



San Juan Historical Society & Museum

Winter 2017

Archival Project Update: Digging into History



In January, the Museum and its volunteers began work on a renovation/restoration timeline whose completion will result in an updated, invigorated and exciting new look and feel for our 50 year old archive.

The first phase of the project was sorting through the existing archives, located in over 150 boxes at the Resource Center. Volunteers worked through one box at a time, determining whether the items in the box were in need of repair or research, in need of further descriptions and documentation, and in some cases, whether the artifact was appropriate for the Museum's collection. Even through the snowstorms, the team was able to complete the chore within the three week timeline, and is ready to begin work on the 3000+ photographs in the collection.

Some of our volunteers are new to the island, and some are longtime residents. The conversations around the work table have been very interesting, as we learn about the history of the island through the artifacts and documents in the collection. We have also had some surprises in

our sorting: a gasoline cigar lighter (see next page), a set of four juice glasses commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the Pig War, several articles of glass that were melted in The Great Seattle Fire, of 1889, a Gesswein Tool Company catalog, an 1875 map of San Juan Island, a 1903 8th grade report card, and of course, a bag of hair.

Volunteers for the project include: Diana Mancel, Rich Norris, Don Nixon, Romona Jones, Donna Alexander, Carole Sue Conran, Sue Nielsen, Sally Rogers, John Miller, Alan and Lynn Weber, Roochvarg, Regina Kammer, Sarah Ann Miller, Robin Jacobson, Dave Kane, Tom Starr, Susan Waters, and Mike Hansen. They will be joined in the coming weeks by ten other volunteers.

There is always room for more volunteers! Now that the Resource Center Archival collection has been sorted, it is time to work through the photo collection, conduct research on items that have not been documented, repair items and

See Digging in, next page



Thresher Project Update



Groundbreaking began on the thresher cover project in late December and is now nearing completion. The thresher was moved (very carefully) to its new space just last week after weather delays due to snow.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the thresher arriving on San Juan Island. We believe the cover is a most appropriate way to mark the milestone and a good start to the farming exhibit portion of the Museum of History and Industry.

Thank you to all involved for making this project possible especially the San Juan Island Community Foundation, San Juan County Historic Preservation Grant Program, San Juan County Council and staff, Store More Storage, the Estate of Dr. Colin Sandwith, Scott Sandwith and all financial contributors.



Additional thanks to: Bobby Ross Construction, Egg Lake Sawmill & Shake, Browne's Home Center, Harbor Rental & Saw Shop, Egg Lake Quarry and M.E.M Enterprises.

We also wish to thank and recognize local architect John Gresseth, for developing the design of the cover structure. The design will serve as a template for future projects of this nature and as a part of the overall museum campus plan.

Future plans include storage and display space for a number of larger artifacts, additional restrooms and equipment storage.

Digging in (continued from page 1)

appropriately preserve the items that are going to stay in the collection. The items that do not specifically belong in the archives can be used as props in future exhibits and will be stored in a separate area.

The Archival Project will continue until April 15th. Volunteers can join in and depart at any point, and all time & effort will be deeply appreciated and important. Please contact Project Coordinator Diana Mancel by email at: dianamancel@gmail.com or Museum Director Kevin Loftus at museum_admin@sjmuseum.org to join in on the fun.



One of the more interesting items in the collection is a well used cigar lighter, with the inscription: USE GASOLINE ONLY. Maybe a more detailed inscription should have been included, such as: USE AT YOUR OWN RISK!

Upcoming Events: History Lives Here Month

***A photographic history of San Juan Island from 1853 to the present.
Wednesday, May 17 at 7 p.m at the San Juan Island Library***



Local and regional historian Mike Vouri will explore the photographic history of San Juan Island in *Images of America: Friday Harbor and San Juan Island*.

The books focus on early pioneering, town and community building, farming, fishing, schools, transportation, religious and social life and extended families, Vouri said.

Vouri and his wife, Julia Coffey-Vouri, authored two photo-books of the same title(s) in conjunction with the Museum in 2009 and 2010. The couple utilized more than 400 images from the museum's extensive collections in telling the story of first Friday Harbor and then the early nascent years of white settlement on San Juan. The first book was published in conjunction with the centennial of the town's incorporation in 1909.

"The second was a natural progression, as we had hundreds more images that were hard to resist that did not really accommodate the town story," Vouri said. "These focused initially on the island's southern extremity where American Indian, First Nation and white settlement, really began."

"It turned out to be an opportune time to publish the books as we were able to draw on the knowledge of long-time residents who are sadly no longer with us," Vouri said. Among those who contributed were Al Sundstrom, Al Nash, Nourdine Jensen, Lynette King Guard and Jim Cahail. "Jim not only brought a degree of expertise that only a multi-generational islander would know, but he also had a terrific sense of humor, which reveals itself page by page in the books," Vouri said.

The Vouri's will remain after the program to sign books. All proceeds from sales benefit the Museum.

From Odd Fellows to Orcas Friday, May 19 at 7 p.m. at the San Juan Island Library



Presentation by San Juan Historical Society and Museum board member Robin Jacobson.

If these walls could talk...and sometimes they do in the former Odd Fellows Hall, now known as The Whale Museum. Stories both historical and supernatural have originated in this iconic old building towering high on the bluff. See a timeline of its community uses in Friday Harbor from 1892 through today, including the infamous 1895 murder trial of teacher Richard Straub, the prohibitionist preaching fervor of Billy Sunday in 1910, decades as the social hub for island festivities, and later as Lee Bave's Island Gallery and home of her quirky San Juan Saga theatrical production.

Beginning with the Mt. Dallas Lodge of the International Order of Odd Fellows, the benevolent organization that developed the property in 1892, you'll learn how we got from Odd Fellows to Orcas, with a modern Salish Sea focus as The Whale Museum in 1979.

Researching and Writing Our History

The Writing Our History Project (WOHP) was founded by local islanders Sandy Strehlou and Liz Illg in 2013. Since then, WOHP writer/researchers have written and published 29 essays on www.historylink.org. A sampling includes stories about islanders Lucinda Boyce, Virgil Frits, Roy Franklin, Edward Warbass, John L. Murray, and the histories of Friday Harbor's waterfront, Roche Harbor Limeworks, San Juan County Land Bank, and the San Juan Island Library. Other essays include *San Juan Island Rabbit Tales*, *Coast Salish Woolly Dogs*, the history of San Juan Island's Japanese and Chinese workers, and how prohibition came to Friday Harbor in 1910.

History Link, the online encyclopedia of Washington state history, partners with WOHP to publish essays about the largely undocumented local history of San Juan County. You can read

more great WOHP essays and other stories about Washington by going to www.historylink.org.

Have a story to tell? WOHP is a county-wide collaboration of local history writers, researchers and enthusiasts. They meet quarterly to share stories, ideas, information and inspiration. Anyone with an interest in local history is welcome to attend WOHP meetings in the SJI Library community room. On May 20, during *History Lives Here Month*, WOHP and the SJI Library are sponsoring *Researching Our History*, a workshop about using local, state and national resources to research your favorite local history topic. This event is open to the public.

For more information about WOHP, History Link or the upcoming *Researching Our History* workshop, contact Sandy Strehlou, [sstrehlou@fridayharbor.org](mailto:ssstrehlou@fridayharbor.org) or 360.622.2037.

Moments in Time ...

The Wilkes Expedition (1838-1842) named many of the islands in the San Juan Archipelago; some names stuck, some did not. The Expedition named the group of islands differently, referring to it as the Navy Archipelago. San Juan Island was "Rodger's Island", Lopez was "Chauncey's", and the Sucia Islands were called "Percival Group".

Hudson's Bay Company started the Bellevue Sheep Farm, here on San Juan Island. That company is still in existence, 410 years old, and is now the parent company of Home Outfitters, Lord & Taylor, and Saks Fifth Avenue.

Navy Lt. L. B. "Tuck" Smith spent his retirement years on San Juan Island before his passing in 2006. He was the Navy pilot who found and led the attack on the German battleship Bismark in WWII, for which he received the Distinguished Flying Cross. After an inspiring career in the service, Capt. Smith and his wife Loretta retired in 1975 and made their home in our community. He passed away on May 16, 2006, and is interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

Each year, the Museum conducts tours for the Road Scholars (formerly Elderhostel) in partnership with Skagit Valley College, San Juan Center. This educational organization grew out of a conversation between two educators at the University of New Hampshire in the early 1970's, and was based upon adult "folk schools" conducted in Scandinavia. The program officially began in 1975, and grew from a turnout of only six participants in its first course to a comprehensive 5,500 courses that serve over four million participants per year. In 2016, nearly 50 groups of close to 1,000 Road Scholars adult students from all over the world passed through our little Museum, with guided tours conducted mainly by Director, Kevin Loftus.

In 1859, Friday Harbor town founder Ed Warbass imported some California Mountain quail and released them here. Now, over 150 years later, they are a common sight on the island.

Volunteer Opportunities Abound

The Archival Project is only one part of the operations of the Museum, and though we are currently immersed in boxes and photos, we are looking forward to Spring and Summer 2017. Here are some of the projects where your time, funds and effort are needed:

Docents – *the museum visitors greeting center will be moved this spring from the King Farmhouse to the atrium of the Museum of History and Industry, and will incorporate a replenished gift shop, and internet access for the volunteers. Volunteer docents will receive a comprehensive training program, a new handbook, and will serve as the frontline for the Museum's outreach to the public. (starts soon!)*

Landscaping and gardening – *creating and implementing a rain catchment system for the grounds, introducing native plants, integration of some newly discovered outdoor equipment into the interpretive areas of the museum. Also needed: lawn mowing, tree pruning, weed pulling, etc.*

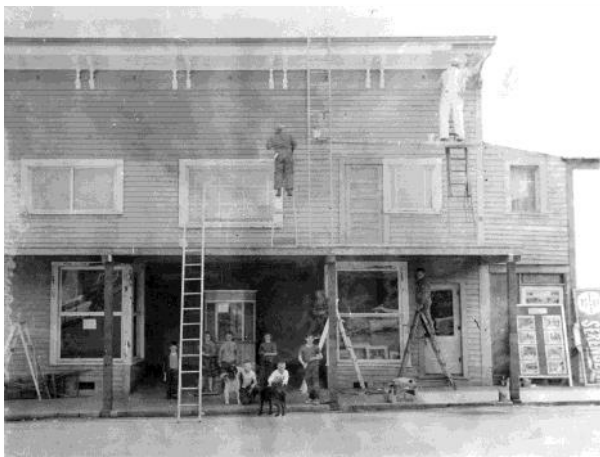
Creating new exhibits – *the archival project has uncovered a number of unique collections and artifacts we are anxious to introduce to the public: vintage post cards, the museum's flag collection, vintage charts and maps, office equipment of the early 20th century.....so many exciting prospects for interactive and educational exhibits, rotating throughout the year.*

Fundraising & Membership – *as with every non-profit, there remains a constant need for infusion of funds, new members, volunteers, grants. If you have the time, we have the projects.*

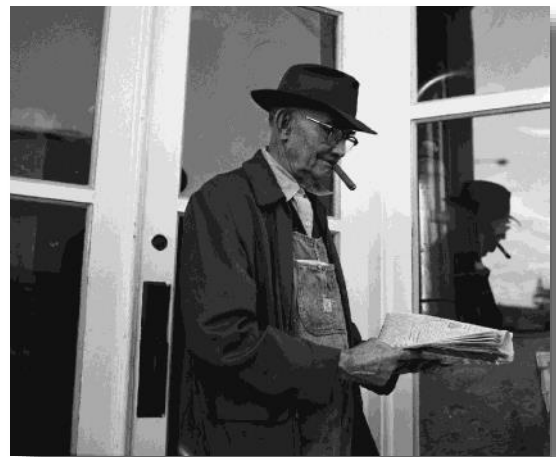
Researcher – *responding to requests from around the world for information regarding past island events, residents and buildings. Also researching donated artifacts and identifying the unknown photographs in the collection.*

Buildings – *maintenance, exhibit refreshing, and loving care of all buildings on the campus.*

To get involved in any of these projects, contact Museum Director Kevin Loftus at 360-378-3949, email us at museum_admin@sjmuseum.org or stop by during business hours and we'll show you around!



The Royal Theater undergoes renovation, c.1959 after being purchased, by Lee and Milton Bave. Renamed the MADD Playhouse (Music, Art, Drama, Dance), it hosted community theater productions in addition to feature films. A story circulates that Mrs. Bave would stand in the projection booth during some films and cover the projector lens to protect patrons from what she considered unseemly material.



Friday Harbor Journal editor and publisher Virgil Frits. The Journal was founded in 1906 by Oscar G. Wall and Gus A. Ludwig, a journeyman printer. In 1907 the two hired Virgil Frits, who at 24 became the printer/editor. Fritz owned the newspaper until he retired 51 years later and became known for the cold cigar that perennially dangled from his lip.

Passport into History Winner

Orcas Island resident Maggie Kaplan was the lucky winner of the San Juan Island prize package for the Passport into History Program.

The program was a collaborative effort between the Lopez, Orcas and San Juan Historical Museums. The program was intended to foster exploration into the history of each island by visiting each respective Historical Museum.

If an individual visited all three Museums they could then enter their completed stamped passport for a chance to win the prize package on the island of their choosing.

The San Juan Island prize package included a stay at Tucker House B&B, a whale watching excursion from San Juan Safaris and a meal at Cask & Schooner.

Thanks to all the participants and to our generous sponsors, Tucker House B&B, San Juan Safaris and Cask & Schooner.

Pick up a PASSPORT Into San Juan Islands History

Visit at least one historical museum in 2016 on each of three islands: Lopez, Orcas and San Juan for a chance to win a prize package from the island museum of your choice.

PASSPORTS may be picked up at:

- Lopez Island History Museum**
Weeks Road • Lopez Village
360-468-2049
www.lopezmuseum.org
- Orcas Island Pioneer Museum**
181 North Beach Road,
Eastsound • Orcas Island
- Crow Valley School Museum**
Crow Valley Road • Orcas Island
360-468-4649
www.orcas museums.org
- San Juan Historical Museum SJI Museum of History & Industry**
323 & 405 Price Street
Friday Harbor • San Juan Island
360-378-3949
www.sjmmuseum.org

Museums of the San Juan Islands
www.historicsanjuans.com

Save the date:

Historical Society Annual Meeting at the San Juan Island Library Wednesday, March 22

We are trying a new approach to our annual meeting this year. In past years we have held the election for new Board Members followed by a program of historic interest.

This year since we will still be involved in our Archival Project we will take the opportunity to present to museum members and members of the community, what we have discovered so far. The program will be as follows:

5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p. m. - San Juan Historical Society Board of Trustees in the library conference room for business and voting on Board Members. Current Museum members are invited to attend.

7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. - In main salon of the library, the public is invited to a Show and Tell from the Archival Project. Displays of some of the artifacts in the collection and a slideshow and brief talk about some of the fun and unique items we found during the first phase of the project. We will also provide an update about the status of the project and the next phases.

Snacks and light refreshments will be served.

New & Renewing Members and Donations

Business Members

Olympic Lights B&B
Store More Storage
Harbor Lands, LP
Islanders Insurance
R&R Accounting
Ernie's Cafe
Animal Inn & Wellness Center
Homestead Mobile Home Park
Valmark, Inc.
San Juan Pest Control
Friday Harbor Suites

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Your monetary support is very much appreciated and vitally needed

Members are the lifeblood of our organization. Financial contributions from individual donors and businesses are critical. They make an impact and provide necessary assistance in a number of ways.

For over 50 years, the Museum has been preserving and interpreting the island's rich history. Through the eight heritage structures on the Museum campus, documents, artifacts, photographs and oral histories, the Museum illuminates the daily lives and times of San Juan Island's early residents on up to the recent past.

Membership dues and donations help to create exhibits, purchase archival supplies to maintain the items entrusted to our care and maintain our buildings and grounds, to name just a few examples. Other sources of funding are derived from grants, admission fees, tour groups, memorial donations and gift shop sales.

We run a lean organization with just one paid part-time staff position, thereby relying almost exclusively on volunteers to carry out our mission. We manage to accomplish a great deal on a tight operating budget. However, a bit more breathing room would be most welcomed!

Please continue your support to us by keeping your membership current and consider an additional donation to help sustain our mission. Sense the excitement of preserving our past while knowing that your support helps ensure that the San Juan Historical Society and Museum remains a vital resource of history and inspiration today and for generations to come.

Show your support today by sending in the handy form on the reverse of this page or visit sjmuseum.org and click the donate button. You'll be glad you did. ***Thank you!!***

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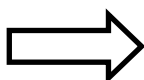
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The Museum is a recipient of 2017 grant funding from San Juan County lodging tax funds. Proceeds derived from this grant help to defray a portion of operating expenses. We thank the San Juan County Council and their lodging tax advisory committee for this grant award. We thank the islands lodging owners and their guests for the continued financial support of the Museum.

Please detach this form at dotted line and return with your donation today. Thank you!

Name _____

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This is a (check one) Renewing Membership New Membership Donation

Yearly membership contribution: \$ _____ (amount of your choosing)

Additional contribution: \$ _____

Memorial contribution: \$ _____ in memory of _____

I wish to donate \$ _____ to the developing SJI Museum of History and Industry (MHI)

Please make checks payable to San Juan Historical Society, PO Box 441, Friday Harbor, WA 98250

The San Juan Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, tax i.d.# 23-7022221.