

# One square mile per family

The old Oregon Land Act allowed a square mile to each settler, but the general shape of Whidbey Island was such that this arrangement was hardly practical. Later the allowable acreage was modified and the claim shapes were varied.

Not all embraced 640 acres. The land easiest to make into gardens and pastures was taken first, and latecomers had to be satisfied with wooded and rocky ledges. Trees were so numerous and of little value, heavily forested sections were shunned.

**George Kellogg**, in his book "A History of Whidbey's Island" tells of the earliest settling in the 1850s, among them one Joseph S. Smith who located on Smith's Prairie in 1853. He was a local Methodist preacher "who spoke with little eloquence but with great force and some logic." Smith later made his fortune in other endeavors than preaching.

John Kineth, Smith's brother-in-law, took a claim next to Smith's, but the lines were not distinct. When the lines were finally run, Smith was found to have 400 or more acres of good clean prairie but Kineth had little more than 100. Smith would not listen to adjustment.

In 1858 the Seabeck Mill Company proposed a mill on Snakelum Point. Settlers helped the young company along, convinced it would provide jobs and a market for their products. Smith was to give them a small amount of land from his 640 acres along with a right of way. When the company lawyers looked over the deed offered by Smith, they found he had reserved the

right to ship produce of all kinds and in any amount free of charge over the company dock. Such a deed was not acceptable and Whidbey Island lost a start in industry.

Smith did little preaching but his political and business talents soon placed him as Representative in the Territorial Legislature. He later became a congressman from Oregon, where he died a wealthy man.

**Misunderstandings** about claims were many. Charles Seibert came on a ship commanded by William Robertson, and Robertson aided Seibert in locating his claim on the west side of Robertsons on Ebey's Prairie.

After Seibert built a cabin, his friend found the Seibert Claim had included land he himself wanted. He demanded that Seibert readjust his stakes, a demand Seibert refused.

Robertson then found that Seibert had fenced his property



in such a way that the Robertsons were required to take down bars on their way to their own property, so action followed.

Robertson hauled a cannon that would shoot a nine pound ball in front of the Seibert cabin and announced he would blow up the cabin and that its occupants were advised to move out.

Seibert was not at home, and Mrs. Seibert, with a baby in her arms, stood in the doorway and told the Robertsons to shoot if they dared. Embarrassed, the cannon party took their cannon home and the Seiberts kept their location.

Later Seibert was to become an important figure in the history of Snohomish County.

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## High School Corner became Chimes Corner

In the early 1930s, Midway Boulevard did not exist from what was then Chimes Corner northward.

Whidbey Avenue, which crosses it (then Neil Road and later 700 Ave.) was the northern boundary of Oak Harbor, and that was only because the school was located on the corner where the Midway High School is now and Memorial Stadium has been for many years.

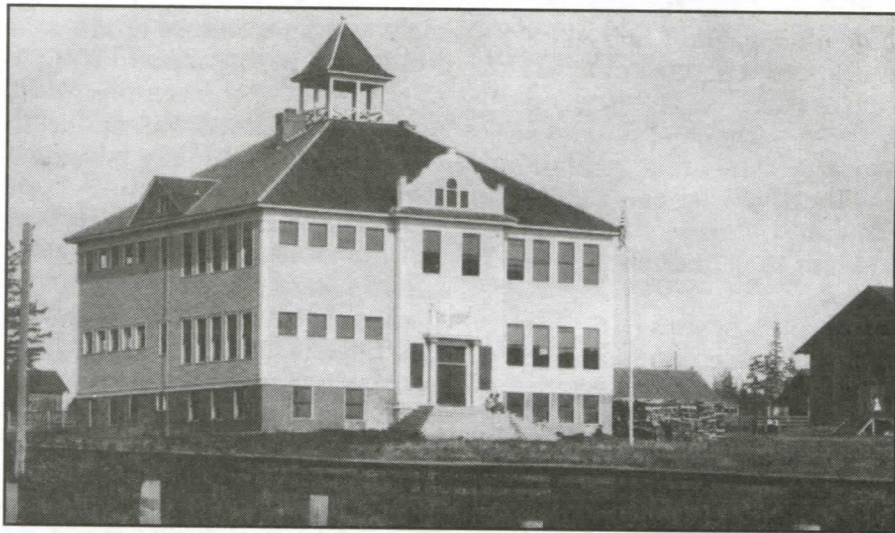
Before being called Chimes Corner, it was referred to as High School Corner, or just plain School Corner.

The school was that far north of town because the William Izett family donated the former farmland to the town, to be used only for school purposes.

It is written that the donation stipulated that if ever the property was used for anything else but the school, the land would return to the family. In other words, the school district cannot sell it!

The women of the town got together and raised money to put in sidewalks up Midway to the school, because, of course, all kids had to walk to school in those days, and it was a long way to walk in the mud.

The first building on the property was a combination grade and high school. The top three floors of the school were



This 3-story Oak Harbor school for grades 1 through 12 was built in 1912 at the corner of what is now Midway and Whidbey Ave.

demolished after the "new" school was built across the street, but the basement of the 1912 building is still in use.

**During the Great Depression**, the Public Works Administration or the WPA (Works Progress Administration) came to the rescue of working men with families.

Women were not allowed.

Goldie Road was built, smack through the Neil ranch, from what is now Whidbey Ave. to the home of John Goldie (near Ault Field). This opened up another lane of travel from Oak Harbor northward.

The new Oak Harbor high and elementary school was

built with government funds and workers, a building that is now a part of Oak Harbor Elementary school, and despite the Depression, Oak Harbor moved north.

**It wasn't until 1946** that the Chris Fakkemas built the Chimes Cafe. The round turret on the corner was supposed to contain chimes, to ring out from a record player through loud-speakers, but somehow that never happened.

Across on the other corner from the stadium site, a service station and store was built, and from then on, north Midway began to take on the shape of a shopping center.

From Chimes Corner north are many of Oak Harbor's most popular businesses and services; from the corner south to Pioneer Way there are many others.

Midway Boulevard is in a direct line from Ault Field, and presents the first entrance to Oak Harbor from the north on State Highway 20.

Its 70-year plus history has changed the face of the town and added greatly to the facilities for shopping and services.



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# North & South were two separate areas

**W**hidbey Island had the disadvantage of being settled in two areas, north and south, and "never the twain shall meet."

The reason was that in those long-ago days when roads were non-existent and boat travel the only way to get to or from the Island, there was an unexplored area of some 40 to 50 miles between the two areas of this long, crooked isle.

North Whidbey had been settled at Coupeville, Ebey's Prairie, Coveland (San de Fuca), Oak Harbor and Crescent Harbor in the early 1850s.

The settlers formed little villages and as more and more of them arrived, they began to build schools and government buildings as well as homes.

On South Whidbey, settlers were few and far between for many years. Loggers moved in to take their allotment of trees, then moved on.

Settlers cleared land and built houses; many married Indian women and raised their families in the isolation of an Island in Puget Sound, with no close neighbors.

**Sid Nourse**, pioneer settler on South Whidbey recounted the birth of Langley in a Centennial edition (1848-1948) of Whidbey.

"In the fall of the year 1880 a

quiet reflective German youth impelled by the ageless urge of humanity to see what lay beyond the near horizon, set out from Mukilteo in a small skiff.

"At that time the South Whidbey Island was in about the same stage of development as the outlying islands of Southeastern Alaska today.

"A few hardy pioneers, seeking refuge from the demands of civilizations, were living tranquil and unregulated lives with a minimum of effort, on favored spots along the shores.

"There were no roads, but tenuous trails and bridle paths linked together the various sections of this part of the Island. Game of all kinds was super abundant.

"Ducks and geese covered the marshes and the sloughs were full of salmon. Deer and bear were everywhere. There was no need of anyone going hungry."

**Jacob Anthes** landed at Useless Bay and spent the fall and winter exploring the country and getting acquainted with the settlers at Mutiny Bay, Double Bluff, Maxwelton, Bailey's Bay (Cultus), Possession Point, Columbia Beach and Brown's Point.

Beyond that for 20 miles to the head of Holmes Harbor there were no settlers. Four logging outfits were in opera-

tion, providing a ready market for all the farm produce that the settlers wanted to sell.

What a pity South Whidbey's pioneer town wasn't named for the man who was the Father of Langley!

In 1881 Anthes bought 120 acres of land one mile west of the present townsite of Langley from John Phinney for \$100.

He built a log cabin and lived there for a few years, clearing some of the excellent land and cutting cordwood for the many woodburning steamers that were the sole commerce carriers on Puget Sound.

He resumed his wanderings throughout the country, becoming familiar with the topography and lines of government surveys. Noting that the site of Langley had a good harbor and was accessible from almost any point without crossing the ridges which formed the Island backbone, he filed a homestead claim in 1886 and then a pre-emption and timber claim, paying all his expenses by logging operations!

In the wake of the 1890-91 railroad boom, Anthes, along with Judge J. W. Langley of Seattle, C. W. Sheafe, James Satterlee, A. P. Kirk and Howard B. Slauson, incorporated the Langley Land and Improvement Co. and the town of Langley was born.

At a cost of \$5,000 a dock was built, followed by a general store and post office. Anthes was the town's first storekeeper and postmaster, and he took the leading part in all activities.

As the trading post manager Anthes showed intelligent and shrewd management; he contracted with the steamboats to supply cordwood which furnished employment for 25 woodsmen and seven teams.

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schoolhouse was built for 15 children, Anthes' store was a clearing house for the \$2.50 tuition for each child, plus the amount paid the teacher.

Anthes encouraged and assisted in opening of trails into the interior from Langley.


The 1893-94 depression dealt Langley a hard blow, aided and abetted by a capricious Mother Nature. The dock went out in a storm and had to be rebuilt. The Great Northern Railway built to Bellingham put the steamboats out of commission and lost the cordwood revenue for Langley.

Things were rough all over until in 1898 the Alaska gold rush began stimulating business with orders for piling and brush. Over a hundred men found employment, thus boosting the population.

**The Island County** government at Coupeville, agriculturally minded, considered South Whidbey hopeless except for its timber, and no county funds were allotted for road building until 1902.

Until that year all travel between North and South was by boat or along the beaches.

But with the building of the road connecting the two far apart "ends" of Whidbey Island, Langley, Freeland and Clinton became a working part of Island County.

South Whidbey's ties still are closer to Everett and Snohomish County, while North Whidbey is bridged to Fidalgo and Skagit County, but with swifter transportation and increased population, Whidbey now has a "oneness" that it did not have during the first half of its 150 years. 

## What does Uff Da mean?

Every time we drive through to Conway and see all the "Uff Da" signs, we remember a Norwegian friend of ours who told us the slang expression is used to cover a variety of frustrations, such as:

Uff Da! is ... walking downtown and then wondering what you wanted.

Uff Da! is ... eating hot soup when you've got a runny nose.

Uff Da! is ... waking yourself up in church with your own snoring.

Uff Da! is ... trying to pour two buckets of manure into one bucket.

Uff Da! is ... having Swedish meatballs at a lutefisk dinner.

Uff Da! is ... trying to dance the polka to rock and roll.

Uff Da! is ... sneezing so hard that your false teeth end up in your plate.

Uff Da! is ... taking your girlfriend to dinner and forgetting your money.

Uff Da! is ... forgetting your mother-in-law's first name.

Uff Da! is ... having a mouse crawl up your leg when you're on a hay load.

Uff Da! is ... arriving late at a lutefisk supper and getting minced ham instead.


Uff Da! is ... losing your wad of gum in the chicken yard.

Uff Da! is ... spending two hours cleaning my room and all Mom says is "Uff Da"!

Uff Da! is ... getting swished in the face with a cow's wet tail.

Uff Da! is ... noticing non-Norwegians at a church dinner using lefse for a napkin.

Uff Da! is .... NOT being Norwegian!

Uff Da! is also having your computer crash just as you're half way through doing the Spindrift . . . and you haven't backed it up! We're sure you can think of many other uses for Uff Da! 

## CASUAL HOUSE

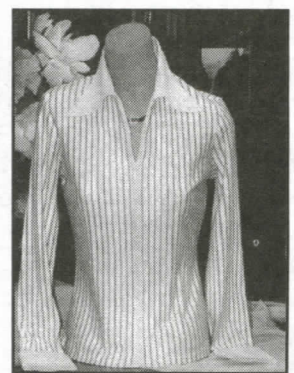
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# Whidbey never did get its railroad . . . but

Early settlers in Oak Harbor who struggled to gain their land and a nest-egg of savings were not immune to "con men" of the turn of the century, who took a good amount of money from them with schemes to "get rich quick!"

Herman Keister, who came to Oak Harbor as a young man in 1900, told of participating in one stock scheme for a railroad to be built from where City Beach is now, across his property back of Pioneer Way and on north to Deception Pass.

The promoters sold stock and drove stakes into the ground to mark the route of the railroad, but never started construction.

"Little Chicago" on the spit near the Keystone ferry landing, was another Island promotion which took money from Islanders, as was the San de Fuca scheme which included selling lots as far north as Hastie Lake on the promise of a ship canal to be built from Penn Cove to West Beach.

The Tucker-Potter Company enticed settlers to North Whidbey through the sales of land for orchard farming. One old-timer came from Chicago to view the land he had bought on speculation in this fabulous northwest country, and said when he arrived to inspect his purchase he found it to be on

Mount Erie, on Fidalgo Island!

The promotions brought gain to the promoters, and to many who came to live here as well, not in get-rich-quick avenues, but as founding fathers and mothers of Island generations.

**"Come to Coupeville! A Railroad Will Traverse Whidbey Island within 12 months! Come and Settle Before The Rush!"**

This 1891 headline in the *Island County Times* blared forth the exciting news for Coupeville.

The railroad was coming. The townspeople were inflamed. Lots in the town sold for as much as \$50 and up, and prices were even higher in Little Chicago, or "New Chicago," which was the site chosen for the projected terminal of the Chicago and Skagit Valley Railroad.

The long stretch of beach separating the lake from the salt water was staked out in small lots and sold for unheard of prices. The railroad itself was to come from Sedro Woolley to cross Saratoga Passage somewhere near La Conner, and continue down the Island to Admiralty Head.

According to a 1960s interview with Herman Keister of Oak Harbor, he remembered that the

railroad was to cross from Fidalgo Island to just north of Cornet Bay and proceed to where Oak Harbor City Beach is located. He said surveying crews had been busy, surveying across the Keister property to the beach where cars were to be transported by scow across Penn's Cove to Coupeville.

When asked as to where the railroad was headed, once it crossed Penn's Cove, Keister smiled and shook his head. "Damned if I know," he said.

Stock in the railroad was being sold to those fortunate to have enough money to get in the ground floor of one of the biggest promotions in the Northwest.

Most people did not know just where the railroad was to begin, or why, but Little Chicago was to be the terminal, and that was the center of the "progress" hysteria.

One company offered to assume the Chicago project if given a subsidy of \$150,000. Among Puget Sounders interested were John G. Phinney, Captain George W. Morse of Oak Harbor, and Dr. G. V. Calhoun of La Conner.

It was said that when the bottom dropped out of the scheme and "hard times" descended on the Northwest, that Abram Alexander was able to buy the \$50 and \$100 lots at Little Chicago for 6 cents each!

But the idea had taken a firm hold not only with prospective buyers of stock, but by stock agents who saw the opportunity for a fast buck.

In 1895, a group in Port Townsend put forth the plan to install a railroad crossing by ferry from Little Chicago to that city on the peninsula. The railroad would run northward up Whidbey Island to Dugualla Bay, then cross Skagit Bay ➤



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# Glendale did

and join the Great Northern at Burlington.

The enormity of the scheme to barge railroad cars back and forth between Port Townsend and Little Chicago, and between North Whidbey and Skagit County struck no note of caution in the minds of investors dazzled by the "boom times" of the era.

Much as today when a miracle-stock-selling scheme is promoted, they lined up to invest cash and sometimes their life savings on the word of the promoters, and lived to rue their impetuosity.

**"Island County, a World Beater"** is a small booklet published by Elizabeth Dodge, "Mayor of Glendale" on South Whidbey in 1968. The booklet was first published around 1920 and includes every small hamlet and town on the Island, along with pictures.

One of the chapters presents Glendale, "the southernmost settlement on Whidbey, situated on the east shore that nestles comfortably in a quiet cove where storm never bother." Glendale is just a few miles southwest of the Clinton ferry landing, and it had it's own dock and industry.

A dozen families lived in the little logging community that was the first railroad terminus on Whidbey Island and its only one. The railroad was four miles long and hauled timber to tidewater. At the time the book was published, the loggers were putting in 35,000 feet of lumber per day with an approximate value of \$10 per thousand.

Glendale had boat service with Seattle by the steamer "Calista" and to Everett by the launch "Daphne" and the town had good dock facilities. Several good farms were located around



*This recent photo is of what was probably the original hotel and general store in Glendale. It is now a private residence.*

Glendale, raising fruit and vegetables. One farm shipped green onions to an Everett market all winter long. A good store and post office were located there and "Good Roads" was the battle cry of South Whidbey.

**Glendale** was the only town on Whidbey Island to ever have a railroad. It was built to run from the mill to the dock. Glendale was also one of the earliest Island "boom" towns, with a barn dance pavilion hotel built in 1889 by a Mr. Leonard, who came from Snohomish in 1877.

There was a slough that ran

back of the hotel, and boaters came in at high tide, according to Elizabeth Dodge of Clinton.

In 1914 a storm struck, leaving water on the hotel floor which was, for many years, a restaurant, but now is a private residence.

In 1922 a porch was built onto the hotel, with lumber brought from Lone Lake. Leonard also built a campground.

Dodge credits the above information to Bill and Dorleska Peterson who were married at Glendale in early part of the century. Glendale is located about three miles south of Clinton, but today many Islanders have never even heard of it. ✂



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# The 1916 Wobblie 'massacre'

Nearly ninety years ago the "Everett Massacre" took place, a notable event in the early years of the twentieth century. It was 1916 when Everett's labor trouble erupted in a bloody gunfight at the dock.

The fight took place between citizen deputies and members of the Industrial Workers of the World, otherwise known as "IWW's" or "Wobblies."

The steamer *Verona* with some 250 Workers of the World aboard, attempted to land at Everett. Their way was blocked by Sheriff Donald McRae and an armed group. A shot rang out and a fierce fight followed.

When the fighting was over seven were dead and at least 50 wounded, seven or more were missing, and the jails of Seattle, King and Snohomish counties were filled with IWW's.

Snohomish County Deputy Sheriff Jefferson Beard was mortally wounded and Charles O. Curtis, an Everett sales manager and member of the citizen deputies was dead.

Of the IWW's, five died aboard the *Verona*. Suffering lesser wounds were Sheriff McRae, shot three times in the leg and Everett lumbermen Joseph Irving and Naile Jamieson.

*Verona's* quick-thinking engineer, Ernest M. Shellgren, without orders, reversed engines and backed the ship into Port Gardner Bay.

Captain Clarence Wyman, who had taken refuge in his cabin when the shooting began, then took over and took the *Verona* back to Seattle.

The IWW's aboard were arrested and lodged in jails and the wounded treated at Seattle's emergency hospital.

An amazing fact emerged

when the *Verona* was searched after the fight. No one was armed when they docked in Seattle. A thorough search of the ship revealed only nine empty cartridges aboard!

Because Sheriff McRae had men nearly surrounding the ship when it docked, there was speculation that at least some of the Everett citizen deputies were victims of their fellow deputies' guns!

**The so-called Everett Massacre** was inevitably the showdown between Everett's lumber industry barons and union members.

In 1907 the Shingleweavers were fully organized in every mill in Everett.

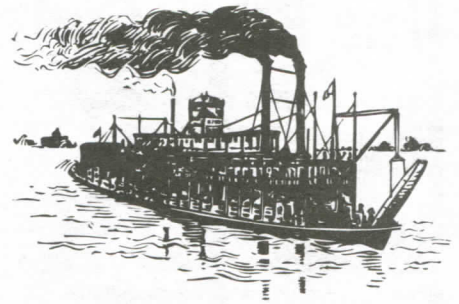
In February of 1915 following a drop in shingle prices the mill owners posted a 20 percent wage cut, coupled with an open shop declaration.

When workers rejected the cut, the mills were closed for two months with the help of armed guards and scab workers.

World War I brought prices up again but the mill owners refused to raise wages.

The battle was on. For months there were speeches, threats and violence and numerous reports of police brutality.

Forty-one men on a passenger ship from Seattle to Ever-



ett were met by McRae and 200 armed citizen deputies who helped them into cars and took them to a park where they were beaten with saps, clubs, axe handles, rifles, fists and boots.

The screams of the wounded roused farmers a quarter of a mile away. Seventeen of the Wobblies required hospitalization.

As tension mounted, the Everett Massacre was inevitable.

**Three women** were arrested, Edith Frenette, Mrs. H. Peters and Mrs. Hubbard Mahler after getting off a bus in Seattle.

There were words of revolution and retribution from one side to the other.

Five months after the event IWW member Tom Tracy and 73 others went on trial charged with first degree murder.

Tracy was acquitted. The 73 indictments were dismissed and no charges were brought against any of the citizen deputies.

The Everett Massacre became a propaganda victory for the IWW.

2

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In the early 1930s, Oak Harbor was little better than a wide place in the road.

It offered more than most wide spots, however, because on one side was the water, with fish, clams, and crabs, which constituted a good share of every Islander's food.

The 500 or more residents of the town were as agriculturally minded as the surrounding bona fide farmers; each family was pretty independent.

There were no zoning laws or ordinances prohibiting fowls and livestock from being kept on a "city" lot. Cows, pigs and chickens were standard equipment for town households.

There were vacant lots and wild land for the cows to graze upon. A pen of chickens provided eggs for the family and Sunday dinners.

Everyone put in a garden, some large, some small. Sugar and flour and coffee and tobacco were about the only commodities a family had to buy.

A garden and a couple of fruit trees, two pigs, a cow, and two dozen Rhode Island Red hens could provide just about everything that a table would need.

**Things were looking up** all over North Whidbey . . . the Depression just wasn't going to get the Islanders down. The CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) was installed at Deception Pass, where several hundred boys from the East Coast lived and worked under semi-military conditions, and the money they earned was sent "home" to families in dire need.

A new high school was to be built with WPA labor, with \$1,500 allotted for labor; and the Deception Pass Bridge became a reality in 1935.

Emergency relief was started by the state and national reemployment service registered 1,000 men in Island county.

A county relief organization

## Oak Harbor in the 1930s

was set up; the state allotted \$150 for garden seeds for the needy and issued 2,460 lbs. of smoked pork for them. Seven road building projects were going. The American Legion Post set about collecting clothing for families.

And somewhere along here, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "We're not going through another winter like the past."

**Back to 1930 . . .** That was the year Mel & Dorothy were married, and they felt they were better off than most because Mel was farming and had bought a brand new 4-door Model-A Ford, for around \$600.

Dorothy was "liberated" . . . she had a bookkeeping job for the Washington Farmers Coop at the end of the old dock, and took home the magnificent sum of \$94 a month . . . until the Depression cut it to half.

This, along with the Model A with which to bedazzle their peers, plus a farm and living on "the ranch" assured them of smooth sailing.

Even a petition circulated by the farmers to get her "fired" because she was a married woman holding a job that might have been held by the head of a family, left her unruffled.

They didn't know any male

heads of families who were capable of doing the work for \$50 a month.

**The first ten years** were the hardest, as they say, but time has a way of not sticking around too long, and the "hard times" and the struggles when the kids were little became only memories.

It was during the early twenties that a city ordinance was adopted forbidding residents to allow livestock to roam on main street.

We were glad to see the thirties move slowly out of focus. The end of the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, WPA and CCC, and emergency relief measures, merged into the building of the "base," rationing of food and gas, the War and finally the atomic bomb.

As we used to say, "we were poor but we didn't know it because everyone was poor." ☺

### The Hair Garden by the bay



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