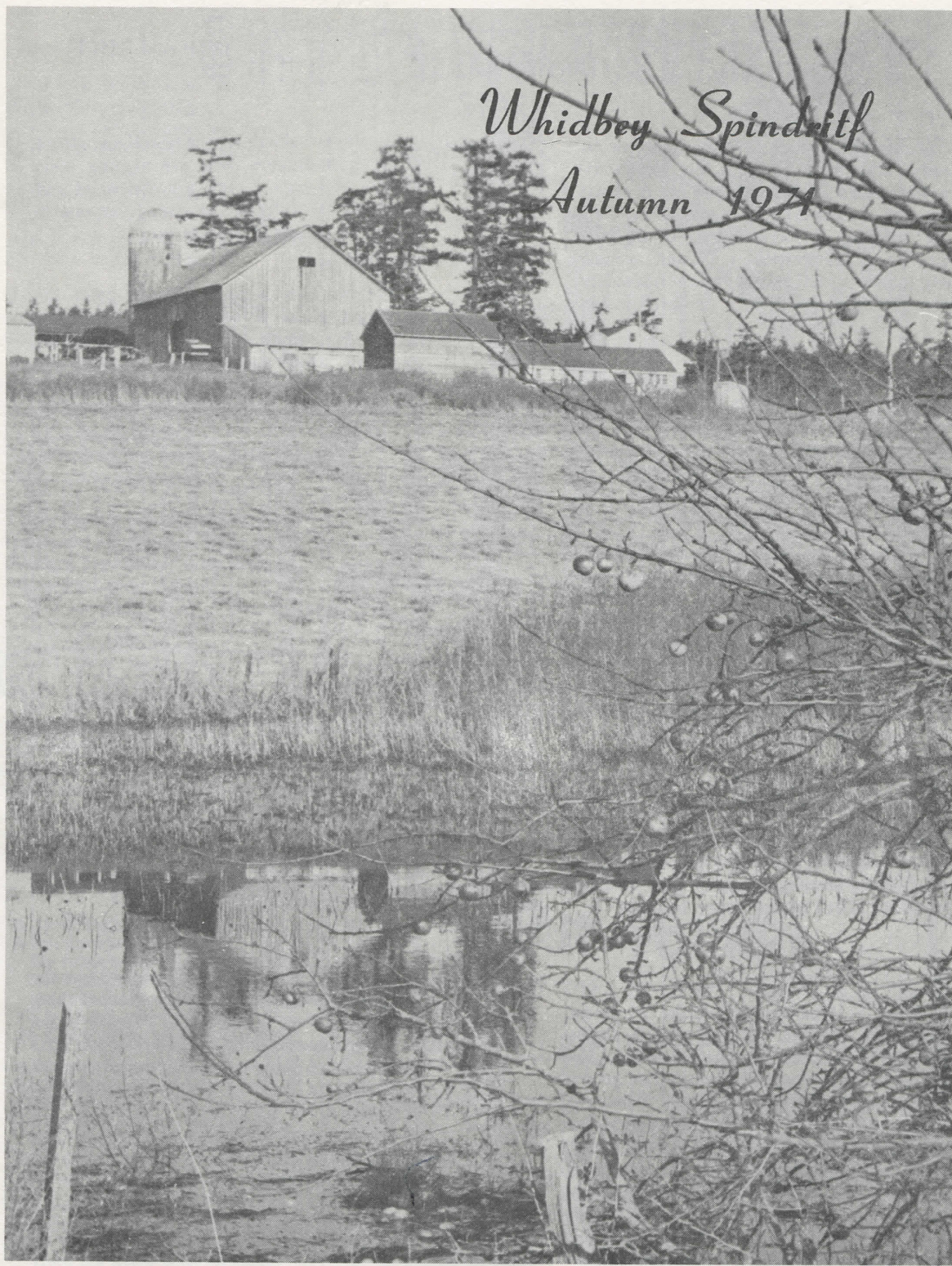


Whidbey Spindrift
Autumn 1974



ISLAND

HISTORY

by "Aneutty Tillicum"

The Fourth of July is a day long to be remembered by the oldtimers of Whidbey Island, Washington Territory, for on that day residents "did themselves proud" celebrating the nation's birthday.

At that date, the nation was in the throes of a Civil War, the Army of the Potomac, under Generals Grand and Meade had crossed the Rapidan, the battles of the Wilderness had been fought, and Grant was again "marching on to Richmond" while Sherman with the western armies was fighting his way through northern Georgia, to Atlanta.

Although far away from the scene of the war, the citizens of Washington were as patriotic as any, although we got the news of the war but once a week, by sailboat from Seattle.

THE CELEBRATION that year was mostly at the farm of Hill Harmon on Ebey's Prairie, and on that Monday morning, the people assembled from all directions, on foot, horseback and in farm wagons (there was not a spring buggy on the Island at that time; and by ten or 11 o'clock all of the white inhabitants and most of the Indians had arrived.

Harmon had built a large frame barn, and because of the celebration had put down a floor of matched lumber, and divided it by a partition running lengthwise of the building, into a dining room and dance hall.

The indoor exercises were held in the building, and Dr. Nathaniel D. Hill read the Declaration of Independence. A most patriotic oration was given by a professor of phrenology, a visitor on the Island. (The writer has forgotten his name).

DINNER WAS SERVED in the dining room and was a grand affair. The meat had been roasted in trenches in the ground, and was "meat fit for the gods." There was an abundance of everything the Island afforded, and cost only one dollar, well worth the money.

The writer was a 17-year-old boy at the time and got a job waiting tables, therefore saved his dollar for other purposes.

After dinner everyone went to Smith Prairie for the horse racing. The race was between a gray stallion belonging to George Gillespie, and a brown stallion owned by Thomas Perkins. The Perkins horse won the \$200 purse.

After the race all returned to the Harmon place, and at about seven o'clock supper was served for fifty cents, an excellent meal but did not compare with the dinner.

Some time after supper, and as soon as it was dusk, the whole barn was lit up with candles, and dancing commenced in the hall part of the barn. OH! but that was a jolly crowd at the ball.



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1864 CELEBRATION

THE FIRST INSTALLMENT of the "Mercer girls" had arrived on the Sound a short time before and two of them, Misses Jo and Georgia Pearson, had secured schools on that side of the Island. Miss Josie taught in Coupeville district, and Miss Georgie on Smith Prairie. The two young ladies made a good impression on the people of the Island.

(Miss Josie died unexpectedly a short time later. Miss Georgie became Mrs. Charles T. Terry.)



Young and old participated in the ball, a grand success, and dancing kept up until after daylight, when everybody got their horses, wagons, or set out on foot, and departed for their respective homes.



Whidbey Spindrift is published by Dorothy Neil, 3102 300 West, Oak Harbor, Wash., 98277. The magazine is published quarterly at present, and subscriptions may be obtained at \$1 per year, mailed anywhere in the U.S. Whidbey Spindrift is the only magazine that really cares about Whidbey Islanders.

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There have been many celebrations on the Island since 1864 but it is doubtful if any can compare favorably with the affair at Hill Harmon's barn. The writer has attended several celebrations on the Island since that time, though none since 1871, none had the same "good time feeling." Should the writer live to be 100 years old, he will never forget that celebration of the Nation's birthday in 1864.

ANCUTTY TILLICUM (Chinook jargon for "old-time friend")

Island County Times, May 24, 1912

50 Years Ago

"On Sunday last two hundred autos came over the Deception Pass ferry. Messrs. Neil and Olson run the ferry at a loss during the winter months, and we are glad that they now have an opportunity to make even."

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