

Spindrift Two

50¢

Volume 7

Number 4

Whidbey Island's Own Magazine

Spring 1984



4 Land Deals Brought Dutch to Whidbey

In the late 1890s, the Tucker Potter Trust Company was attempting to dispose of lands on Whidbey Island that were owned by the company. A Mr. R. E. Workman, who was also an agent of the Holland Colony of Whidbey Island, saw a great opportunity to encourage Dutch immigrants to come to the island.

Captain George Morse, one of Oak Harbor's early settlers, a deep-sea captain and later a state legislator who introduced the subject of a bridge over Deception Pass, took an active interest in bringing Dutch colonists to Whidbey. In the January 1895 issue of *De Grondwet*, a Holland, Michigan, newspaper, was the following letter to Workman from the captain:

Dear Sir:

In answer to your request about the Holland people moving to Whidbey Island, I have been in this country since 1858 and during that time have been busy with farming. I have never seen a crop failure. I have taken five tons of hay from an acre on my Dugualla Bay farm. The following years I have taken off my farm in Oak Harbor 87½ bushels of barley and 100 bushels of wheat off an acre. I could find several acres here which I am sure have 150 bushels to the acre.

The best crop per acre from a whole piece of ground in Oak Harbor was harvested on Arnold Freund's farm which averaged 86¾ bushels per acre. The total harvested grain last year

threshed out in round figures, 74,000 bushels. Ed McCrohan of Oak Harbor threshed 15,000 bushels, about one-third wheat and the rest oats and barley.

The last name in some places got 30 bushels to the acre. John Gillespie of San de Fuca threshed 37,000 bushels. J.W. Cliese of Useless Bay threshed 2,000 bushels of grain. The harvest was out of the ordinary. As regards the fruit of the Island it cannot be beaten in quantity and quality both large and small fruits. . . (signed) G. W. Morse.

Produce Exhibit

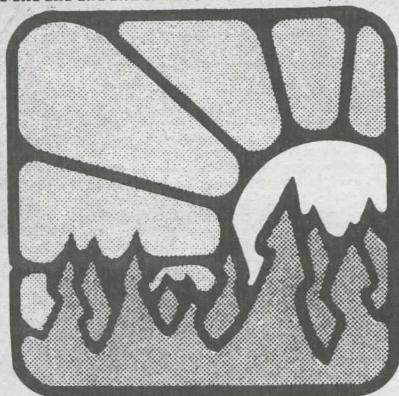
In the fall of the same year, Workman went to Michigan and then to the Netherlands with an exhibition of farm products as additional enticements to settlers.



The *Island County Times* of Oct. 18, 1895, described some of the exhibit: "...oats at 125 bushels to the acre, with stems as tall as 'bamboo fishing rods'; wheat 95 bushels to the acre; potatoes that weighed 7 pounds and rutabagas in an immature state weighing 30 pounds, and apples at 1¼ pounds!"

No wonder the drought-inured Hollanders of the Dakotas and Michigan began to look to Whidbey Island!

In November of 1895 the stern-wheeler steamer *Fairhaven* arrived at San de Fuca with 60 persons of Dutch descent. Names, still familiar on Whidbey Island, included Zylstra, Eerkes, Boerhave, DeWilde and VanDyk, all of South Dakota;



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No Floods, Good Land

5

Fakkema, Riksen, and Nienhuis of Michigan. Most were married men with children and some were farmers. All found quarters in San de Fuca while they looked over the surrounding country.

According to historian Jerome Ely, Hollanders began arriving on Whidbey Island in 1894, some with means to buy land, some with very little money. They all became citizens of their adopted country, and leaders in building the little town of Oak Harbor into a prosperous small business center.

Among the prominent names of Dutch descent is that of Zylstra, with five generations of the family becoming Islanders.

In 1896 Riekele Zylstra, his wife and eight children came to Oak Harbor from South Dakota, after three crop failures in that state. It was spring when the family arrived in Seattle by train, then on to Whidbey Island by boat.

Riekele had been here for four months to take stock of the area, to find what grew here best and what opportunities were at hand. Neighbors who had come West before him had given him glowing reports of the climate and the vegetables that could be grown.

The late Taapke Zylstra Nienhuis was 15 when she moved here with her family. She remembered Holland and the terrific thunder storms there. She said it was much colder than Whidbey Island.

"When father told us there were no thunder storms on Whidbey Island, I was ready to go there right away! And I have never regretted moving here."

The Riekele Zylstra family consisted of five boys and three girls: Jim, Ralph, Rance, Rein and Nicklaus, and Taapke, Augusta and Jessie. Riekele had two brothers who also came to the Northwest: Douwe, who settled in Lynden; and Rein, the father of Geert, Charlie, Richard and Tena, all well-known Whidbey old-timers. Tena married Jake Riepma.

When Riekele Zylstra came to this country, his name was Van Kalsbeeck-Zylstra, the first part his mother's name. But when he went to take up a claim, a lawyer advised him to shorten

*There's just as foot fishes in
older sea as vat has
been caught yet.*



the name to Zylstra, because "we don't use those long names over here."

Reikele, according to his daughter Taapke, was so patriotic toward his new country, that he did as the lawyer advised. He wanted to be 100 percent American!

The family first rented a small house, then bought land in Clover Valley and built a house there, where Riekele farmed. He later went into real estate, establishing an office in downtown Oak Harbor.

Jim, Augusta and Taapke all went to the Puget Sound Academy in Coupeville, and Augusta went on to Bellingham Normal School. Jim Zylstra studied law under Judge Still and became a lawyer. He was Prosecuting Attorney for Island County for many years. Taapke married Barney Nienhuis, a local businessman, in 1908.

Richard "Reke" Zylstra was Mayor of Oak Harbor, and Geert Zylstra managed the Oak Harbor Cooperative store for many years. Ted Zylstra has a law practice, following in the footsteps of Great Uncle James.

Rance and Reke and Rein were all builders, and Rance's two sons, Don and Laurin, and Ken Zylstra, Laurin's son, also are in the construction business.

Enough of Floods

Many Dutch immigrants chose Whidbey because of its similarity to their mother country, The Netherlands: a farming country, close to the sea, cool summers, rainy winters. Some were tempted to go to Skagit County, but the yearly flooding of the Skagit River and inadequate diking changed their minds. They had had enough of dikes and floods in Holland.

That the land was heavily forested presented no problem. These people had worked hard all their lives and knew the value of an honest day's labor.

The first Dutch immigrants were reported in Jerome Ely's "History of the Hollanders" when the steamer Idaho sailed into Oak Harbor in 1894 with 18 Dutch colonists aboard, among them the names of Heller, Freiling, Jacobson, Haan, Bolt, Oldhuus, Jonker, Schloss and Lichtenberg.

A year later 60 more families came and within two years there were about 200 Hollanders, industrious, thrifty people who cleared the land and built their homes in some of the worst of times. There was little money.

(Continued on next page)

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VISA

It's a Dutch Town

(Continued from previous page)

Clover Valley

Douwe and Rein Zylstra each bought 40 acres about two miles from Oak Harbor on the road to Coupeville; John Ronhaar, Charlie Nienhuis, H. Riksen, the DeWildes, Erke and Rein Eerkes all settled in Clover Valley.

Nienhuis and Riksen each took 60 acres, DeWilde Bros. 40 acres, Erke Eerkes 40 acres, Ronhaar 20 acres, and Rein Eerkes 10 acres. Later, Reikel Eerkes arrived and bought 20 acres south of Ronhaar, and M. Fakkema 20 acres south and west of Eerkes. Fakkema had just enough money to make one payment on his land, and he had a large family to support.

Fakkema had good land and from the first had good crops. As soon as the land was cleared, he raised 95 bushels of wheat to the acre. Ely, in his "history" in 1912, wrote: "Mr. Fakkema now owns 200 acres north of Crescent Harbor, 85 acres under cultivation, a fine new house with spring water running all the time to the residence and barn. He is just a little in debt yet, but his farm alone is worth three times as much as he owns."

In the 1980 census, there were 991 Hollanders listed in Island County. Most of these live on North Whidbey, and one still notes Dutch names on rural mailboxes, such as Riepma, Boon, Zylstra, Fakkema and Heller.

Many prominent businesses bear Dutch names: Fakkema and Kingma, Zylstra and Beekma, Koetje Agency. Al Koetje is Mayor of Oak Harbor, and Ed Boonstra is city maintenance supervisor. The Christian Reformed Church and the First Reformed Churches are well attended, and each year in late April the community celebrates its Dutch heritage with a three-day Holland Happening festival, with parade, Dutch dances, buffet supper of Dutch foods, crafts fair, and international dancers.

At Oak Harbor City Beach a large windmill overlooks the play and picnic grounds; at Holland Gardens a smaller but beautifully picturesque windmill is centered, and as one enters Oak Harbor from the north, the Auld Holland Inn beckons to visitors with its windmill arms moving slowly on the breeze.

It is a Dutch town!



Floods such as this one on the Snohomish River helped bring Hollanders to Whidbey Island. Photo courtesy of Al Molenaar

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¹⁰ House Built in 1877 Still Occupied



The Ulrich Freund house, built in 1877, still stands on the Freund Donation Claim just west of Oak Harbor.

The original Freund house on the Freund farm just west of Oak Harbor is the only home left that was built by one of Oak Harbor's first three settlers. Ulrich Freund, the Swiss Army captain, came with two companions, Martin Taftson the Norwegian, and the "Yankee" Sumner in December of 1850 and in 1851 filed on three Donation Claims that took in most of the harbor.

Freund's claim was the westernmost acreage, and members of the Freund family still live there. The house is 107

years old, built in 1877 after Freund's log cabin was burned by marauding Indians.

The house is of single board construction, and was originally papered inside with newspapers, among them the 1877 Wyoming Democrat, "published weekly for Two Dollars for a year's subscription. A discount of Fifty Cents allowed for advance payment."

Over the years a great deal of re-

papering and painting has been done. Although a small house, it contains a living room, dining room, three bedrooms, a kitchen, pantry, bathroom and back porch. When the Arnold Freund family lived there for three years, a fireplace and a kitchen woodstove heated the place and provided for cooking.

Betty Freund (Mrs. Arnold) saved a portion of the Democrat of 1877 used in the original papering, complete with a recipe section with some interesting "economical dishes" of that day.

Rice Pudding

"Rice pudding can be furnished at a cost of nine or ten cents, as follows: Take a small teacupful of rice and sugar each, half a teacup of raisins, two quarts of sweet skimmed milk and a little salt. Bake slowly from two to three hours, and the result will be nutritious, cheap and healthful."

Family Supper

"A family supper, consisting of good home-made bread and butter, canned huckleberries, cream of tartar cake and milk or sage tea well trimmed, is pretty good living for common people. It is very simple and cheap, and the persons who practice it are not conscious of having done anything extraordinary in the scrimpsing line."

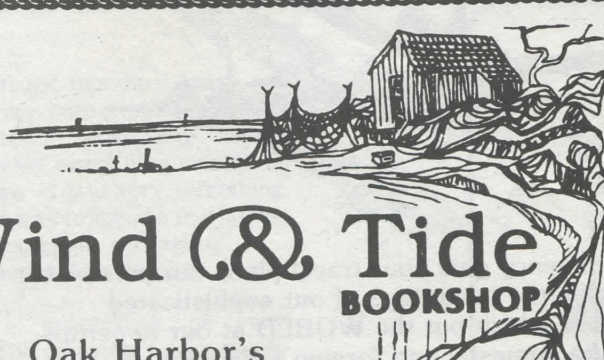
Hog's Head Delicacy

"Not long since I bought a hog's head, costing four cents a pound, cut off the jowls and salted them, and they furnished pork for two messes of baked beans, enough for two meals for a family of six, and it was much more delicious and tender than the ordinary side pork.

"After divesting the remainder of eyes, ears and snout, it was soaked in water for 54 hours, scraped thoroughly, then boiled until the meat was ready to drop from the bones, chopped fine, seasoned with salt, pepper and sage and pressed.

"When cold, cut into slices and fry slowly in a batter made of milk, eggs, flour. I prefer sour milk, one egg to a cup of milk, and use a little soda. This makes an excellent breakfast dish. Enough fat presses out and rises on the surface of the water to pay for the work."





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'My Ruthinda'

A new book about Whidbey Island is just off the press, "My Ruthinda," the story of Ruthinda Wallace, wife of William Wallace, first settlers in Crescent Harbor.

The author is pretty, vivacious Christopher Barnes of Anacortes, great-great-granddaughter of Ruthinda Wallace.

Barnes was born and raised in Mount Vernon, a graduate of Mount Vernon High School and Seattle University. She spent seven years researching history for her book, "during my spare time," taking husband and children on vacations to Oregon, Utah and Wyoming, wherever she might find some history.

The author is married to the Rev. Hugh Neil Barnes, a retired Army Chaplain, and the couple has three children, 17-year-old March, Catherine, 16, and Sarah, 14. Christopher Barnes' grandfather was Phil Cornelius, a pioneer of Skagit County who was manager of Darigold for many years.

The book records history in story form, omitting much of the "begets and begats," and is delightfully told.

The books are available in Whidbey Island bookstores, with excerpts appearing in Spindrift Two.

Ruthinda and William Wallace and two young children, Isaac, about 3, and Betsy, a tiny baby, were the first settlers in Crescent Harbor, located just east of Oak Harbor on Whidbey Island.

They arrived in the summer of 1851, to take up a 640-acre donation claim where the U.S. Navy base is adjacent to the town of Oak Harbor. Unlike the land nearby covered with giant oak trees, the Wallace property had one large open field, with waterfront and a stupendous view of Mt. Baker.

William Wallace was a carpenter by trade, and he quickly put up the first frame house on Whidbey, according to Christopher Barnes, author of the book "My Ruthinda," which charts her family back to her great-great-grandmother.

On the long journey overland to Olympia the going was hard, and on arrival they found they were the only white family there. They pitched a tent and lived like the Indians. Ruthinda was uneasy among the Indians, even though they were friendly, she found



them to be primitive, and "not to be trusted."

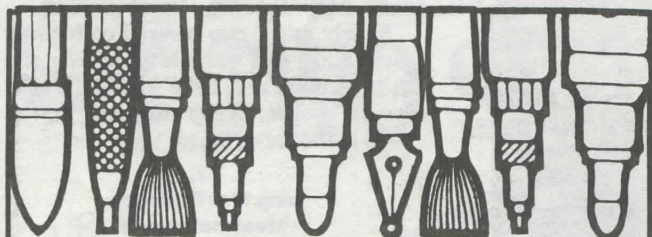
Because of her husband's skill in carpentry, Ruthinda found herself with better living conditions before too long.

During their stay in Olympia, Wallace met Isaac N. Ebey, the Colonel who was to become the U.S. Collector of Customs for Puget Sound, and he urged them to go to Whidbey Island, where Ebey had filed a claim on Oct. 15, 1850. Anything would be better than the place they were living so Ruthinda, William and their young family packed up and moved on.

They traveled by scow and Indian canoe. Whidbey Island was only about 100 miles from Olympia by water, and Whidbey seemed to be the land of their dreams. On the way north they stopped to rest at another Indian village on a point called Alki (early Seattle).

Ruthinda found Whidbey to be a desolate place and wondered how on earth Mrs. Ebey stood it. When she asked Colonel Ebey about his wife, she was told that he had not yet brought his family west. Ruthinda was unhappy

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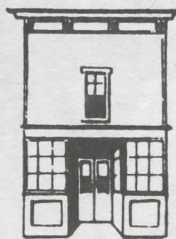
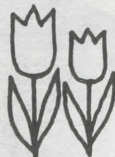
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about being the first white woman on the Island.

Betsy Wallace wrote later: "I have heard my parents tell of their visit at the Indian village (Alki) and how kind and hospitable Chief Sealath was, generously offering all the land they would accept if they would only stay; but they were still under the spell of Col. Ebey's enthusiasm and proceeded on their way."

The Wallace family arrived on Whidbey Island in the summer of 1851 and filed their Donation Claim at Crescent Harbor as the third such homestead staked on the Island.

In April 1851 there were only 15 settlers on the Island. There were no other white women, and life was hard for Ruthinda. It would take three or four years to get the land to produce. Food was scarce and expensive when available. Flour was \$40 a barrel. The closest trading store was at Port Townsend.

Victoria had the best supplies but was farther away by boat. There was plenty of milk and butter. The Wallaces brought the first horses to the Island and others brought cows. There was plenty of venison and salmon, and potatoes were easily grown. They quickly became the daily vegetable.

The pioneer mother with two small children was expecting another baby, and she was worried about her con-



Christopher Barnes

finement. Finally, much to her relief, the Wallaces began having visits from others. Col. Ebey brought his family to the Island early in 1852, and Ruthinda found other white women had arrived. On April 20, 1852, Mary Wallace came into the world to be known as Polowna, the name of Ruthinda's younger sister.

By June 1852, there were four families with 12 white children living on Whidbey. In 1853 there were 400 Skagit Indians and eight white families. But only one white woman lived at Crescent Harbor and that was Ruthinda.

She was firm with the Indians, and even made acquaintances with some. When she heard that Rebecca Ebey was teaching her children how to read and write, Ruthinda decided she must do the same for hers.

William Wallace believed his Island was truly "the land of dreams." Soon Ruthinda's brothers, James and Milton Mounts, came and took their own claims just west and adjacent to the Wallace claim. As bachelors they each claimed 320 acres. Ruthinda was happy to have her two bachelor brothers living nearby, but wished they would marry.

Barn raisings were popular entertainments in the early Whidbey Island settlements. They combined work and pleasure, with the men working to help each other raise their roofs, while the women brought food for the workers. When the barn was complete, there was a barn warming, and Milton and James, who were both musicians, were eager to play at dances.

The Mount brothers were out-going young men, whose door was always open, and Islanders came from as far away as Coupeville to attend the rare social get-togethers.



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Maylor Brothers Store Building,

In 1893, two enterprising brothers, Joe and John Maylor, who were born and grew up on Maylor's Point, turned their interest toward a business in the little town of Oak Harbor.

The brothers were very different, Joe the businessman was quiet and efficient; John was a photographer and to him Oak Harbor is indebted for the many pictures he took during the early years of the century.

While L.P. Byrne had built a nucleus of business houses on the east end of main street along Oak Harbor Bay, the Maylor brothers chose the west end of the street to build a general store and dock.

The dock reached a long finger out toward the end of "Crooked Spit" on Maylor's Point, where local Indians had buried their dead. The store was a two-story building with its foundations built along the slough that divided the town and beach area.

The brothers also built identical homes across the street from the store, with spacious lawns and trees in front, and with interiors as modern as any on Whidbey Island. The Joe Maylor home still stands, the home of Joe Maylor's youngest son Paul. The spacious front yard is now part of Pioneer Way's business section.

John Maylor sold his interest in the business in the early 1920s and moved from Oak Harbor. His house stood on property next to the Joe Maylor home until it was destroyed by fire in the 1950s.

That the Maylor brothers chose to build a few blocks away from the Byrne dock, warehouse, hotel and store, was a happy circumstance, for one hot August day in 1918, fire destroyed not only the Byrne holdings but the creamery, livery stable, a home and other buildings on the east end. The business buildings were never replaced, and the town regrouped to the west, with Maylor's Store one of the central businesses.

The "store" sold everything, from feed to dress goods, groceries, lamps, oil and machinery. The post office was also located there, with Joe Maylor the postmaster. Farmers tethered their horses along the walkway, awaiting loading of wagons with feed for the trip to the farms.




The Maylor Building as it appeared shortly after being built in 1895. The brick-faced front portion was added later.



Historic Maylor Building now caters to more modern tastes.





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oak tree

Family Home Still Here in 1984



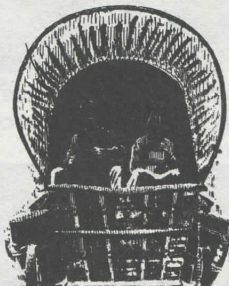
This comfortable home was built by Joe Maylor at the turn of the century, when the brothers built identical homes across the street from their building. The house, up the hill on 50th N.W., is half hidden by large Pioneer Way buildings but once was surrounded by gardens and orchards.

The Maylor dock extended from what is now Pioneer Way West and 50th N.W., to deep water, and freight and passenger boats loaded and unloaded there daily through the 1920s. When the Washington Cooperative Egg and Poultry Association bought the dock in the late 1920s, they built a three-part warehouse on the channel. The structure went up in a spectacular nighttime fire in 1967 and was never rebuilt.

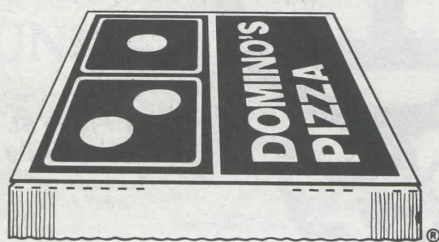
A mini-harbor with float was installed just off Flintstone Freeway, and some dredging was done for a small boat harbor, but the project was abandoned with the installation of the Oak Harbor Marina at the head of the harbor.

The Maylor Store, managed by Joe Maylor's sons, Howard and Paul, was sold in the late 1970s and other businesses are located there on the thriving small town business street.

The Maylor Store structure, however, remains about the same, and a small restaurant, The Two Sisters, is located upstairs where apartments formerly were. The slough has been filled in with the building of the Flintstone Freeway, and dance studios use the space beneath the street level businesses, facing the harbor. In 1993, the building will be 100 years old.



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This was the Oak Harbor dock, renovated and extended from the old Maylor dock to serve the Washington Cooperative Egg and Poultry Association, about 1930. Photo taken from the beach to the east of what is now Flintstone Park.



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Chinese Were Island Pioneers Too

by Lillian Huffstetler

John Gong — Loo Gong — Ah Soot — Wah Lee — Lee Yu — Mar Hee — Charley Sow — Tom Sow — Tom Sing — Lee Sing — Big Jim — Old Jim — Ah Hop — Ah Cheap — Gin Lin Tin — exotic sounding names for some early Whidbey residents.

There were others too: Tom Swong Soot — Leo Gay — Chin Toy. But I am going to tell mostly about the men who rented land or did business with my grandfather.

The Chinese came to the Northwest and Whidbey Island near the turn of the century and were here about 20 years. There was also one Japanese, Tanaka, here in 1918 and a Korean or two.

They, too, were pioneers, as they left their own country and came across the Pacific to a strange land, with different race, language and customs. They were young single men and most rented a patch of land and raised potatoes, working hard to get money to take back to China.

My grandparents, Ernest and Julia Hancock owned Aloha Farm on Ebey's Prairie, which was originally the W.B. Engle donation claim. In my grandfather's journals the earliest listing of Chinese is 1899 and the last 1920.



Of these all but two were honest. There is a notation by Gin Lin's name in 1900: "Skipped." He owed \$81.60. And by Old Jim in 1912, "Never Paid." His debt was \$189.55.

This was quite a sum when you consider that yearly rent per acre was \$10. Harrowing $5\frac{1}{2}$ acres twice was \$4.40; hauling wood $\frac{1}{2}$ hour 25 cents; cultivating $5\frac{1}{2}$ acres \$2.75. A man worked all day at that time for \$2.00.

Johnny Gong was listed from 1905 through 1920 and he was the one closest to the Hancock family. He lived on Aloha Farm in a tiny cabin across a pond near the farm buildings. When my mother was small Johnny Gong brought her gifts whenever he went to Seattle, and the family still has some of them — lovely little embroidered silk scarves.

There were slippers and other things, too, but these were worn out and discarded. When Johnny went back to China with his savings he bought a young wife, who later took all his money and ran away. He died penniless.

Wah Lee lived near the road down to Ebey's Landing, across a patch of woods from Johnny Gong, and the remains of his house is still there, covered by bushes. Wah Lee's name was entered from 1903-1912.

For part of the time he had a grandson living with him, a half-Chinese, half-German boy named Lawrence Young. When his grandfather went to work in the fields at dawn, Lawrence would take his lunch bucket and go sit on the porch steps of the Hancock home until the children were ready to go to school.

Later he left for China with his grandfather, but Wah Lee died en route and the young boy was sent to relatives in the interior of China. They were very primitive and superstitious and we heard they took away his bicycle and threw it up on the roof "to scare away demons."

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They Were Generally Well Treated Here

31

I don't know what happened to him, but it certainly must have been traumatic for a child born and raised in America, to be suddenly thrust among strangers in a foreign land, although I assume he must have known some Chinese language. I hope that somehow he was able to return to the U.S.

Ah Soot lived on the John LeSourd farm on the road to Ebey's Landing. Unlike the rest of the Chinese who felt it was of utmost importance to return to China and be buried there, he always wanted to stay here and to be buried "near Mr. LeSourd." He was sick for a long time before his death in 1924, and each evening John LeSourd would walk down to see if he needed anything.

When he died he was buried in the LeSourd plot in Sunnyside Cemetery in Coupeville, with a stone which reads: "AH SOOT, BORN IN CHINA." Some 60 years later his friend John LeSourd was buried near by, just as "Soot" wished it.

He was lucky to have such a fine employer who treated him with such kindness at a time when most were treated as "non-persons," to quote Jimmie Jean Cook's book, "A Particular Friend." I think most of the Chinese on Whidbey were well-treated.



Jimmie's book also mentioned about Leo Gay hanging himself on Jan. 31, 1909. My mother remembered the incident, as she was a young teenager at the time. I believe he lived near the Ed Jenne place, just where Engle Road jogs.

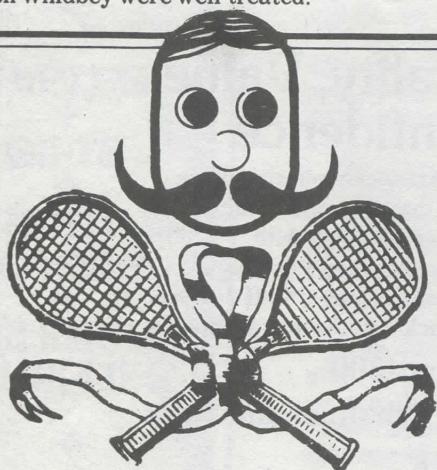
The reason that he hanged himself, they heard, was because he had gotten drunk and was in jail on Chinese New Year, and that was such a disgrace he took his life.

I don't know which Chinese it was, but one invited my Uncle Virgil and another young boy to dinner. He had baked a chicken, whole. He had taken the feathers off, but everything else was there.

The boys took care to eat only the wings and legs. He also served them "gin" in tiny cups. They didn't want to drink it, and didn't know what to do, so one would get the fellow's attention, and the other would pour it down a knot-hole in the floor under the table. So they made it through the dinner. He must have thought those little kids could really hold their liquor!

I have a few items which belonged to the Chinese of Ebey's Prairie: Johnny Gong's spoon and chopsticks; a soy sauce pot; ginger jar; rose wine jug; an opium bottle dug up in a field by Glenn Lynn of Coupeville when he was plowing; and a silk kerchief.

A Chinese laundry used to be in the building where "Knead and Feed" is now. When the Fisher family ran the Glenwood Hotel their children, Henrietta and Madeline were very small. Henrietta was blonde and blue-eyed and when Madeline arrived with dark brown hair and brown eyes, the Chinese help looked at her and said, "Good Chinese baby." Madeline Darst told me this two years ago.



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The Izett Store of Crescent Harbor

Henrietta Izett Frostad was the daughter of John Izett, an 1850s pioneer who settled Crescent Harbor and whose story has been told in earlier Spindriffs.

In an account of Oak Harbor in 1881, when Henrietta was a girl, she gives a delightful insight into "her world," when she described the Captain Barrington home. Following are excerpts from her memoirs:

Earliest Days

Three young men came to Oak Harbor in the fall of 1859, landed from their hired sloop at the foot of the hill (Big Spring), and climbed to the top. On viewing the natural prairie before them (Oak Harbor), Taftson the Norwegian shouted "Eureka! I have found a spot for my home!" His donation claim extended from the Crescent Harbor marsh west to the center of Oak Harbor.

Charles Sumner filed on the next claim (west) and Ulrich Freund, the Swiss, took the next claim (farther west). Ulrich and Taftson were good friends, but argued continually. Taftson once said to my father (John



George Izett Creamery, Crescent Harbor, 1910.

Izett), "I don't see why Ulrich can't say 'blue-yay,' he always says 'plue-chay.'"

Jerome Ely wrote about Captain Ed Barrington. All the business of the early settlers centered about him. He was in logging and freight; furnished the Utsaladdy mill and hotel with meat; and provided hay and feed of all kinds for man and beast. He was strictly honest in all his personal dealings, and trusted his fellow-man likewise. This (description) would also fit Uncle Jerry Ely.

Oak Harbor's Ship

A model of the ship "Growler" is I remember about the boat my father built for Barrington. He named it because of all the "growling" done by the builders. (Ed. note: The Growler was the only boat ever built in Oak Harbor.)

Father said it had been his dream for years to go into shipbuilding, but he suffered much loss on a trip to Frisco in 1857, when nearly all his savings of the years working at Utsaladdy went overboard to lighten

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Turn of the century Oak Harbor street scene, with Maylor Bldg. in background.

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ship when the old Constitution nearly foundered. So the Growler was not only his first attempt to build a ship on Whidbey, it was his last.

Captain Barrington found the Growler a good money-maker for him, and sold her for a good sum to a trader in Alaska. She was lured ashore and wrecked by Northern Indians.

Oak Harbor in 1881

From where Maylor's Store is today, east along the waterfront was a dirt road. The land above the road was part sheep pasture and part orchard.

The Barrington home, the most modern in Oak Harbor, was surrounded by orchards. It was a white house with green shutters, two fireplaces, a big front porch and an elegant parlor.

I can still feel the shivers of awe going up and down my spine as my country-girl feet trod the Brussels carpet; heard the fine playing of Olivia Barrington on the grand piano; noted the coal fire in the grate; and was shown pictures in the family album by my little friend Sibbie (Sibella) Barrington.

There was a music box in the album; a marble-topped table in the house, and around the house itself was a red brick walk.

The Barrington house was the only one until one came to the creamery

corner, where Mrs. Christopher and a son and daughter lived in the Taftson house where Grandma Van Dyk's house was built later.

Across the road from the Barrington house was the store and warehouse. There was nothing but an Indian camp on the beach until one came to the blacksmith shop with a small dock between it and the warehouse and hall building, with a store in the first story and a warehouse below.

A Big Snow

There was a frosty spell that iced over a few inches of snow, and we came to the Harbor in a sleigh. We called at the Christopher home and Anna Lena begged mother to let me spend the night. We slept late but Mrs. Christopher roused us about 8 o'clock saying, "Get up and see the real snow." There was about three feet of snow, clear over the fences! (Ed. note: 1881 was a winter listed in pioneer annals as unusually severe, with a deep snow.)

Anna and I dressed up in her brother's clothes and waded the snowdrifts to the store and up to Sibbie's house. My brothers broke the road coming down "Walkers Hill" (now 70th N.E. along Victory Homes housing), which was the only road leading out of town except the road north (Oak Harbor road), and I got home safely.

What lovely sleighing before the thaw came! But how my mother scolded me for wearing boys clothing to the store!

In my girlhood days (1880s), it was not unusual for winter weather to drop to zero and the daily mail boats, the Idaho or Fairhaven, wore boards over their bows to protect the hull from ice formed by river water flowing into the Sound. Many times the mail had to be put off at Long Point (south of Coupeville) and hauled overland.

There were few water pipes to freeze in those days, but we had cold clear water at our cabin house, piped from the spring. The first pipes were
(Continued on next page)



Tribulations of John Izett, Pioneer

(Continued from previous page)

wooden ones bored by hand with a spliced ship auger. They were white fir poles, 12 feet long and 6-8 inches through, bored first from one end then the other.

Father and the boys were pleased that they had only spoiled two lengths of "pipe" by missing center. I was only 7 years old at the time of the pipe boring.

Aunt Juliet Morse

Juliet Morse, an eccentric maiden lady, ran the store under the Grange Hall on the waterfront. There was just a short dock to which the mail boat tied up when the tide was in, took on cordwood for fuel, passengers and mail, and it was the chief excitement of the day to "go to meet the boat."

By neighborhood cooperation, a two-plank walk was built out to deep water. Many of us remember being carried (out to the boat) by strong good-looking deck hands. One fine big Swedish fellow said to a young lady who was being carried, "Don't be afraid to hoog me, lady, the tighter you hoogs, the easier it is to carry you."

I often wondered why Aunt Juliet Morse never let herself be carried from the boat over the mud-flats, but one day when Maurice O'Leary and I were the only customers in the store she told us, "One time I was dropped by the man who was carrying me, and it was a lot of fun for everyone but me. So since then I always take off my shoes and stockings and wade in or out."

Aunt Juliet had a bedroom in the rear of the building, and kept a loaded shot gun for protection.

John Izett's Trip

In 1857, John Izett and Larence Grennan "went below," Grennan to buy machinery for the big mill that he and another pioneer by the name of Cranney were to build at Utsaladdy. The two rode horseback (from Olympia) to an Oregon port to take a ship to San Francisco.

Izett planned to take an extra course in drafting and to buy a stock of goods to start a store at Coveland (San de Fuca), to get the wherewithal to start a small shipyard. Within a few months they loaded their stuff on the old



Pioneer Izett family at Crescent Harbor home.

steamer "Constitution," and with lightened wallets but happy hearts, set out for home.

On the way a fierce storm overtook the boat which was heavily loaded and with a big passenger list, and it began to founder. As they turned back they found the pumps inadequate to lower the rising water in the hold, and Izett made wooden pumps. All the men aboard worked day and night to keep the ship afloat until they docked again at San Francisco.

But during the storm everything that could be moved by hand had gone overboard. Only a box of once white kid gloves bought by Izett to be part of his wedding finery was left. The wedding was to take place as soon as he returned to Whidbey. The gloves had been used to save the hands of the "pumping passengers."

Grennan's mill machinery, too heavy to move, was saved, as was Izett's furniture which had been loaded in back of the machinery. The wedding had to be postponed until July 4, 1858, and Izett went to work for Grennan and Cranney to make money to improve his land and build the log cabin.

The Izett Family

John and Nancy Finley Izett lived in Crescent Harbor, a densely wooded valley, after their marriage, staying with the Chenoweths, another pioneer family, until their first son, George,

was born. Then they moved to their own cozy log cabin home.

Inside there was a tiny kitchen with a painted floor and a varnished cupboard and a Buck's four-lid patent cookstove, the stove I learned to cook on. In the parlor was the sofa, a rocking chair, and four dainty cane chairs, a falling leaf mahogany dining table, a homemade desk and a little sewing chair. There was an ingrain carpet here and in the bedroom where there was a spool bed and a highboy.

John Izett found after he built his first few buildings that the land he had pre-empted was on an unsurveyed school section, and for years he fought for his title. He worked at milltown as a ship's carpenter, and at clearing land.

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