

STANWOOD AREA ECHOES

Newsletter of the Stanwood Area Historical Society
P.O. Box 69
27108 102nd Ave NW
Stanwood, WA 98292
www.sahs-fncc.org



Stanwood Area Echoes

Issue No. 46 : Spring, 2015

O.B. IVERSON & THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

O. B. Iverson became known as the father of the Norwegian colony in Washington state but in 1875 a chance meeting in San Francisco nearly had him fathering the Norwegian colony of Southern California. His mandate from family and friends in Dakota Territory was to locate better land and opportunity in the West. One such opportunity was presented during an encounter with William Thomas Sayward in the private office of a San Francisco banker. Sayward was known as a “boomer” who in 1875 had forgone his timber and mill holdings in the Puget Sound and aimed his sights at fledgling orchards on the arid plains east of Los Angeles. A stretch of ill health had led Sayward to seek an area and “people who wanted to live in an agreeable and healthy climate.” Finding an agreeable climate was high on Iverson’s requisites as well after having developed an aversion to the extremes of heat, cold and blight which plagued his farm in the Dakotas.

Ole Iverson Borsheim was born on the estate lands of Borsheim, Ulvak, Norway in 1845. His name Americanized to Ole B. Iverson, he accompanied his parents Iver and Brita to America in 1857 and moved initially to Big Canoe, Winneshiek County, Iowa just as national tensions foreshadowed the violent explosion of the Civil War. In September 1862 he joined Company D of the Sixth Iowa Cavalry and spent three years guarding the frontier against anticipated Indian trouble. As a post-war farmer he married Maria Danielson in 1866. However, a hail storm devastated his first crop, as well as his personal finances, and sent him packing for a new start near Sioux Falls, Dakota Territory—a 300 mile trek. An industrious man, there he began a farm, built a mill, practiced law and surveyed government land. His many talents won him positions in government service, becoming a tax collector and a member of the territory’s lower legislative house. In 1874 he was appointed Commis-



*Maria and O.B Iverson with six of their children ca. 1890:
Anna, Ida, Bertha, Edward, Frank & Martha*

sioner of Immigration for the territory and visited his homeland where he recruited others such as Peter Leque to emigrate to the U.S.

The year 1874 was unfortunately also a “grasshopper year” on the southern Dakota plains as described in a local history. Even after fending off the initial wave of the ravenous insects, the fear of a more severe assault by locusts the following year pushed many area farmers to look elsewhere for a homestead.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members and Friends:

The Stanwood Area Historical Society has been very busy over the last two months, and things are certainly buzzing with activities this spring. The South End String Band started us off in early February with a rollicking good time. The music was outstanding, the accompanying narrative was entertaining, and the food was delicious. Skeeter Daddle did himself proud. Close on the heels of the South End String Band, the annual Snow Goose Festival was held at the public hall. Members of the Society served salmon chowder and taco soup both days as a fund raiser, and we served so many people, it became obvious we will have to make more of each next year! I can't help but brag a little: we do have a lot of good cooks in our ranks, and they really outdo themselves when preparing food for SAHS, and those of us who don't cook are exceptional dishwashers!

We followed the music of the South End String Band with another outstanding musical event in March, our Big Band dance. The music was different, but the quality was just as good. The hall was transformed into a beautiful ballroom with wonderful decorations, and we are so appreciative to our sponsors who supported us monetarily and supplied items for our raffle. MaryAnn Plambeck catered the affair, and the food was superb. Many people said they had no idea the food would be so good, and that there would be so much of it!

We have also had two H & H presentations so far this spring. In March, Tug Buse gave a very entertaining and interesting account of his boat trip from Iowa to the Atlantic seaboard. Yes, that's right: from Iowa. It involved a lot of river travel, waterways, and the Atlantic Ocean! Like many great undertakings, he had no idea what he was getting into, but it made a fascinating presentation. On April 12, our own local author, Val Schroeder, talked about her book on the history and environment of Camano Island, its parks, and wild places. We all learned a lot more than we ever thought we would know about Camano and the people who have worked so hard to preserve it. On May 17, we will finish our series of programs with Hank Cramer singing sea chanties. Mr. Cramer started our series last fall with a presentation on the Oregon Trail, which was a huge success.

Our big upcoming event is the Spring Tea on April 25 at the Floyd. Last year everyone had a blast, and I am sure we are all anticipating a great event this year. The Culinary Arts class from

Stanwood High School will be catering and serving under the direction of their teacher, Kris Merritt. I have also heard that those bodacious bartenders from last year, John Smistad and Cliff Larson, are going to be making Mimosas again this year! The program will focus on the late Dr. Dorothy Anderson, the first woman physician in Stanwood.

As always, I invite anyone interested in Stanwood, its history, or history in general, to join us as a member, or just pop in to enjoy any of our events.

Sincerely,
Gail Ryer, President

Stanwood Area Historical Society January 1, 2015

OFFICERS TERM (2Yr)

President	Gail Ryer	2015-2016
Vice President	Dan Lien	2014-2015
Recording Secretary	John Smistad	2015-2016
Corresponding Secretary	Margaret Utgard	2014-2015
Treasurer	Deborah Knutson	2014-2015
Past President	Larry Lien	

TRUSTEES TERM (3Yr)

Penny Buse		2013-2015
Bill Keller		2013-2015
Kathy Uroff		2013-2015
Louis Strangeland		2013-2015
Jim Joyce		2013-2015
Delbert Fox		2013-2015
Janet Mayer		2014-2016
Sandy Robinson		2014-2016
Dave Eldridge		2014-2016
Margaret Utgard		2015-2017
Pat Bronson		2015-2017
Vivian Henderson		2015-2017
Joan McConnel		2015-2017
Mary Margaret Haugen		2015-2017
Alex Gedstad	Honorary Trustee	

Seeking Photographs of Mayors

The City of Stanwood is planning to create a gallery of portrait type photographs of the Mayors of Stanwood and East Stanwood to be on "permanent" display at City Hall. They have asked us for their help. The City has some photographs of recent mayors but some past mayors are missing. And we (SAHS collections) have a few to add.

But to complete the gallery, we are taking the unusual step in asking the public to help us locate copies of portrait type of photographs from this list:

A.B Klæboe	Albert C. Moe
George Ketchum	Charles Yngve
L. H. Jacobson	Harold Greer
Nels Olsen	James J. Hansen
Charles Dockendorf	Ira Armintrout
O. E. Thompson	John G. Hanson
Ed Bryant	



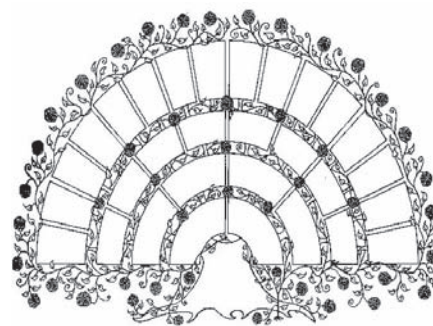
SAHS Board & Member Meetings - Third Tuesday afternoons at 4:00 pm in the second floor of the museum. Everyone is welcome!

**Thank You To All Our Sponsors
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 Premier Title of Island County • Tony Hewlett
 State Farm Insurance, Leslie Tripp**

Family History Researchers!



Camwood Genealogy Workshop meets the FIRST Monday of each month at 1 p.m. on the 2nd floor of the Stanwood Area History Museum.

For more information, call Bill Blandin, 360-387-3375

O. B. Iverson, Continued From Page 1

Iverson, however, wrote that he had regrets about leaving his Dakota home. "It is really the finest land and location I have seen east of the Rocky mountains," he wrote, "and all my people, and many other friends were there, and I had prospered. Future prospects were even better. But I knew that the climate was slowly killing my wife, and that settled it." He had received promising information from the governor's office in Washington Territory and was chosen by friends to "spy out the land." In January 1875 he boarded a train for San Francisco with a money draft guaranteed by a Dakota bank.

By 1875 the village of San Francisco had gone from a rough and tumble shanty town to a city. A far cry from the settlement William Sayward found upon his arrival in the spring of 1849. Then, the muddy streets were lined with wooden shacks, makeshift tents, warehouses and small retail ventures. The wealth of the Gold Rush may not have benefited every adventurous youth but helped San Francisco come into its own. Historian Mary Floyd Williams wrote that for those industrious, or perhaps desperate, seekers of riches, "every sunrise might be the herald of fortune or ruin." Merchants slept in their offices to gain an early start on the day and hopes of beating the competition for greater profits. Men such as Sayward gained from the unfettered marketplace. He soon realized that it was more lucrative to purchase gold dust from the miners rather than rooting it from the hills and streams himself. He opened a broker's office on Montgomery Street, which became known as the Wall Street of the West. He provided a quick money exchange for those miners who arrived from the gold fields on the night boats from Sacramento. Getting a jump on the other banks, he often handled five to ten thousand dollars in a day. As his profits increased so did his land holdings with purchases around today's Golden Gate Park, Napa County and lots in the town of Stockton.

William Thomas (W.T.) Sayward was born in Thomaston, Maine in 1813 where he practiced the trade of carpentry and was a local deputy sheriff and justice of the peace for a time. Following the deaths of his two children, he left Maine and his wife, traveling to San Francisco by way of Mexico. W.T. Sayward has often been confused with his sea-faring brother, Captain James W. Sayward and particularly his Vancouver Island cousin William Parsons (W.P.) Sayward who became wealthy from his extensive lumber, milling and mining operations

there and around Port Madison, Washington.

Devastating fires in San Francisco and Sacramento between 1850 and 1852 sent lumber prices soaring and W.T. again saw opportunity – this time in exploiting the lush forests of the Northwest. Efforts along the Willamette River near Oregon City proved too expensive so Sayward and his partner Joshua K. Thorndyke looked north, erecting only the second steam-powered mill on the Puget Sound at what became Port Ludlow, which Sayward helped found. With the establishment of Washington Territory in 1853, Sayward was chosen for the first legislative assembly as the representative for Jefferson and Island Counties in 1854. Meanwhile, Sayward and Thorndyke incorporated mill operations with their extensive fleet of small vessels, buying and distributing merchandise to settlements throughout the Sound.

Sayward leased the Port Ludlow mill to Amos & Phinney Company in 1858 although his shipping business continued, and in 1866 he led a consortium of men who re-incorporated the Puget Sound Steam Navigation Company. Ill health, however, forced him to explore a drier climate. He was again enamored by the business opportunities while visiting the colony of Riverside, California in 1874. In partnership with Samuel C. Evans, he purchased 10,000 acres and made plans to initiate a canal irrigation system to provide for expanding orange orchards in the area. The *Los Angeles Daily Herald* dubbed Sayward the very personification of progress for his development of Riverside irrigation. His enthusiasm for that project was at a peak when he met O. B. Iverson in that banker's office while again visiting San Francisco.

Sayward told Iverson that Washington territory was no place for farming, only logging. Iverson should come to the San Bernardino Valley of Southern California if farming was his aim. Iverson wrote that Sayward promised, "he would contract with me to sell to my people, not more than 80 acres to a family at five dollars per acre, and furnish water for irrigation at 50 cents per acre per year, and give twenty years time to pay for the land with ten per cent interest on deferred payments. He would even furnish working capital." Iverson was committed to the Puget Sound but since no boat was leaving for another two weeks, agreed to consider Sayward's offer.

"I did not know what to think of the man," Iverson later wrote. "He did not look, talk, or act like a confidence man or an ordinary promoter and when I got back to the hotel, I told Henry [his train

bunkmate and traveling companion]. He said, 'I know Mr. Sayword, [sic] that is I know he owns one of the large mills, and is considered reliable and responsible. I have no doubt he told the truth as he saw it. As to the Puget Sound, I think he is about right, and I think you can depend on him doing as he says he will.'"

Iverson was not fond of the "cold, drizzly, fog and wind" that blanketed San Francisco in those early months of 1875. There would be gray drizzle and fog in Washington Henry assured him, but they arrived in separate doses and not all at once. Any ideas Iverson might have had to venture south soon became moot when the pair was offered employment on a revenue cutter sailing to Victoria. Iverson explained his decision to Sayward who replied that, "I guess it is better so. You will be better satisfied when you return."

Henry and Iverson took passage on a steamer at Victoria which sailed up the Sound, dropping Henry at Port Townsend and Iverson later at Olympia. The promised gray skies of March and the loss of his friend, led Iverson to question his decision, at least for a moment. "I began to think that Sayword [sic] might be right after all. I did not fall in love with anything on this trip from Victoria to Olympia. . . . I felt discouraged and thought of San Bernardino. Then I thought of my wife, how she suffered from heat, and the Olympia climate was soft and cool, only a little moist at present."

Iverson's talents led to work on a survey party which helped plat the greater area of the Stillaguamish Valley including Centerville (today's Stanwood). There, he and Peter Leque, Nils Eide and others purchased land, erected dikes and levees and began farms. Iverson, like Sayward before him, was a member of the territorial legislature from 1876 to 1877. He actively participated in the territorial conventions while continuing as a surveyor and engineer throughout the region for the government and railroads. His home was in Olympia in 1882 although he returned for a short time to Stanwood in the 1890s. From 1899 to 1912 he continued his work as a draftsman in Olympia. He died in the city in 1940 at the age of 94.

W.T. Sayward was instrumental in bringing vital water to the windswept, scrub hills south of



Logging crew including who is believed to be O.B. Iverson (second from the left)

Riverside, California. He constructed over 20 miles of main canals in the area and over 50 miles of irrigation ditches. With additional partners he expanded his enterprise's land holdings as president of the Riverside Land and Irrigating Company. Records indicate that his boom and bust enterprises netted him both wealth and bankruptcy during this time period. He died in San Francisco on June 11, 1887 with newspapers reflecting efforts by his brother to pay off his debts.

To study history is to study the choices people make—where to live, how to earn one's living. The choices made are sometimes based on chance or a whim or more often for the simplest of reasons, such as a wife's distaste for warmer climes. We'll never know how O.B. Iverson would have fared in Southern California but we can assume he rarely reflected again on the road not taken.

by Richard A. Hanks

(Sources: *Illustrated History of Southern California*; *Illustrated History of Skagit and Sonohomish Counties*; *History of Washington, Idaho and Montana, 1845-1889*, by Hubert Bancroft; *History of the San Francisco Committee of Vigilance of 1851*, by Mary Floyd Williams; *Seattle Daily Times*, May 11, 1958; *Los Angeles Daily Herald*, December 30, 1875; *Stanwood News*, "First Impressions of the Pacific Coast," by O.B. Iverson, October 8, 1920.)



Descendant Kristin Peterson and family at the D.O. Pearson House

Special Visitors to the Museum

In March we had a very special visit from the great-great granddaughter of D.O. & Clara Pearson, Kristin Peterson and her children, Daniel and Erika. Our docents, Kathy Uroff and Gwen



Hoistad, took them on a tour of the facility, and they looked through our archives with the help of Karen Prasse, Bill Blandin and Richard Hanks. Kristin shared some of her personal family heirlooms with everyone. On the left is a photograph of an elaborate, homemade Valentine card that D.O. Pearson sent to Clara Jane Stanwood

in 1865, three years before they were married.

In addition to tours, we have many events at The Floyd. We started our year with the Magical History Tour Concert when the South End String Band returned to The Floyd on February 7th. At the end of February we hosted The Port Susan Snow Goose & Birding Festival with many events over the weekend and hundreds of people attending. This was followed by the Big Band Dance with the Moonlight String Orchestra on March 25, 2015. In April we will hold our most popular event, which is the Spring Tea and Fashion Show, with a sold out crowd.

All of these tours and events take dedicated, hardworking people and our members, board, docents & volunteers do an outstanding job of getting all these things done. If you are interested

in volunteering at the Stanwood Historical Society, please contact Kathy Uroff at (425) 328-8306.

Also, please join or renew your membership for 2015. There is a form on the back of the newsletter, online at our website, www.sahs-fncc.org or at our visitor's center at the Tolin House. If you would like to receive this newsletter by email, please call Janet Utgard at (306) 629-6110 or email her at SAHS.Janet@gmail.com.

SAHS Memorials & Donations

In Memory Of:

Gloria Arentzen - Janet Mayer

Bessie Nielson Harrison - Margaret Utgard

Marguerite Fjarlie - Pam Fugier

Peter Henning - Margaret Utgard, Pam Fugier

Ray Landry - Margaret Utgard

Dennis & Shirley Anderson

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Mr. & Mrs. Jim Armintrout

Mr. & Mrs. Steve Scott,

Mr. & Mrs. Ray Armintrout

Mickey Oversby McKay - Margaret Utgard

Richard Norgaard - Norgaard Trust (Nancy Garlow)

Clarence Schmitt - Norgaard Trust (Nancy Garlow)

Ilene Svensen - Gerald & Rose King

Marian Turner - Elaine Thurston

New Lifetime Memberships:

Dave Pinkham, David Thomsen

Donations in memory of Mike Buse to the Capital Funds Account:

Dave and Pam Pinkham

About Hero Quilts - Red, White & Blue

These quilts are made for wounded US military in Afghanistan waiting for evacuation by air to the hospital in Germany. The quilts keep them warm during the flight and are theirs to keep.

More than 1200 quilts have been made by the local group since 2007. Quilts, members and correspondence will be at The Floyd on the 4th of July. Please join us!

Mission Statement

The Stanwood Area Historical Society seeks to discover, preserve, and display any materials which help to establish, illustrate, and interpret the economic, social, and cultural heritage of the greater Stanwood area, including if financially possible and appropriate, historic sites and properties.



AT THE FLOYD

May 17th • 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

History and Hors d'oeuvres

Hank Cramer

July 4th • 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Hero Quilts - Red, White & Blue

Parade & Flyover

Ice Cream Social

Parade Starts at 11 a.m.

NAS Whidbey Island Flyover

Ice Cream Social Starts at 11:30 a.m.

HANK CRAMER RETURNS TO THE FLOYD

Hank Cramer is one of the best-loved folksingers in the American West. He is widely known for his booming bass voice, smooth picking on a vintage flat-top guitar, and his wry sense of humor. He has a repertoire of over a thousand modern and traditional songs, spanning the genres of celtic, appalachian, maritime, cowboy, and plain old folk music. He is more than simply a performer, however. He is a historian and educator who weaves music and history into presentations which bring to life the rich story of America's westward movement, and give his audiences insight into the "folk process" by which traditional songs evolve and change to describe new events.

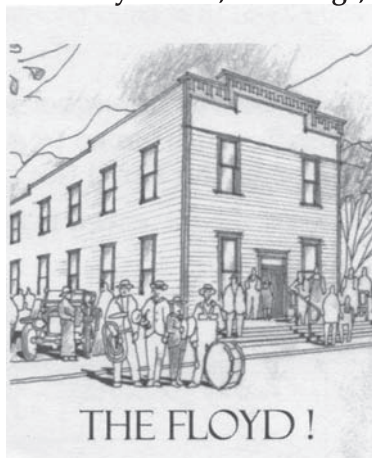
He appeared last fall at our History and Hors d'oeuvres event and was so appreciated we have asked him to come back for new old songs and stories! He will be presenting a program on the history of Sea Shanties on May 17th at 4:00 p.m. Please join us...you will enjoy it.



The Floyd is Available for Rent

The Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center Public Hall is available for arts, music, theater, cultural events as well as a banquet hall for family events, weddings, reunions, birthdays, & business meetings. Call 360-629-6110 or www.sahs-fncc.org

Proceeds from rentals and events benefit the continuing preservation and rehabilitation of the Public Hall and SAHS educational and historical projects and programs.



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GET INVOLVED...STAY IN TOUCH

The Stanwood Area Historical Society is a special place. It collects and conserves the wondrous treasures of history that define our community. Your participation would not only assist in this crucial protection of our past, but would make you part of our important work. You can make a difference. Join SAHS today!

Memberships are due annually in January. This is a significant means of support for the Society and includes a subscription to the newsletter. SAHS is a tax-exempt non-profit organization and depends on gifts, bequests from individuals and groups, fundraising activities and membership dues for its financial support. Your contributions are tax deductible and will be used only for the preservation of the history of our area.

- Individual Membership: **\$10.00** Student Membership: **\$1.00**
 Family Membership: **\$15.00** Lifetime Individual Membership (+65 yrs of age): **\$100.00**
 Business/Organization Membership: **\$20.00** General Supporting Donation: \$ _____

Name [Please print] _____

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P. O. Box 69 ~~~ 27112 102nd Ave. N. W., Stanwood, Washington ~~~ www.sahs-fncc.org Photographer: G. D. Horton, circa 1886, Stanwood Stillaguamish River Waterfront

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