

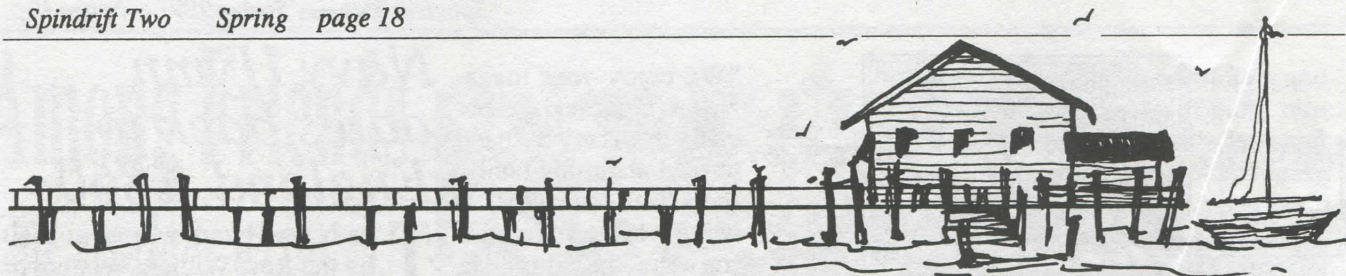
Spindrift Two

A stylized, graphic illustration of a coastal scene. In the center is a tall, white lighthouse with a black top section. To the left of the lighthouse is a green house with a white roof and a white square window. The lighthouse sits on a rocky, green-shaded shore. To the right of the lighthouse, a red sailboat is on the blue water. A large, white, stylized wave with black outlines and small white circles is in the foreground. The background is a light blue sky with horizontal lines. The entire scene is framed by a yellow border.

Volume 14 Number 3

Spring 1991

\$1.00



San de Fuca Was Island's First County Seat

At the head of Penn's Cove, on Madrona Way, stands what is reported to be Washington state's oldest public building, the first Island County Courthouse. It was built in 1854 by Thomas Cranney and Lawrence Grennan and used as a general store, a post office, the courthouse, and as living quarters for Cranney, who at that time was also Island County Auditor.

The first pioneers on Whidbey Island found they had to assume many public responsibilities as well as making homes for their families in a new land. So it was that the enterprising Cranney received a bond in 1856 from Dr. Richard Lansdale for lots 1 through 8, block 2, in the unrecorded plat of Coveland, as soon as the doctor received title to the property from the U.S.

Cranney was born in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia on June 11, 1830 where his father was the owner of a dry goods store and was also inspector of Customs for the U. S. Government. When the elder Cranney came west, young Thomas came with him. They sailed "around the Horn" and arriving in California went to work in the mines. The elder Cranney became ill and returned to Brunswick, while his son came north in 1853, locating at Penn's Cove.

Coveland, now San de Fuca, was a promising place for settlement, and Cranney took over the postal position in 1857. The mail was brought from Port Townsend on the mail boat *Peter Thompkins* and put ashore at Ebey's Landing, then carried on horseback by William Engle to the Coveland site. Port Townsend figured promi-

nently in Whidbey Island's development of those early days.

On the second Monday of the month a Mr. Corliss arrived for court sessions. The court was within the Third District, which included Pierce, King, Island, Whatcom and Jefferson counties.

Thomas Cranney served as County Auditor for two years. Commissioners' minutes do not reflect too much the anxiety of the settlers at this time when the "Indian Wars" were much in evidence. However, there is one nota-



In later years a private residence the Territory's first public building north of Olympia still guards the head of Penn's Cove.

tion that the auditor was allowed to pay \$10 freight for a box of muskets shipped on the steamer *Constitution* directly after the death of Col. Isaac Ebey.

Cranney and Grennan at that time operated a mill at Coveland. In 1858 they opened the mill at Utsalady on Camano Island and Cranney disposed

of his store at Coveland the following year. On Dec. 25, 1859 he married Sarah E. Coupe of Coupeville, daughter of Captain Thomas Coupe.

At Utsalady Cranney was engaged in the lumbering business and in fishing, and served as County Commissioner from Camano Island from 1861 through 1867. He petitioned the Superintendent of Schools, R. C. Fay, for establishment of a school district for Camano, and School District 5 came into being, embracing all of Camano.

In 1863 Cranney was authorized to organize another school district and a meeting was held in the company building, a board of directors elected and James E. Kennedy chosen as schoolmaster. Grennan offered use of the building, the furniture, blackboards, etc., without charge for the rest of the year. Kennedy was paid \$60 a month and the mill was eventually paid \$70 for the furniture and stove. There were 17 pupils attending, including three from Oak Harbor.

After 1866, Kennedy left and Cranney served as clerk until 1877. In 1867, from his mill at Utsalady, lumberman Cranney shipped a flagpole 150 feet long and 24 inches in diameter at the base to the 1867 Paris Exposition. The pole was originally 200 feet long but had to be cut to fit the hold of the ship. The Territorial Governor, who arranged the shipping with Cranney, wrote: "It would be impossible for us to convey to the hundreds of thousands and millions in Paris between March and December of 1867 a true idea of the magnitude of our timber, but short of its fair proportions as it is, by being shortened by 50

feet, the glorious flag of our country will float from its top to the admiration of all visitors, far above the emblems and banners of any other nation."

When Lawrence Grennan died in 1869, Cranney operated the mill alone until 1876 when it was sold to the Puget Mill Co. Cranney moved to Coupeville and became County Commissioner, County Auditor, Probate Judge, Justice of the Peace, Superintendent of Schools, County Clerk and County Treasurer, not necessarily in that order. He was also a representative to the Territorial Legislature in 1871 and became the census enumerator for the U.S.

Sarah Cranney died in 1894 and Thomas in 1896 married Henrietta D'Jorup of Camano Island. When he died in 1907 his death certificate listed his occupation as "Gentleman." Thus, in history he always appears.

Life was not all hardship

Flora A. P. Engle of Coupeville remembered Utsalady when it was a booming lumber camp and sawmill. It shipped spars and lumber to the East Coast and to Europe. Most of the mill hands were single men and their social life was monotonous, but occasionally they would send the steamer *Linnie* or *Favorite* to Coupeville to pick up all the young ladies who would consent to come to their dances.

"Arriving in the ballroom no girl was at a loss for a partner, no matter how unattractive she might be. Female wallflowers were never in evidence in the little burg which was composed of men who worked in the mills or woods. Anyone wearing a skirt was in demand, young or old, big or little," Engle wrote.

She had a vivid recollection of seeing Thomas Cranney waltzing around the room to the music of the one violin which composed the orchestra, with his little 6-year-old Mollie, who became Mrs. J. W. Clapp. "We always had a good time at Utsalady, dancing from dark until daylight, for we would never go home until morning." ❀



Tartans & weeds

Whidbey Island's
SPECIAL Clothing Store
Classic & Traditional Fashions For
Men & Women

Open 7 days 'till 5 p.m. 678-6244 4 Front St. Coupeville

KNEAD & FEED



Homemade Breads and Pies
Soups, Salads and
Cinnamon Rolls

Made Fresh Daily

678-5431

On the Water Under Front Street, Coupeville



CENTER ISLE REALTY

Serving the Entire Island for 20 years

5 South Main Street, Coupeville WA 98239

678-5858



feet, the glorious flag of our country will float from its top to the admiration of all visitors, far above the emblems and banners of any other nation."

When Lawrence Grennan died in 1869, Cranney operated the mill alone until 1876 when it was sold to the Puget Mill Co. Cranney moved to Coupeville and became County Commissioner, County Auditor, Probate Judge, Justice of the Peace, Superintendent of Schools, County Clerk and County Treasurer, not necessarily in that order. He was also a representative to the Territorial Legislature in 1871 and became the census enumerator for the U.S.

Sarah Cranney died in 1894 and Thomas in 1896 married Henrietta D'Jorup of Camano Island. When he died in 1907 his death certificate listed his occupation as "Gentleman." Thus, in history he always appears.

Life was not all hardship

Flora A. P. Engle of Coupeville remembered Utsalady when it was a booming lumber camp and sawmill. It shipped spars and lumber to the East Coast and to Europe. Most of the mill hands were single men and their social life was monotonous, but occasionally they would send the steamer *Linnie* or *Favorite* to Coupeville to pick up all the young ladies who would consent to come to their dances.

"Arriving in the ballroom no girl was at a loss for a partner, no matter how unattractive she might be. Female wallflowers were never in evidence in the little burg which was composed of men who worked in the mills or woods. Anyone wearing a skirt was in demand, young or old, big or little," Engle wrote.

She had a vivid recollection of seeing Thomas Cranney waltzing around the room to the music of the one violin which composed the orchestra, with his little 6-year-old Mollie, who became Mrs. J. W. Clapp. "We always had a good time at Utsalady, dancing from dark until daylight, for we would never go home until morning." ❀



Tartans & weeds

Whidbey Island's
SPECIAL Clothing Store
Classic & Traditional Fashions For
Men & Women

Open 7 days 'till 5 p.m. 678-6244 4 Front St. Coupeville

KNEAD & FEED



Homemade Breads and Pies
Soups, Salads and
Cinnamon Rolls

Made Fresh Daily

678-5431

On the Water Under Front Street, Coupeville



CENTER ISLE REALTY

Serving the Entire Island for 20 years

5 South Main Street, Coupeville WA 98239

678-5858



A run for the gold, 1890s style

By Dorothy Neil

Gold is where you find it, and throughout the ages men have searched the world over to discover it. Gold has been responsible for migrations and settlements of continents, for lives lost, hopes dashed and hopes realized.

The Gold Trail, however hazardous, lures man through unheard of agonies with a tiny flame of hope at the end of the tunnel. Maybe, just maybe, he will find gold, lost of it.

The California Gold Rush of 1849 was instrumental in populating the Great Northwest, believe it or not. There wasn't enough gold in California to make rich men out of the thousands who came to "find" it. Finally, disillusioned, they began to look elsewhere for their fortune. If they could not have gold, the time was ripe for them to have land, and the Donation Claim Act led many of them to Puget Sound.

Reconstructing the scene in what was a village called Smithfield (now Olympia) at the southern end of Puget Sound, we find three disappointed veterans of the '49 Trail, Ulrich Freund, a Swiss Army veteran who had traveled halfway around the world to take part in the Gold Rush in California; Taftson, a Norwegian who had heard the same call; and C.W. Sumner, a "Yankee" who had a head start, by an ocean, over the other two. An unlikely trio to be the first settlers in Oak Harbor.

Free land was not the gold they had set out to find, but it was free. With information from another settler, Samuel Hancock, who had been in Smithfield when the three arrived, they obtained an Indian canoe and a couple of Indian paddlers who knew about a long narrow Island "up north" with land for the taking. There was a land-locked harbor with a wide beach and many springs and a forest of Garry oaks.



Approaching their destination, the three learned through the excited conversation between the Indians, that their canoe was not going to land in the harbor they had started for. The Indians encamped in that area were at war with the India tribe to which the two belongs. So they landed on the other side of the "point" which separated Crescent Harbor and Oak Harbor, at the site of what the Indians called the "Big Spring."

The cold clear spring water was a welcome sight to the travelers, and after a night's rest, they tackled the bluff above them to get a better perspective of the land they plan ned to claim.

For the next year or so all thoughts of gold were erased from their minds as Taftson, Sumner and Freund claimed the entire expanse of what is today the City of Oak Harbor. Clearing a place to build a cabin, building the cabin, planting enough to sustain life along with the fish, clams and an occasional deer., filled their days. Unlike finding gold, taking land in the northwest was a struggle with long-deferred rewards. We wonder sometimes if their dreams of finding gold often haunted them as they grubbed out their days on the untamed land of Whidbey Island.

Another Gold Rush

But the dream of finding gold was

still viable, and in 1897 and 1898 the Alaska Gold Rush became the main topic of conversation. Farmers, businessmen and woodsmen, some of them second generation of gold-rush-turned-farmer settlers, mortgaged their land, packed their gear and took their lives in their hands to make a long and uncertain voyage by boat to Alaska . . . then further conquest in a cold and unrelenting country to where they might find gold.

Everything floatable was put into service to transport the men to Alaska, and the treacherous waterways and shoals proved a graveyard for hundreds before they ever saw Alaska.

Elmer Calhoun of Coupeville, who made the trip to Alaska during the early Gold Rush days recalled the horrors of the icy trails filled with ill-equipped gold seekers. There were women, many of them carrying babies and herding small children, all in light clothing, among the men. Their eyes were blinded by their hope at the end of the rainbow, a gold strike which would make them rich and they sacrificed their families for the dream of wealth. Only the well-equipped and hardy got through, and only a small percentage of them found the riches they sought.

Calhoun told about working on his Sulphur Creek claim. In the last hole he "put down" he took out one pan containing \$10 in gold and another worth \$28. Before getting down to bedrock he had taken out many pans amounting to two or three dollars each.

The water had not yet frozen that September when he worked the gold country, and he was able to work it to advantage,. It was supposed that he had a good thing. Ten dollars was very good wages in those days when the county was in an early "depression" and money was scarce. But still, Calhoun's claim was not to be considered a "strike."



Alaska bound gold seekers in 1898 at Port Townsend, awaiting transportation. At right is Albert Hoffman, Oak Harbor businessman of the early 1900s. These men appear to be properly dressed for Alaska, but many went ill-prepared.

Islander strikes it rich

The Island County Times of 1898 reported on one rich quartz strike near Ketchikan. The claim was staked and owned by two men by the names of Johnson and Dyer. Dyer was Captain Charles P. Dyer of Whidbey Island, father of the late Yorke Dyer and grandfather of Norman, George and Rae Dyer who still make their homes in Oak Harbor. Norman has a daughter, Dawn, who also lives in Oak Harbor with children Ted and Elspeth. George's daughter Annette and daughter Abbie also live here, fifth generations from the Alaska Gold Rush pioneer Charles Dyer.

The Times account said "If the rock continues to produce gold at the rate it was begun, Johnson and Dyer have the richest mine in Alaska and a fortune which nothing can exhaust unless they shovel gold into the sea as fast as it can be pounded out."

Governor Swinford of Alaska inspected the Dyer find and reported "I never saw anything like that vein. In

one week's time Johnson and Dyer cleaned up 26 pounds of pure gold, and only worked about eight hours a day.

The Johnson-Dyer strike had come about in a routine manner. The two men had experienced failure in finding gold and had decided to leave for Seattle. However they did not have the boat fare to go "outside," so they decided to go over to the claim on the Cleveland Peninsula to try to pound out enough gold for their fare.

They knocked out a few hundred pounds of rock outcropping and came to a rock on which the "free gold stood out in spots as thick and as big as the perspiration on a man's brow." It was the beginning of the Johnson-Dyer strike, and the two men began to pound out the gold with hammers in small mortars. The result in free gold was so astonishing they kept up the work for more than a week. When they quit they had \$32,000 in gold, a sizeable fortune in those days of 1898. ❧



Oak Harbor Hobbies

WILTON CAKE SUPPLIES • ROCKETS
PLANES • TRAINS • MODELS • MACRAME
CRAFTS • DOLL HOUSE MINIATURES
TOUCH MUSIC BOXES

675-5813

1108 West Pioneer, Oak Harbor

South Whidbey Was Thriving By Turn of Century

From early day newspaper clippings of news on South Whidbey, 100 years ago saw struggling communities of pioneers, schools to be built, homes and farms being cultivated. In the town of Langley, there were 13 heads of families, and 14 children of school age. The nearest school was at Brown's Point.

Progress was apparent on South Whidbey with G. M. Calligan operating a logging railroad 2½ miles long in the Useless Bay area. In Clinton the saloon closed because of poor patronage; the wharf at Langley had 2,000 cords of wood piled on it for sale at \$2 a cord; the south half of Hat Island was reported burning; the road from Useless Bay to Langley was completed.

The news for 1893 told of 2½ feet of snow on South Whidbey; Jacob Anthes set out 1,500 fruit trees; Luther Weedon was setting out hickory, black walnut and beech trees; and the Farmer brothers hauled in 350 salmon in one day.

In 1896, the news reported the "bicycle craze is alarming with five new ones coming momentarily"; school was held during the summer and spring in regard for the children's health; and in 1897 a new school building was built on the N.E. Porter land and the road was surveyed from the head of the Island to Coupeville. At this time South Whidbey residents rode horseback to Coupeville to pay taxes, etc., at the courthouse.

In 1898 the road to Coupeville was planned to be 60 feet wide, and the trail was completed to remove all brush and trees except those trees 2½ feet through. There was a good bicycle road from Langley to Useless Bay.

In 1900 there were 18 telephones on South Whidbey. By 1901 a post office for Mutiny Bay was planned to be called Austin, and the schooner *Whidby* was launched. Community life came alive in 1902 when mail was first carried from Austin to Langley;



there was a forest fire in Clinton; Free-land advertised ripe strawberries and the First Thursday Club discussed women's rights. The first auto on Whidbey Island was reported.

By 1903 there were 31 pupils in Langley school. In 1904 the first RFD mail route was established out of Langley, with a Mr. Brooks as the carrier. In 1906 everyone in Saratoga was up in arms again against a saloon at Langley.

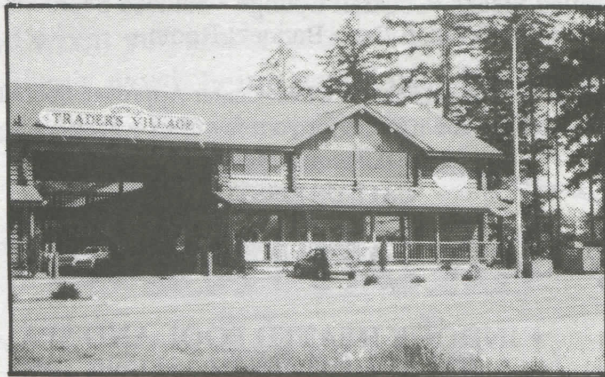
In 1908 Island County's population was 4,118 total, with 760 residents in and around Coupeville; Oak Harbor area 900; Camano Island, 242; Ut-salady, 428; Useless Bay, Langley and Skagit Head together boasted 1,603.

In 1911, the steamer *Calista* was launched; the steamer *Fairhaven* sank in November; the *Vashon* burned in December. There were exciting events reported in 1912 with the post office in Langley being robbed, a new school built at Mutiny Bay, and a Mrs. Jones was caught speeding her auto over the street of Austin.

In 1913, Mutiny Bay School was proud of its Victor talking machine, and silver salmon were selling for 15 cents each. In 1914, the Useless Bay tide of Jan. 25 was the highest in memory, with bridges floating away and roads impassable. And as a harbinger of things to come, the Island's first fatal accident occurred at Fort Casey.



Representing the **FINEST** Publishers
in **WILDLIFE AND WESTERN ART**



**WOODLANDS WILDLIFE
GALLERY**

1416 Midway Blvd. 675-4475 Mon.-Sat. 10-5