couple of kids and is in this little local newspaper in Sweeney Iowa is an upstanding community member.

[00:05:09] And then you start looking at the notes of the Natural History Club in Davenport and he's collecting plants for them and in 1880 he he as a 20 something year old he collects a little panic grass is the first plant named after him panic and early bird. So he's into it as a kid.

[00:05:30] He appears to be completely self trained.

[00:05:32] We don't have any record of him having any schooling after age 15 but he's obviously got an amazing skill and he's obviously very restless because he ends up in Mankato Minnesota and he ends up working for the Northern Pacific Railroad and in 1883 the year that they finished laying the tracks to Tacoma he has a job with them that is the most hilarious job and again is emblematic of the time as soon as they finish the tracks they start putting out these handbills that are trying to get settlers to come across and as you can see all of them show these broad leaf trees and corpses of cool forest coming across except for the one that has a mine that makes underground mining look like a carnival ride. And John's job is to plant Box Elder trees along the railroad grate in North Dakota and eastern Washington to make it look like this is real.

[00:06:32] Even though we know it's not and he rides all the way across.

[00:06:38] He collects Wallflower and a couple other cool plants on the slopes of Mount Rainier and you can track him by his specimens which you're all in the National Herbarium and really see the amazing extent he traveled. And sometimes he's not. Sometimes there's gaps in his letters or in his

journals or in his jobs but you can always find plant specimens that tell you where he was. It's a nice way to chase somebody he's interested in everything he goes back to the Minneapolis Natural History Club and does a paper on the petrified forests of western North Dakota where Teddy Roosevelt National Park is now and he can't stop his mind from working. He has these theories that this used to be a rich deciduous forest which it did and that the mountains the Rocky Mountains rose up which they did and cut off the moisture and made it into this dry arid plains that he's seeing now all that is correct. Nobody really had it figured out then because they didn't have the geologic time table or tectonic knowledge to really understand it. But he intuited how the landscape came and that really pays off as he goes along. He has a really good natural feel for landscape and this is kind of how it works.

[00:08:01] This whole book works is the Northern Pacific sent a photographer along with the trains going across so they could document.

[00:08:09] This is a great photographer named Francis Haynes and this is the trestle across the PAC River on Lake pond array which is where Leber really went out of his mind with how neat North Idaho was. And this looks exactly like it does today. There's a pedestal over the park river that looks just like this but it's not just like this. In 1956 a dam was built. It raised the river level about 12 feet and they had to build another trestle and that's the way a lot of lee Berg's world is. He will say things that sound just spot on with now but you have to make the interpretation between the hundred years and our world to really understand what is going Kerry is the same way.

[00:08:51] So Kerry Lieber is born in the New England.

[00:08:55] She ends up married to an older gent in Mankato Minnesota.

[00:09:01] We found a ninety nine year old great niece of Kerry's and got some she was very sharp got some oral accounts of her who describe a girl who always wanted to be a doctor at a time when you could not really do that in the US.

[00:09:15] And when her dad moved from New England to Mankato she apparently cut a deal or the family cut a deal with this older guy named Marvin who said that he would pay for her medical education if she married him. He was about twice her age which was totally standard at that time. So you see the Minnesota census from 1880 and it says James Marvin.

[00:09:41] You know Carrie Marvin housekeeper. They have an adopted son and that seems to be what's going on. And then the very next year she's going to this woman's medical college of Chicago which has now been absorbed by Northwestern which is a legit woman's college. She graduates two years later she's right in the middle of this attendance sheet. And in the graduation speech there's a real it makes the Chicago daily interaction and the male speakers talks about hygiene and the quote that they run in the paper is when the filthy Hubble's the miserable dark and musty basements and their foul backyard ceased to be the habitations of human beings.

[00:10:27] There might be a decrease in both crime and disease and you can take that from our point of view as somebody saying Well these women nurses should clean up and it'll make things healthier. Or you could understand that actually a lot of what Kerry did was fight poverty and hygiene and try to educate people and that was her lot. If you look at the courses that she took at the college they were in. She learned how to run a microscope and do slide specimens. She did surgery. She did a lot of Pediatrics.

[00:10:59] She did the training to become a family general practice general practitioner. And she was good at it and she did it most of her life. So there are there are funny couple because they're both married to other people at this point but that's not a problem because as soon as Kerry gets her medical degree she runs to California passes the bar exam there to become I mean the medical examiner to become a licensed doctor. John runs out on his family in Iowa and wants to become a prospector on lake pond. So that's what he does. They take the train around. They go to. They go to the south end of lake pond Ray and start up a homestead. Kerry has a child who we aren't sure who the father is named Bernard and they name it. Bernard peek just below it Leesburg point and they set up a homestead there and John develops this prospecting trail that starts it Arthel goes over Joko saddle which you can still take foresters service roads over and deals with the little North Fork of the pond a ray of the Courtland Lane River which at that time was not on any. So he had what every prospector wants which is the whole territory to himself. And he started pounding away. This is their homestead cabin which after it was abandoned by them years later made it onto a picture postcard. And it is now in Farragut State Park on the south end of Lake Pontchartrain which is a naval base from World War 2. And they only. So. So this got to stay and it's gone now but you can line up the site and see what an amazing place it is.

[00:12:39] It's an astonishing place and these cliffs that you're seeing off to the right is where the courtier and Glacier was stopped to make Lake Missoula glacial Lake Missoula and create the Ice Age floods that everybody talks about in eastern Washington which came out right over his house. He feels that as well and he writes amazing letters about coming down and staking about 30 claims over a period of 10 years and working them on the north for on the little North Fork. There are many names we're looking at some consolidated ones on Lieber creek There's Leesburg Ridge and Leesburg mountain in Leesburg everything over there he was a real he was working off by himself with a few of his neighbors trying to make it as every prospector was and none of them ever quite make it.

[00:13:25] That's the story of North Idaho prospecting after all but at the same time he was still interested in plants and he would send letters to collectors saying hey I have all these cool I know gold threads or Calypso orchids or many other neat endemic plants that he was trying to sell because this was a time when our barons were building up their collections back East and in places like Berkeley and Missouri and St. Lewis and you could make money selling plant specimens and the Burke was very good at what he did. And this is a very rich place for flowering and non flowering plants especially mosses and the botanical world is a small community and they took notice and they started coming out to visit to see what he was up to. And that led him to this amazing woman named Elizabeth Britton who was a moss and fern expert who was a woman so she couldn't teach botany at

Columbia University her husband who is a geologist taught the botany courses. But Elizabeth was a giant in the field published over 300 papers worked all over the Caribbean South America was fluent in Spanish. She was amazing and she probably corresponded with 100 amateur botanist like John Lieber but she took the time to nurture him. She was writing him three letters a week for a decade and he was writing back not as often but sometimes he was writing 20 page letters and these are all in the New York Botanic Garden so this is this is good stuff.

[00:15:01] This is good stuff and you can see John's letters here and you can see how you can see how this is what he has these he puts in there a mishmash of Latin names and different attributes that they're trying to identify plants but he also just goes crazy when he finds these rock ledges up on top of green monarch ridge above his cabin where the ice sheet stopped and he sees the fat mosses festooned down growing like hares and he's sending them off so Lizbeth Britton agrees to do the specimens of all things he sends back and they discover some really interesting mosses and she publishes some very important papers off of Lieber specimens. She's the expert she's mentoring him along. He will argue with her about different aspects of this but always about to her expertise he is untrained and he gets very good at it. This is what it looks like to the naked eye but this is what the page looks of this paper that Elizabeth published called some mosses collected in northern Idaho by John Lee Berg in 1889. These are the microscopic details that allow you to identify the mosses and this looks really really amazing Elizabeth Britain's obviously a very fine scientific illustrator. Now we have electron microscope and you see that it's much more than that there is a Paris dome over to the right that they're looking at and John is in his little cabin with a little microscope that might be Kerry's medical school microscope looking at the person. This is what it really looks like. And you go whoa this is amazing and you can't differentiate these species by doing that very specialized during the course of working for this book. I met a lot of botanists who just totally ignore mosses because they're hard and they're different. And they use a different language to really get into it.

[00:16:54] Britain and Leesburg and the people who are working with them did everything they were true naturalists they were interested in all. Elizabeth Britain is impressed by John's work and at the New York Botanic Garden which is just beginning to form they have a full hall of fame where all the people have their photographs up all the men have their photographs up and she gets John to send her a photograph.

[00:17:15] So we have a photograph of John that we get from the New York Botanic Garden Elizabeth Britton also ask Kerry for her photograph because she realizes that John has a wife and a kid out there and she starts writing back and forth as Kerry answers some of his letters when he is out prospecting and they develop a relationship. Britain is smart enough to send out the Harper's Weekly with the speeches from the presidential inauguration of 1888 because Kerry is curious because she is isolated and it was a split election in the time that they were in Idaho.

[00:17:52] There was three split elections where the Electoral College winner beat the popular winner. And it was a very divided nation politically. So Elizabeth is Britain is mentoring John in the moss world but she's sort of trying to draw Kerry out as well. And the what we know about Carrie Lee Berg is really in her letters to Elizabeth Britain John describes in his letters Oh you know we have such a

great family life out here we get on the horses and go up and have picnics with the kid and the wife and all these things on it while I'm pounding away on my prospects.

[00:18:26] Kerry does not describe it like that. Kerry is a doctor. She goes to Post Falls and opens an office opens a doctor's office and she has stories about that she takes the child Bernard with her. John is mostly on the homestead guarding against claim jumpers on the claims. Kerry is writing to Elizabeth Britton from the closest post office so she has the communication in hand.

[00:18:57] One stormy February evening Kerry and Bernard huddled alone in Post Falls while John tended to the ranch on lake pond. As strong gusts lashed rain against the windows Kerry sat awake worrying about a case of peripheral peritonitis that had kept her up for two nights running. It is a terrible thing to see a little brood of children who in a few hours may find themselves motherless she wrote. Even the best of physicians are so powerless. It is no wonder that one with either knowledge or conscience dreads the responsibility she slept better than expected that night and awoke to find the sun shining brightly. My spirits always rise with the barometer she reported to Britain. They rose higher when her peritonitis patient turned out to have survived the night. The doctor gave her charge a fair prospect of recovery but couldn't quite shake her blues of the previous evening. The study of medicine is grand she wrote. But the practice is full of responsibility and labor that is very hard.

[00:19:57] That is the tone that she has in her letters and again she has a very high failure rate in her profession and it weighs on her as it does on a lot of doctors of that time and now really where there are things that you cannot fix. And there are people wanting you to fix them so all kinds of things happen. You know all this Bernard comes down with scarlet fever. Carey quarantines them together and writes some amazing letters to Britain about that but then she goes from Post Falls up to the rail head on the north end of lake pond. Ray

[00:20:35] Called Hope and writes letters back and she writes them. She gets herself a rubber stamp which is what everybody wants. It has a small business a rubber stamp that has who you are on it. That's announcing you know I am somebody I am Dr Carrie Lee burg of hope. This photographer Frances Haynes was still cruising the Northern Pacific line from Minneapolis to Seattle at that time. He took a lot of pictures of hope all of them show only men and in some of them it'll show the offices in Kerry's office has got to be like all just out of the picture. So it's a it's a way that women disappear from history.

[00:21:09] And Kerry is trying to make it stick somehow and it even though she struggles with her profession she doesn't let that stop her. It's like it inspires her she goes back to Chicago and at a time when what they call lying in clinics are starting to become the fashion there are four places where women can go have a baby in hospitals in Chicago instead of having them at home where there is a higher mortality rate. Kerry goes back and visits with the eye of setting one up in Spokane. There are other people trying to get one set up in Spokane at that time. There's all kinds of crazy political stuff going on with that is involved with the silver production in the mining world in Idaho at that time. And John is involved in all of that. That turns out to create this amazing depression the Panic of 1893. It makes mining maybe not look so smart and John tries to get a job in plants and he becomes a

seasonal worker for the US Department of Agriculture something anybody who's ever worked for the Forest Service can understand where he gets set up. First of all to work with a professional botanist and then to run the horses to wrangle the camp to take care of the setup and make it work.

[00:22:32] And this becomes his first of many expeditions that he leads and is called the Sandburg Lieber trip of 1893. It sets the stage for everything he does later.

[00:22:44] And it goes from Spokane to Steven's pants and his charge is to figure out the limits of the Columbia Basin and find out where the Sagebrush grows and where it stops to collect all the plants that he can to talk to all the farmers and ranchers to see what's fenced with what's works agriculturally. And when he has time to climb some of the volcanic mountains in the Cascades because his boss at the USDA is the head of the first head of the National Herbarium Frederick Cavell who's a mountain climbing Van John Leesburg is not a kid.

[00:23:22] He's 41 years old when he does this. Koval is 26 so there's a little bit of an age thing going on but John has very good legs and he's ready to go. So he gets his horse and wagon. He's in charge now. It's a farm wagon. His professional helper Dr. Sandberg has a bum leg. According to John so he sits around camp most of the time and John goes out and collects all the specimens talks to all the farmers and take and then does the field journal at night. And then he works them out and there's a Asia.

[00:23:56] Curtis is of course a Seattle photographer who came over to us Washington and took some amazing photographs just about 20 years later. And John has really. Professor Mack at WSU has described it as the first ecological look at the Columbia base where other people who skirted it like David Douglas or Lewis and Clark collected plants maybe. But nobody looked at the whole picture. Leesburg really tries to understand what's going on so he sees overgrazing by cattle. He sees fencing. He sees people trying to use fences to keep their cattle in the right place. He has to clip the wires to get his wagon through. He sees people trying to grow tree plants. He sees people failing not understanding when the frost comes in not understanding alkaline chemistry and soils he's deep into soils. It's an amazing journal and it's amazing how much he talks and how many people he talks to. And again Curtis shows these photographs that look totally nuts to us now plowing up the Sagebrush kind of stuff.

[00:25:03] But Leesburg lights it up with plants.

[00:25:05] I mean he just lights it up with many cultural plants from tribes that he has to look at that he has to understand their context in the basin and how they work in this black and white world of photographs of that time how what an incredible place it is. And he writes senators like do you see how the. Have you noticed how the biscuit roots and their can flood across the Columbia Plateau and and light it up early in the spring and then go away so you wouldn't really know that that is the touchstone of botany in the whole area unless you get there.

[00:25:45] He's always telling his boss don't start in June. Start in April. So this is great stuff. He's he writes letters to Elizabeth Britton and he writes his field journal and he describes things that little puzzles that he tries to figure out that are trying to talk to us now. I think this is a plant that he finds in the sand dunes around rock island. He's well aware of all the botanical history before him. He knows everything about what Lewis and Clark collected and about what David Douglas collected. This is a plant David Douglas collected at Priest Rapids. So it's called Sand Verbena as a very light scent. Douglas called it honey scented sand for being a great name and Labor just has it as a specimen that you can see at the WSU herbarium. But he writes a letter to Elizabeth Britton and says I found on our trip this summer kitchen mittens in the Columbia family with all the old litter usually accompanying them and around their meaning he finds tribal encampments and archeological sites scattered all over the Columbia Basin because you know tribal people have been there for ten thousand years and you see them they are no some of them are noteworthy in a botanical way because there is an approach here which seemed to have been introduced by these ancient dwellers purposefully or otherwise and spread from their old camping grounds. So this plant this honey centered approach here does not show up on any net not ethno botanical papers that I can find but this plant has a very close relative that lives in the Southwest called fragrant Sandra.

[00:27:29] It is has 100 hundred uses if you look it up on the Internet for ticking in pillows and mattresses and hanging up in your Hogan and medicine and teas and all these different things that make sense because of this wonderful odor and the other part about it this kind of magic is that it blooms very late it blooms in July and August and September when everything else is burned up in the hot country on the dunes. It's just an astonishing cool plant and it it is still around in the places where David Douglas collected it.

[00:27:58] Rock Island is of course now buried under a lake so it's not there but dunes are an area that is you know leaving us as we develop the base and more and the plants that live in it and the cultural context of those plants are things that Leesburg is trying to get across. If we can figure out what he's saying he comes across afraid a fan was at the bottom of Grand Coulee near Soap Lake and realizes instantly that it has to be a big water event that had had it.

[00:28:32] It's now on all the maps as a part of the Ice Age floods and has these great interpretations. He sees them clearly just as back home when he's working in the bitter roots he sees. He describes the extent of Lake glacial lake Missoula. He just see something and reads it and he has quotes like to understand the botany of a place you can never really do it unless you have a handle on the geology and how the soils were formed. He tries to look at. He sounds like an ecologist writing. He gets to when Archie he gets to he starts going up the Wenatchee River and the summer is coming to a close. He tries to climb up Mal Stuart and it's still packed in with snow. It's a great record of some of the snow fields in the Cascades in a certain month in a certain year one hundred years ago and he gets up to Steven's Pass and he sees you know he sees the big mountains and wants to try to climb on them and they're all too steep. So he goes back down to Icicle Creek and he makes an ascent of Mount Stuart in Fred back. His book has been amended but in the in the third edition of Fred Becky's mountain nearing book he has the first ascent in 1895 by a cousin of a person that Leesburg later worked for Sam Gannett at the USGS and he described it Sam Gannett left behind. He was a

surveyor and left behind a field journal of how he did it. Leesburg describes taking exactly the same route he undoubtedly uses local knowledge to do it and he gets up and does and and really has the

[00:30:12] Work on it followed the attempted to reach the summit of this mountain. The previous month but extensive fields of snow in the process of melting prevented us. This time we crossed the Wenatchee river opposite camp followed the course of the river six miles west to the junction of Icicle Creek so there in Leavenworth headed up bicycle Creek. Follow the course of the stream seven miles to the base of the northern ridges leading to mount Stewart found these impassable by reading of the numerous precipice cities and on the morning of July 20 of August 28 turn towards the east skirting the base of the mountains for eight miles through open forest of Ponderosa found a spur rather steep but leading directly to the central peak ascended this spur for five miles through scattered groves of pine and Douglas fir retaining a height of about five thousand feet. At this point the spirit joined the main ridge from which mount Stewart rises.

[00:31:06] All this sounds just like Sam Gannett's description written two years later but Sam Gannett goes up and puts a cairn on top and writes its name. And that was given his first ascent until some previous surveyors might have it in a later you know under under later study. But that's not what Labor is interested in. He is interested in getting up there and finding what plants grow. He spends a whole morning on them collect climb the peak and spend August 29 collecting on and about the summit.

[00:31:37] He describes the geology he described. He takes an elevation and then he is very disappointed because he's not finding the kind of alpine plants that he wants to find. He's into separated isolated kinds of new plants that he can get he realizes that the Mount Stewart is a little bit west east compared to some of the peaks that there's the dry hot winds of the basin. He starts getting back into climate ideas and he also really notes a lot of the effects of forest fires and the fires of settlers set and how they have torn up some of the peaks. He gets very serious about fire. He talks about it all the time. He talks about weather and he he publishes an article in 1899 and national geographic on impending aridity and climate change in the American West. Again it's not exactly the way we see it but he's seeing and feeling things that we sort of have homed in on over time.

[00:32:39] He collects I'd plant the David Douglas collected up in the Wenatchee is a beautiful Glacier.

[00:32:45] He gets back and they invite him to come to Washington D.C. to work up the specimens on his plants to help the taxonomic figure him out. And he is under the influence of a man named C. Hart Merriam who's back there who's working on plant associations off the work that Alexander von Humboldt did in South America trying to figure out different elevations and associations just like the forest service manuals are now he he he struggles with it but he understands that there's something to that.

[00:33:14] Then he comes home in September and you think man this has been an amazing summer for this guy.

[00:33:20] And Kerry says he's totally worn out. He's just he had to keep camp he's lost a lot of weight. This guy John Sandburg didn't help him at all.

[00:33:28] What are we going to do and all he wants to do is go prospecting right now he has to go check on his claims to make sure nobody's jumped him but he's always got something more across from Kerry's office across the railroad tracks from Kerry's office on Emily's point. There are these amazing petroglyphs in northern lake pond Ray that are should be a world heritage site. They're close to that I guess they're their bare paws they're all bare paws as soon as John gets home he gets the issue of Science which is a respected scientific journal then and now it comes and it has an article by him about the petroglyphs. That's the first article written about these rock carvings and he has amazing stuff about it. He sounds like a man of his time. He doesn't understand the tribes very well at all. But he takes his prospectors tools and tries to emulate the marks that they're making and cannot touch them and then begins to speculate how they're doing it by running sand and water and using really sophisticated methods to make these beautiful very accurate Bach's he asks people who might know more than him to help him out and figure this out but he doesn't think anybody's described as he describes a whole bunch of other ones that he has found which are also documented now most often buried under the lake since it right since it raised. And you go wow this is this is really this is the guy we want to study that has the real broad view of what's going on.

[00:35:03] But you know what. He doesn't have a broad view of what is going on. He is just a guy of his time. It's Kerry that has a broad view of going on we because in a few years before she's talking to Elizabeth Britain about cameras because it's just getting to the time when you can get a camera with film in it and take pictures and normal people can take pictures. Elizabeth Britton is a professional now she wants to buy a Zeiss camera which is top of the line for her photographs and she has mentioned this in a letter to Kerry. And Kerry writes back you know I'm thinking about getting an amateur camera myself and taking some pictures. Do you mind if I send you some landscapes. I'd like to see how they come out. I'd like to see. I'd like you to be able to see this part of Idaho wants to share. We know nothing. There are no records of any place that we can find that have any photographs that Kerry Leeper took except in a family album in the museum in Spokane. The Mac. There are these two prints glued in and they are several prints glued in and they are of this Indian encampment in front of these petroglyphs where Kalispell sand oil all kinds of beer Salish Courtney a whole bunch of tribes gather David Thompson saw them there in 89 when he made first incursion into this world. He saw this encampment at Indian Meadows he describes exactly what is in this photograph which is taken by Carrie Leeper.

[00:36:32] This is a family and I have friends that are passed away now but we're Kalispell people who went to this encampment every summer late summer and fall of their lives until the dam went in and raised the level and this is now called Denton slew it's under water. But Alice Agnes looks at this and go oh it's Charlie Seymour that son of a bitch. He beat his wife.

[00:36:52] I never did like him. And you look at his Charlie Seymour walking through camp and there is a kid hearing what is clearly Indian hemp another cultural plant that Alice says oh yeah we would

go out there to his mouth. The clerk worked together gather. This is at the mouth of the Clark Fork River which is a very important place for a million reasons. And Kerry is explaining all this to us. She's taking landscape pictures with people in them which nobody does at that time. So it is just she is so far ahead of her husband I guess is one way to say it in how she is visualizing where she lives. This is another picture and botanists look at this guy. Oh there's a red Alders we're starting to get into this sort of disjunction of plants that grow on the coast and then grow in the Idaho rainforest in north Idaho in British Columbia.

[00:37:41] John Leber is very sensitive to these disjoint plants. He writes about them all the time and really find some great ones but it is Kerry who gets these the encampment and Alice Agnes looks at this and says Oh yeah you know my grandmother always said anybody who is together had three racks one for me one for fish and one for hives. Well here's a tepee. You can see the horse buggy in the back that they rode over in maybe from Cusick maybe from the Bitterroot Valley maybe from Flathead Lake maybe from Bonner's Ferry to take part of this big event.

[00:38:16] And she is showing us how it worked there amazingly important. We know nothing else about him. We don't have the negative swarm or anything there's undoubtedly a lot more. But again it's just like little fragments of who this person was. Then she writes a letter. This is this is another mother of these handcart pictures. So John gets home in the fall of 1893.

[00:38:38] Within a few days of his return Leesburg headed to Lakeside ranch there homestead down on the south into the lake where he repacked his kid for a ride across Choco salad to exempt saddle to examine his mineral claims on the little North Fork. Carrie and Bernard remained in hope because she had an officer she had to go to work where they rode out the first big storm of the season. The lake roars like the very ocean and gusts of wind and rain dash against our little cottage she wrote to Britain as she watched her son curl up in an armchair before the fire munching a cookie and telling her of some wonderful things he was going to do when he grew up to be a man instead of Bernard's dreams uplifting Kerry.

[00:39:17] She found it sad that we always live in the future and never learn to be happy and today Harry has this habit which a lot of people that are professional letter writers had at that time and now we're instead of pushing send and she's feeling blue at night which she often does when she's alone. She puts the letter down and then she comes back to it the next day and that is such a wonderful thing for people reading her letters later so she puts it down. Next morning she finishes the letter to Elizabeth Britten and it says I had just signed my name when aloud not fell upon my door. I opened it and there stood a man with a lantern and the water running in streams off his hat.

[00:39:59] He said his wife was sick. She had been in labor three days and he thought she was dying and wanted me to come right away. I was soon ready and went out into the fierce storm. We rode ten miles on a hand car before. At last we reached a wretched little hut where I found a weekly working woman mother of several half starved looking children lying on a roof cot in an almost exhausted condition after reviving her somewhat.

[00:40:25] I delivered her by a high forceps operation of a stillborn deformed child I stayed there all night until noon today and left her in fairly good condition and from other articles that Kerry wrote. We know that her magic formula for fixing people up who were really having trouble and about to die after a long labor was her likes malted milk one teaspoon at a time rode home again on the hand car and still it is raining.

[00:40:54] I was wet tired and hungry and enjoy dry clothes and that comfort of all old women a good of tea. She's forty five at this time I think none but of physician can realize so keenly the folly and weakness of the great majority of the human race. So again it seems like somebody who's about to pack it in she it. Instead she goes the other direction. It is really hard to get your mind around what she was doing because this is just the beginning of this story. This is like the whole book has yet to take place. It's really amazing how far they get how far this journey takes them all the places they go that you cannot predict. And John ends up getting traded. He makes them. He does too. Unbelievable plant surveys in eastern Oregon and one in the quarter lanes in north Idaho. Before he gets traded straight across to the USGS and starts doing Forest Reserve surveys the Forest Service was about to happen. The world of Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pancho was about to take place as we know it and they had these reserves set aside and they knew nothing about them. Their boundaries are what was entered or nothing. Somebody professional had to do it. And as Gifford Pancho who bounced all over the place in the West visiting them wrote in his autobiography we had to find somebody who knew how to do the close work of course I couldn't do it I didn't have time I had to get somebody like he names off to professional surveyors and or John Lee Lieber to do it. JOHN LEE Berg is an amateur Swedish immigrant who left school at age 15 and English is his fourth language. So it's again just as with Kerry it's very hard to tell where he gets the skill to do this but he does.

[00:42:37] Forest Reserve surveys that are published government reports for 13 up to like 25 national forests now because these reserves were huge and they've been broken up. They're astonishing documents on all kinds of different levels.

[00:42:52] They include stand estimates species delineations age he again. He talks to everybody all the miners and homesteaders and loggers and farmers that are going broke in there he is outraged by the mis management of the public lands. He is outraged that everybody in Washington can't get these laws passed. He has quotes like you can't just send them all out here and expect Westerners to obey it. That's like putting a don't tread on my lawn sign out and not thinking people are gonna walk on your lawn.

[00:43:25] You have to engage with local knowledge and local people and work out something that is practical for everybody. It's a it's an amazing story.

[00:43:34] What he did and again that's all published and they there to happen. Kerry story takes all these other turns that involve medicine for sure.

[00:43:45] But she ran. So this is another issue. Kurtis who is a great beacon and all this. In 1910 the year that Washington public passes suffrage and they're seen as ahead of their time because

universal Woman's Suffrage didn't get passed for another decade right. Kerry ran for you for Idaho state rep in Idaho 10 years before this in nineteen hundred. Idaho had woman suffrage when only four other states had it. They were mountain states. It's a strange story that makes hardly any sense.

[00:44:16] It was a very divided world where there were five different political conventions Kerry ends up running for Congress after the first women got elected in 1898 and there was a woman from her district rafter and Prairie in Idaho. That was some kind of genius because she got elected. She went into the legislature and she formed a consortium of three groups that had nothing in common with each other and got them to pass a bill an anti gambling bill which was a huge issue for women's rights at the time because alcohol and gambling were what was leading to the kind of poverty for the woman in the Jack who's having the stillborn baby. And that's what she saw. She published articles in medical journals about her cases about interesting or tragic cases that she had and have unusual cases that again had those same kind of themes that we talked about that she revealed to her letter to Britain you know failed pregnancies abortions gone wrong lots of hot licks malted milk trying to restore people there they're amazing. And again they're just pointing out public health how are we going to fix it. She tries to set up and this is where will and I think. But she this is the land surveyor.

[00:45:36] They lived in this place for 12 years with the 50/50 chance that it was going to be on Northern Pacific lands in which case the Northern Pacific could have name their price and they would have had to buy it from them. Or they get it and they have a stake they were not married. They were not legally married. So in 1990 1897 they took the train. John was working in D.C. Kerry hopped on the train. They met in La Crosse Wisconsin across the river from Minneapolis and got married legally. Then they came back and this great Scandinavian surveyor came named Oscar Stone and cowboy and kept both a surveyors notebook and a field journal. And he comes out to this point on lake pond ray which is at the Congo leverage point. John of course is gone. John is always gone. He's not really a part of this. Her story of the lake pond or a story because he's always gone on these surveys. He's a plant and forest and tree man Kerry is there practicing medicine somehow somewhere trying to raise a kid. Taking care of an orchard with thousands of trees in that you can still see it Farragut Park and according to Stone and count developing the land to make a health spa and resort for.

[00:46:55] He doesn't say what is for named solitaire there's a woman doctor in Spokane who opens a sanatorium which has the same description. At that time for women who are at risk who need the kind of personal gender help that a woman's sanatorium can offer. She was friends with Kerry they had a practice they shared an office in Spokane a couple of times. So one possibility is that she was going to have one in the city and then a rural place where these women could go again. Who are the kind of patients she's talking about who are in trouble. But we do not know. This is the only mention of Solitaire that we have aside from a couple of return addresses where John puts solitaire. So there is really there's a lot to find out about this couple but it's it's so many different things happen to them that it's all I could do to get a book together and then use that as the starting point to try to go further. So that's why I'm going to stop. Thank you very much. And we have time for a couple of questions if anybody has them.

[00:48:05] If you've ever been to Farragut state park or if you ever go you drive all the way out to Lee Byrd point which is now called eucalypts point because it's the best view of the ice age. Dam breaking apart in the waters coming Labor would have a very happy with that and there's a playground next to it that has four big concrete rings in it that were the sewage treatment plant for the huge naval base that was there and we're were two and that was on top of their orchard. But then there's like an escarpment down to the lake and that's full of these pear and apple trees that they planted.

[00:48:41] And we know some of the varieties that he describes when they're doing it and then where these buildings are on here there's a double row of these weird Cherry plums which were a faddish you know cultivar fruit that I've never seen anywhere that that flower and are kind of cool that they planted as a entranceway to their place. So in that sense it's still there.

[00:49:04] It's her wife. He's the guy who should have been her. Britain's husband was a wonderful geologist and botanist but he wasn't you know he taught the botany courses at Columbia. But they were there working together and together they're given a lot of credit for helping to develop what it has become New York Botanic Garden which is another beacon in the world. And to see and they're always inviting John to come visit and he tries to meet him and they're always missing connections. It's a funny story. She's always inviting him to go on field trips to Cuba with her and that kind of thing. So there again there's a lot more to explore in there. He's always sending rocks back to Elizabeth and saying you know there's no RSA around here that they don't know anything but copper gold silver Lindsay. I think there's chrome and militant might and this can you show him to your husband. And could you show him also to Dr. Newbury who's in the department at Columbia who did the railroad survey past Newberry craters where Paul all this incredible stuff s the band is. That's John Newbury a legendary field geologist who ended up working with Nathaniel Britton in Columbia. Leesburg is totally aware of all this. When he first went back to Washington there was an appreciation published of Newberry that said this is this guy instead of just doing a geological report for the railroad surveys in the 1950s he did a larger report where he was looking at everything and really thinking about the landscape and Leesburg writes that that is my ambition to be an ecologist.

[00:50:31] What we would call on in college and I think he makes it in a very strange way. And you have to put all of his writings and plant lists and letters and journals and reports together in order to see it OK with Sandpoint much of a settlement when they came down in 1883 is when he first came and the answer is no hope was the section station that was declared and that that became means the maintenance yard and where they have their people declared in 1888 Kerry and they hired Kerry Leesburg as the district surgeon which means that her territory went all the way to where the tri cities are now. She was the only female district surgeon for the northern Pacific and possibly for any railroad. There's some journals that argue about it but I can't find any other ones. And there's a magazine a journal that just started that year called the Railroad search and it goes and talks about the duties that they have etc. that are just just amazing so it's the world before Sandpoint and the world of a little section station railroad you know a railroad town to railroad town that's how okay. We really appreciate you coming out on a cold night. We will see you again.

[00:51:47] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.