

# Spindrift Two

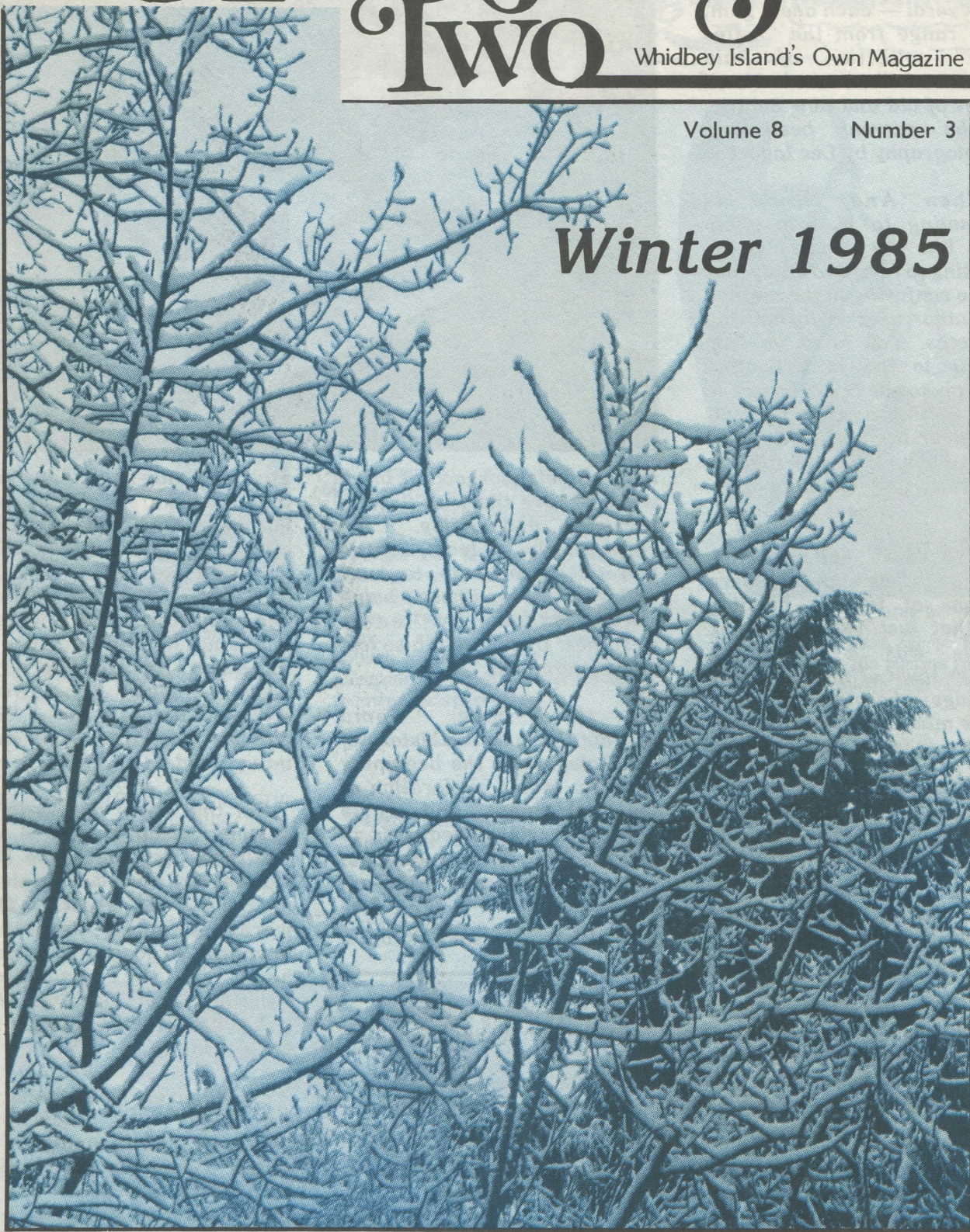
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Whidbey Island's Own Magazine

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## <sup>6</sup> *First White Boy Born on Island in 1852*

It was Feb. 12, 1852, and Whidbey Island pioneers were few and far between. In Coupeville the John and Frances Alexander family, including their two sons Will and young John, sat in the darkening shadows of late afternoon inside their small cabin on the Alexander Donation Claim. Their nearest neighbor was the family of Captain Thomas Coupe.

The Alexander Blockhouse, familiar to history buffs and school children of Whidbey Island, had not been built as yet, for the "Indian uprising" of the late 1850s had not yet occurred. Plans were being made by the Alexanders to build a new house as soon as the spring garden was in and the weather more favorable.

Frances Alexander moved slowly about the cabin, heavy with her third child, and frightened for his well-being in this cold and forbidding land. Her fear of the many Indians at the Cove increased as her time for childbirth approached. She kept her fear to herself, not wishing to add this to her husband's own worries of caring for a growing family in a primitive land on

an island in Puget Sound populated by Indians.

Suddenly a searing pain gripped her small body and as she tried to grasp the edge of the table for support she lost consciousness and fell to the hard dirt floor.

The family moved quickly. John, with young Will's help, got Frances to the bed. Young John brought the horse from the barn and started on the long wooded trail to Dr. Lansdale's cabin across the Cove. He took a lighted pitch torch with him to protect himself and his horse from the timber wolves as he rode.

Before dawn, Frances Alexander was safely delivered of another son, Abram Lansdale Alexander, the first white boy born on Whidbey Island.

The local Indians had been eagerly awaiting this new baby because none of them had ever seen a white baby before. The news travelled swiftly as young John went riding for the doctor, and before daylight came the Indians were lined up outside the tiny cabin.

John Alexander was sure the Indians meant no harm, but he wondered what their thinking was. Would they try to take the baby? He also was acquainted with his wife's fear of the Indians, yet he dared not refuse them a view of the little newcomer.

With a prayer under his breath, he stationed his two sons at the back and front doors, and gave them each a loaded rifle. He told them not to be afraid, and to use the guns only as a necessity.

It was a cold and snowy day, and Frances Alexander, just having been through the trauma of childbirth under primitive circumstances, lay in bed with her newborn son, terrified of the long procession of Indians who filed through the cabin to see the small wonder of a white baby.

Frances Alexander later told her great granddaughter Lois White Perkins, that she could not recall the bitter cold of that long day with the doors opened to snow and wind and Indians. She was much too frightened to even notice such an unimportant matter!

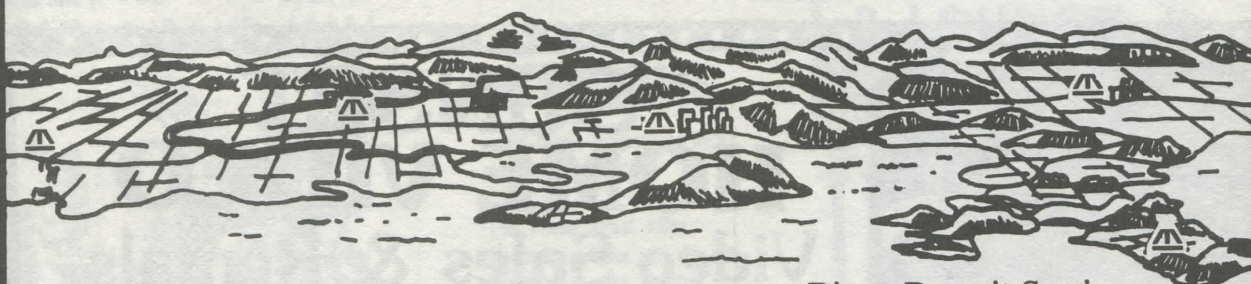
(The End)



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## 36 **Oak Harbor Became Town in 1915**

Oak Harbor, Whidbey Island's largest incorporated town, will be 70 years old this year. On May 15, 1965, citizens observed the town's 50th year, or Golden Anniversary.

The celebration chairmen were councilmen Al Koetje (now mayor) and Ralph Poole. R. O. Ellis was mayor. Beards were promoted for the event. Two receptions were held at City Hall, one for invited officials of the state, county, Navy and surrounding cities. Another was held for the public with town officials present.

Twelve mayors served during the first 50 years of incorporation: Jerome Ely, Frank Stallman, Alfred Maylor, W. H. Barrington, Elmer Jackson, John Eerkes, Charles McEachren, Otto Van Dyke, R.L. Maylor, George Heap, Richard Zylstra and Ray Ellis.

Al Koetje succeeded Ellis, and has been Mayor ever since. R. L. Maylor was elected twice, 1936-42 and 1956-60. He was the son of Alfred Maylor, who served as Mayor in 1920-22.

*(The End)*



The waterfront at Oak Harbor, where East Pioneer Way is now located was a busy place when this picture was taken just off the Byrne wharf (not shown). The Byrne Hotel and warehouse (left) were important part of the little town, that went up in smoke from a fire started in the blacksmith shop.

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