



SOUTH WHIDBEY
HISTORICAL
—SOCIETY—

Lushootseed Name(s): Zah-toh-litsa, Gah-toh-litsa, Hottela

English Name(s): Jane, Jenny, Jane Newberry, Jane Johnson, Jane Oliver, Grandma Oliver

Birth/Death: abt. 1856 - 1945

- Zah-toh-litsa (Jane Oliver), grew up on land she and her Snohomish ancestors lived on for centuries. The land was later taken by the US government as part of the 1855 Point Elliott Treaty and colonist settlers who filed land claims per the Homestead Act of 1862. Jane's history represents a time when Indigenous-Colonial Settler intermarriage or common law arrangements were a means of survival

and sustenance – especially in the late Colonization Era (1840 -1880) on South Whidbey.

- Jane was the wife of one of the earliest South Whidbey colonist settlers, William T. Johnson, who settled on Double Bluff. Jane and William were farmers and raised four children. In February of 1886, he rowed across Admiralty inlet to Port Townsend to sell their produce receiving a considerable sum of money from the sale and left for home. He never arrived but was found dead in his boat the following morning. Authorities presumed he had died of natural causes - his family believed otherwise because no money was found on his person or in the boat.
- Meanwhile, another colonial settler Edward Oliver, had come west from Virginia in 1858. After exploring South Whidbey, he established a logging operation on Deer Lagoon, filed for a Homestead Claim on the west side of the lagoon, and built a home. He had

married a woman by the name of Melvina Sooy, whose mother was Indigenous and whose father was white. Melvina died in 1886, leaving behind four children. On April 3, 1887, Edward took as his second wife Jane (Zah-toh-litsa), widow of the ill-fated William T. Johnson. Edward was 30+ years older than Jane. Together, they became the parents of six children. Jane's household now consisted of an extended family of children and grandchildren.

- Jane or Jenny as some of her acquaintances called her, was known as "Grandma Oliver" to her family and friends. She was known in later years as a local healer, always willing to lend a hand and was "the best neighbor anyone ever knew."