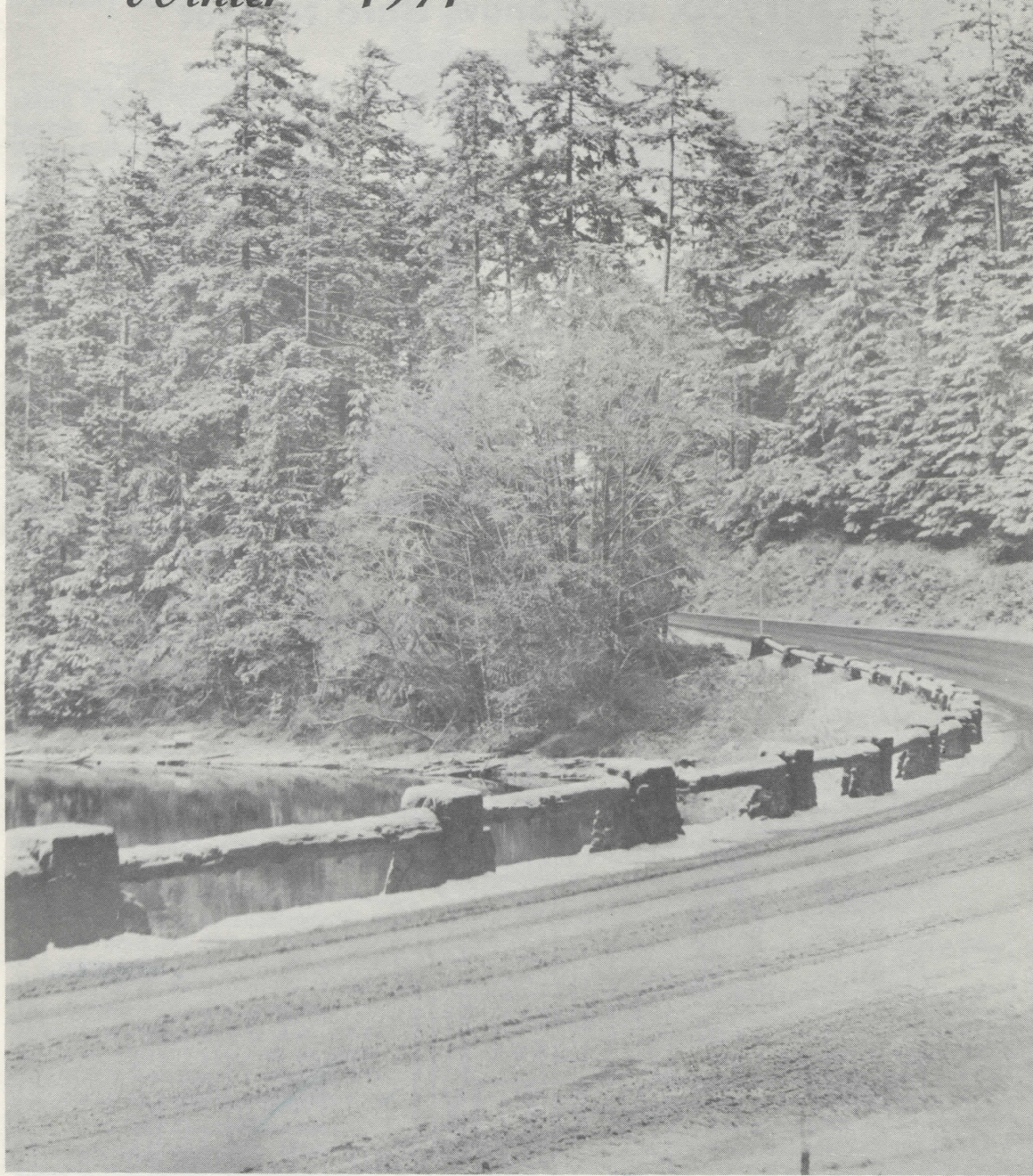


Whidbey Spindrift

Winter - 1971



"SWIKWIKWAB"

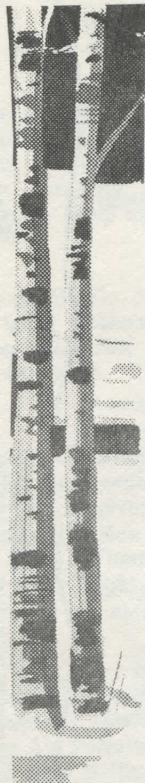
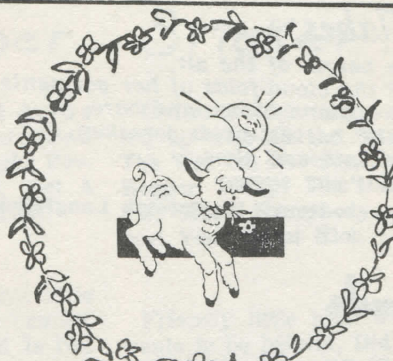
A momentous discovery took place recently at the mouth of the Skagit River's north fork, just across from the northeast corner of Whidbey Island.

Remains of an ancient circular Indian dwelling, the only one of its kind ever discovered in the Puget Sound area have been unearthed by a Seattle Community College archeology team. Rows of holes, once holding posts, circle the 15-foot diameter of the floor, outlining the walls of the house, and in the center, still blackened with smoke stains, are the remnants of a stone hearth. The house design is similar to Indian houses dug up east of the Cascade Mountains, but unique to the Puget Sound area.

Two settlements make up the Indian site, named "Fishtown" by the archaeologists. The lower site is 1,500 years old, and the upper site, located on a high bluff overlooking the lower one, is 2,500 years old. This "dig" will be unearthed again this coming summer after having been backfilled against the winter.


The site was first discovered in the late 1950's, and the Washington Archaeological Society was the first group to dig the site. Seattle Community college took over in 1968.

Both sites were settled by the same Indian tribe, and provide a record of every change in the tribe's culture during the 1,000 years that separate the sites. It is believed that the Indians came from east of the Cascade Mountains or from British Columbia.

SPRING'S
bustin' out all
over at
mode o'day
1153 W. Pioneer

"Swikwikwab," meaning "water canoe people" is the ancient Indian name for the site. It is found in the old language of the Swinomish Indians who still live in the area, indicating that it could have been their ancestors who settled the site 2,500 years ago.

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Cattle Rustling on Whidbey

Cattle rustling was rife on North Whidbey in the 1870's. This was only 20 years after Taftson, Sumner and Freund, Oak Harbor's first three settlers arrived by Indian canoe to take up Donation Claims along the bay where Oak Harbor now stands.

The cattle rustling situation developed after Henry L. Maryott, a disappointed California gold miner, came north in search of further adventure or land to make up in some degree the fortune in gold that passed him by.

He first rented the Haller farm on the Chenoweth claim in Crescent Harbor. (the Navy game preserve is part of this location.)

Maryott also took up a homestead west of Dugualla Bay, then bought part of the government peat bog adjoining his land, making about 300 acres in all. Soon afterward he also bought 800 acres of woods and rich bottom land southeast of Deception Pass.

(Maryott's land possibly included most of the cranberry bog southwest of Cranberry Lake, which he may have named.)

Maryott built himself a log cabin and began to ditch and clear his extensive homestead. He also went into the cattle business.

It is said by early historians that Maryott would have "made it big" in the cattle business if he had had more time to fence his land to contain his cattle. Another factor which hindered him was the mild winters experienced on North Whidbey. They found forage all the year around.



As soon as the cattle were two years old they would wander away to the swales and marshes which lined West Beach clear to Deception Pass. During the summer and fall they would get fat and forget about "home", wandering in herds. It was said all the settlers from Ebey's Prairie north lost cattle, and in 1874 there was estimated to be 100 head in one large herd.

No early day settler was expected to go hungry for beef if he got a chance at one of the big herds, and while Maryott claimed the majority of the cattle, still the minority was too large to be ignored.

Martin Taftson's work oxen left to join the wild herd, and he never could coax them back after they got a taste of the "wild life."

This big wandering herd of beef was too much to be ignored, and "rustlers" appeared on the scene, not to kill for their own use, but for the market.

When the wild herd ran short, the rustlers began on the settlers tame cattle. None were safe.

Ben Ure, an early day settler in the area told Jerome Ely that all the cattle he had were killed, and that he suspected they were shipped to LaConner. He said that two rustlers would work together, they would shoot an ox in the woods, and one would begin dressing it while the other would go to the cabin and talk with Ure until it was finished. All attempts to stop the rustling proved fruitless.

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Did Away With Wild Herds

It was said that when the oxen were at home Taftzon could drive them singly or together, in or out of yoke, but a short time in the wild made them a part of it.

Maryott made some attempts to halt it, but could prove nothing. He had one of his neighbors arrested for shooting a black bull that he claimed. He could prove he killed the bull, but could not prove the bull belonged to him. He swore that the sire was a Durham and the dam a Devon, but failed to show the court how it could be possible for a red and white sire and a pure deep red dam to produce a black calf.

That calf was the last effort to punish the killing of the wild cattle . . . and was the finish of the West Beach herd.

As years went on, settlers built barns and fences, and kept a closer watch over their stock, thus the "rustling" of cattle died out too.

An interesting sidelight on the life of Henry L. Maryott; when he came to the 1849 gold fields of California, he left a wife and two children in northeast Pennsylvania, on a little farm he owned. He expected, as did all of the "forty niners" to soon return home with a small fortune.



On Whidbey Island he saved money, and sent enough home to his wife to pay all the indebtedness against the farm so his family would be safe from want until he returned. The money was lost or stolen in transit and the wife and children made homeless. Mrs. Maryott died thinking she had been deserted by her husband, while he supposed they had received the money and were safe from want.

He later returned East and married another woman and brought her, along with his aged father and mother, sister and her husband and a niece and husband with their families, to Whidbey Island to become permanent settlers.

During the 1800's Maryott rented his marsh farm to J. M. Hoffman for a term of ten years, and built himself a good house in the woods on the land he bought from the government near the pass. There he died in 1889.



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