



Whidbey Spindrift

Spring — 1971

ISLAND

HISTORY

Ault Field, that broad expanse of fertile valley from Dugualla Bay on the east side of Whidbey, to the west beach; where Whidbey Naval Air Station is located, was settled in the 1890's by pioneers of Dutch heritage.

According to an account by historian Jerome Ely, the Dutch immigrants began arriving in 1894 and continued to come in sizable numbers until 1912. These were the "early day" people from Holland; many had settled first in the Dakotas and Michigan, but were attracted west by promoters who offered fertile lands for sale.

Clover Valley was the name given the valley which was cleared by hand labor by people who built homes and raised their families to become good citizens in their adopted country.

In the early part of 1896, R. E. Werkman, who brought the first parties of Hollanders to Whidbey, wrote in the Seattle Times concerning the Dutch settlement at Oak Harbor.

There were about 200 estimated to have settled here at that time, most of them families. Many arrived with only a few dollars and a large family. Soon after their arrival they formed a Christian Reformed Church which met in Byrne's Hall on the waterfront. Plans were being made to build.

Potatoes were the first crop raised that first year, and they found that the price of potatoes which had been as low as \$5 a ton, rose to \$10. Many of them planned to go into the dairy business, and all were reported doing well.

From the Island County Times Jan. 31, 1896, "Many of the newly arrived Hollanders have already begun making permanent improvements. The Island Mfg. Co. mill has been busy . . . getting out lumber and shingles for them. Lovejoy Bros. towed a raft of 11,000 feet of lumber to Oak Harbor via the Calista.

The Holland colony now numbers about 100 souls in Oak Harbor; all have good old-fashioned families of six or more children which will help out the school fund of that district.

They are the kind of settlers needed to make a prosperous community, industrious, patient and frugal, and if they are given the chance, will do their part toward making the wilderness blossom as the rose."



In the spring of 1896, another party of Hollanders arrived at Oak Harbor, accompanied B. H. TeRoller. They were the Rev. Brink and wife, a missionary of the Christian Reformed Church sent to look after the spiritual life of the colonists; Levy Sinnema and wife and three children J. Fisher and P. Oostindie, all of Orange City, Iowa. The local newspaper duly recorded that the newcomers toured Ebey and Smith Prairies and visited Coupeville accompanied by Messrs. Bos, Nienhuis, Hulst and others.





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HOLLANDERS ARRIVE

The first patriotic celebration on Whidbey Island by the Holland people who had settled here was July 4, 1896. An account of the event which took place at West Beach below the Swantown Road, was recorded in the Island County Times.

About 100 persons were present at the picnic place which had been cleared in the woods at the edge of the beach. Seats had been made, as well as a platform, and swings "for the girls."

A patriotic program was put on mostly by the recently organized "Singing School" made up of young Hollanders. J. D. Helder brought an organ to the celebration for music.

Dauwe Zylstra gave the principal address, followed by the reading of the Declaration of Independence. Many readings, some comical were recited; and hymns were sung.

The "Groningers" as they called themselves sang the Star Spangled Banner; Red, White and Blue; and Marching Through Georgia. Members from the "east side" or "Friesen" also contributed to the program.



A huge basket picnic was served, with lemonade, candy and peanuts for free. Two balloons were released during the afternoon, which sailed away toward Coupeville.

Thus ended a most pleasant day by Whidbey Island's newest residents many of whom are observing the 75th of Diamond Jubilee Year since their arrival in a new home.

The Times concluded with a quote from the celebration,

"It is hoped we may meet again next year in increased numbers to celebrate the Independence of the country now our own, and ever more shall be. So be it."

Quite True

Quite a bit of the world's trouble is produced by those who don't produce anything else.

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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A HISTORY OF MUTINY BAY . . .

Mutiny Bay

was originally called Austin. And a man who should know is Omer I. Porter of Saratoga. His father, Nathaniel Ellenwood Porter was the first farmer in Mutiny Bay. He bought 120 acres there in 1869, had grain, cattle and horses which were sold at auction. Oxen were used to do farm work and a few steers were also trained for this labor.



Omer's grandfather was William Johnson (on his mother's side) and he owned 160 acres on what is now the Useless Bay bluff, only it was called Johnson's Bluff then. Prior to that he homesteaded at Port Ludlow, after sailing around the Horn. William Johnson was drowned after taking beef to Port Ludlow and his body came right back home, for he was washed ashore below Johnson's Bluff. There was some question about his death as pirates were operating in those days and thought nothing about pushing a man overboard after taking his money.

Omer Porter remembers the story of one well known pirate named Ludey (Ludi). He traveled in a sail boat and also used oars. He also remembers that he himself often helped row to Port Townsend where all the important business centered at that time. He said:

"You had to watch the tide going or be carried out to sea. Coming back the wind and tide carried you home. In Port Townsend there would be as many as twenty boats waiting for passengers. A well-known character named Charlie Gunderson furnished crews for the boats. The Custom Collector had his office there. Then Port Townsend and Port Gamble were the trading centers, with Seattle a poor third."

"When people paid their taxes," he said, "they rode a horse along the beach from Mutiny Bay to Coupeville. Two or three or four would go together, for their own protection. It took one day to go up and another day to return. There were no proper roads. You always took along an axe as you might have to get down off your horse and clear a way to get through the brush."

Omer I Porter was born in Mutiny Bay. His grandmother, Jane Oliver, was a mid-wife. She had married Edward Oliver after her first husband, William Johnson was drowned.

Omer's wonderfully hospitable wife, Tina Porter, was born in Holland and the Dutch were some of the first settlers on Whidbey Island. She came here when she was three years old. Her maiden name was Roodzant which means "Red Sand."

- CHRISTINE FERGUSON - Whidbey Record

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