

“To the Canyon” Art Description by Collin Pfeifer

This series of panels reflect on the foundation that Nampa was built upon. My research led me to believe that the term “Nampa” derives from the Shoshone word “Namb” or “Nambuh”, which translates to “footprint” or “moccasin”. The Shoshoni people were very much in tune with nature and all the benefits it provided. Their footprints inhabited these lands and I feel that the intersections between the Shoshone people, agriculture/irrigation, and the railroad are important variables within Nampa’s developmental equation. Their connection to what is now Canyon County set precedent for the future growth of a unique community set within Idaho’s magnificent landscape.

The Shoshonis were split into three tribes, the Western, the Northern, and the Eastern. Investigating their history showed that the Western Shoshone and Northern Paiute were inhabitants of what is now Nampa. These people were nomadic hunter/gatherers surviving off rice, grains, fish, birds and other game. They followed the migratory cycles of the animals they hunted throughout the 4 seasons. Depicted in the background is a photo of a Western Shoshone camp which sets the mood on which the first panel is based. The figure depicted in the foreground of panel 1 is Chief Washakie, a prominent Shoshone figure who facilitated treaties between many different tribes and the United States Government. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 and the Treaty of Fort Bridger in 1868 are just a couple historic moments where Washakie was involved and noted as a liaison to the U.S. government. He promoted peace within the tribes toward immigrants traveling west as well as settling intertribal disputes. He set a good example to his people as well as others around him and was a figure of importance within this design. The flower transitioning between the first and second panel is The Shoshone Sainfoin. This flower has highly nutritious benefits from cattle feed to pollen production and grows well in rugged climates. Its ability to power through tough weather conditions symbolizes the characteristics of the native Western Shoshone tribe and their ability to remain steadfast during the changes ahead.

On the right side of panel 1 transitioning into panel 2 is a photo found on the Public Library’s Vital archive that’s described as, “horses moving railroad tracks at Deer Flat Reservoir.” Deer Flat Reservoir (what is now Lake Lowell) was constructed in 1909 and played a large role in Nampa’s irrigation systems. Over 2900 farms benefitted from this off-stream based reservoir. Without irrigation, it is difficult to maintain agriculture. The railroad brought import and export potential to the city allowing farmers to turn a profit from their hard work, as well as made traveling between states much easier. The sunset spanning across all three of the panels is a photo of Lake Lowell. The warmth of this photo reference lends itself well to the design as it bonds the triptych together through color. The canal in the foreground blends into the lake scene which then leads the eye to the water tower on the right. This archival photo of 12th avenue shows the evolution from early railroad construction to the development of a city and the value water holds to the progression of Nampa. The water tower was constructed in 1884 by Union Pacific and historians believe that the “UP chose Nampa as a main division point because the acidity in the water. The higher the acid content, the fewer deposits left in the boiler and storage tank.” This allowed for an easier maintenance process amongst steam engines.

Moving on to the 3rd panel is a continuation of the 12th avenue photo including some of downtown Nampa’s architecture in the lower left corner. Much of this panel reflects on the Oregon Short Line engine 616, which was built by Baldwin in July 1907. This machine operated the Short Line route for years and was donated by the Union Pacific to the City of Nampa in August 1958, where it now resides in Lakeview Park. The Oregon Short Line Railroad was built in 1883 which lead to the construction of many other railroad ventures thereafter including the Idaho Central Railway (1887) connecting Nampa to Boise as well as the Electric Inter-Urban Railroad (1909-1928). With the introduction of the auto-mobile, passenger cars were eventually discontinued in 1971, but Union Pacific’s presence remains active in Nampa.

The last and final panel depicts a beautiful Nampa farm-scape feathered into the image of a Great Horned Owl. The rich agricultural benefits of Nampa allow for these resilient creatures to survive and call these parts home. I wanted to honor the years dedicated by retired Nampa Library Director, Karen Ganske. In this case, I felt that the owl symbolizes intellect and knowledge which are qualities that an individual such as her possess. By investing years in sharing literature and unveiling the possibilities found within reading, the Great Horned Owl was a suitable character to fuse into this design and signify her presence within Nampa’s history.