

From the President: Dear Members, We are in full parade and picnic season. Join us for pizza on June 6 and walk it off with us in the Grand Parade that evening, or just cheer our pioneer families on! We are sharing some fun reviews about the local historian coming to speak at our picnic this July. Serving as your President has been my honor, and I am excited to help SDOP in the role of secretary for the next year. Hope to see you along the trail real soon!

-Joy'e Willman, SDOP President 2025-2026



Destination: Portland, Oregon

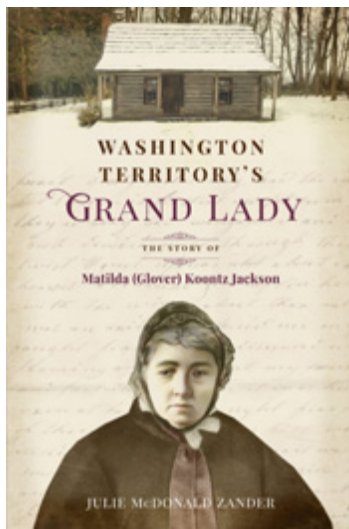
Date: Saturday, June 6, 2026

Gathering and Board Meet & Greet

Doors open at 11:30 Meeting at High Noon at Stark St. Pizza Co. 9234 SE Stark St, Portland, OR 97216

Rest up after pizza and games, then reconnect with your cousins and kin at the **Grand Floral & Starlight Parade downtown. If you plan to walk with us, gather at 6 p.m.** to sign your waiver.

Otherwise, take a spot in the crowd or online, and enjoy the festivities. In any event, walking pioneer proud and wearing your best bonnet; a smile is the most important thing to wear.



The Reluctant Pioneer aka Washington Territory's Grand Lady, Matilda Koontz cherishes her life as a wife and mother on a Missouri farm, but her hardworking husband wants to claim free farmland in the Pacific Northwest. When he suggests selling the farm to trek two thousand miles across the Oregon Trail, she balks.

But in the spring of 1847,

Matilda and Nicholas Koontz and their sons embark on a grueling journey westward. Fresh graves testify to dangers of disease, accidents, starvation, and a multitude of hazards threatening her family and her beloved's dream.

With new struggles at every turn, Matilda wonders how she can protect her sons on such a perilous journey. Will they reach the trail's end? Will the babe growing inside her womb survive?

When tragedy strikes, the question changes: How can she possibly continue?

This year's speaker at the Annual Pioneer Picnic is Julie McDonald Zander, an award-winning journalist, who earned a bachelor's degree in communications and political science from the University of Washington before working two decades as a newspaper reporter and editor. Through her personal history company, Chapters of Life (www.chaptersoflife.com),

she has published more than 90 individual, family, and community histories. As part of a three-book client project, she researched pioneers who crossed the Oregon Trail in 1847 as her client's relatives started the Aurora Colony. He also was related to the first native-born governor of Oregon.



Author and Historian, Julie McDonald Zander, 2026 Annual Picnic Speaker

Between personal history projects, Julie spent five years researching the story of Matilda (Glover) Koontz Jackson before publishing the nonfiction book about her life, *Washington Territory's Grand Lady*, in 2019. It was a finalist for both the Western Writers of America Spur Award and the Will Rogers Medallion. Her oldest brother, Philip Glover, and his wife, Sarah (Koontz) Glover, followed her west in 1849 with their family and settled in Marion County near Salem.

Believing Matilda's story deserved a larger audience, Julie spent five years learning to write fiction before the release of her debut novel, *The Reluctant Pioneer*, in September 2024. The novel received a silver Will Rogers Medallion for inspirational fiction and American Bookfest's 2025 Best Book Award for religious fiction. It also was a finalist for Western Writers of America's Best Historical Novel Spur Award.

Her second novel, *Shattered Peace: A Century of Silence*, is a 2025 time-slip inspired by the heart-breaking events of November 11, 1919, which became known as the Centralia Tragedy. Julie and her hus-