



**CHARITABLE
CONTRIBUTIONS**

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TulalipCares.org

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Contact:

(206) 447-8140
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Date of Award:

2025 Q2

Level:

\$2,501 to \$5,000

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January 13, 2026

Marilyn Sheldon
Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund
8802 27th Ave NE
Tulalip, WA 98271

Dear Marilyn,

HistoryLink's 2025 Tulalip Cares grant (**Q2 2025 14.2**) project is complete and the new articles on HistoryLink.org are posted and available to the public. We have listed them below, with links.

Your support has helped us continue to build our Snohomish County writing team and allowed us to share some great stories with our site visitors. In 2025, we added another new writer, Aina de Lapparent Alvarez to our team. Taylor Russell, a new writer who came on board with us for the 2024 Heritage Fund project, curated an episode of our new ["Field Notes" podcast](#) which focuses in part on a Snohomish County cemetery. This is just one example of how each year through this grant, we are able to develop new partnerships with writers that continue to build content on Snohomish County for the site.

In 2025, the Tulalip Cares grant allowed us to add the following articles:

Feature Articles and Timelines

- 1) [The Seybert Tragedy: Snohomish County's First Murder](#)
- 2) [Everett mystery begins with the murder of bakery owner William Buehrig on Halloween night, October 31, 1934.](#)
- 3) [Bakeman, Charles Henry \(1861-1953\)](#)
- 4) [Fire destroys C.H. Bakeman's furniture store in Snohomish on September 16, 1893.](#)
- 5) [Everett School District opens its first permanent school for children with disabilities on November 4, 1946.](#)
- 6) [Gaeng, Betty Lou \(1927-2023\)](#)
- 7) [Nordlund, Enid \(1906-2003\)](#)
- 8) [Monte Cristo Forest Camp \(Snohomish County\) is dedicated and transferred to the U.S. Forest Service on August 19, 1951.](#)

Your continued support has helped us strengthen our Snohomish County editorial team and continues to make HistoryLink better and we thank you again.

Sincerely,

Lisa Labovitch
Historian

Jennifer Ott
Executive Director

Bakeman, Charles Henry (1861-1952)

By **Warner Blake**
Posted 11/13/2025
HistoryLink.org Essay 23372

0:00 / 20:21

Sent west by their parents in the 1880s to scout for a promising new home, Charles Bakeman and his brother George selected Snohomish, and in 1885 the rest of the Bakeman family followed, liquidating their holdings in Wisconsin and buying a 190-acre farm east of town. Within two years, Charles had opened his first furniture and wagon shop and married Nina Blackman, a schoolteacher who'd recently arrived from California. Four children followed as Bakeman established his furniture business on First Street, later adding the funeral business after he built his first casket. He served on the city council and as Mayor of Snohomish in the 1930s, and continued to run his furniture business up until his death in 1953 at age 91.

Westward Ho

Johann Joachim Friederich Beckmann (1833-1920) and Dorothea Louise Sophia Bartels (1839-1930) migrated from Germany with their families, settling in Peshtigo, Wisconsin, in 1855. They married about two years later, and on October 26, 1861, they welcomed a second son, Charles Henry Bakeman. Charles attended public schools in Peshtigo, a town founded with the establishment of a lumber mill in 1838 and dependent on immigrants from many countries, including Germany. It is remembered today for the disastrous fire of 1871, where at least 1,300 people lost their lives and 7,500 were left homeless; Peshtigo was virtually destroyed.

Bakeman gave an oral-history interview in 1946 describing the family's experience in the fire when he was 10 years old. He said his mother had a premonition "that something terrible was going to happen" and wouldn't let the boys go hunting; instead, they helped their father prepare their animals for evacuation, which happened that night. They took refuge in the river. His strongest memory was of his mother finding an abandoned baby who became part of the family for the night (Bakeman family papers).

In 1879, Bakeman completed a degree at Green Bay Business College, followed by a three-year apprenticeship in the carriage-making trade. According to grandson C. D. Bakeman, "He was ready to start

his adult life ... And his parents were ready to start a new life" (C. D. Bakeman email). Stories were circulating about the abundance that could be found out west, particularly around Washington and Oregon. After 25 years of accumulating a comfortable living and some capital, his parents directed Charles and his older brother George (1859-1946) to travel west and explore the area as a potential new location for the family. "Charley was to manage the expedition," wrote C. D. Bakeman of his grandfather. After assessing communities from Portland north, they landed on **Snohomish**. It was "a small community with a **big future** from what he could see" (C. D. Bakeman email).

In William Whitfield's 1926 *History of Snohomish County*, the author doesn't mention George Bakeman by name in telling of a man who was given the opportunity to purchase a half block on Commercial Street in Seattle for \$1,000. George Bakeman declined the offer; instead, a decision was made to visit Snohomish, "then regarded as the end of the world." They made the day-long trip in a little steamer and were well pleased with the locality, "in which he has since made his home" (Whitfield).

It's plausible that both Charles and George were in awe of the old-growth forests, with giant cedar and fir trees in **spectacular abundance** – just as were the Blackman Brothers from Maine, who relocated to Snohomish in the early 1870s and built their logging company into an economic engine of the Pacific Northwest. Plus, there was the Snohomish River, a deep, navigable river connected to the Puget Sound cities, which "gave Snohomish a rosy future" (C. D. Bakeman email). Their parents agreed. Johann and Dorothea, with children Emma Caroline (1862-1945), John Fred (1865-1939), and Winfred Ernest (1875-1939), followed the boys to Snohomish, buying a farm near **Monroe** and other properties. "Within a few months of arrival, Charles H. had opened the county's first furniture and wagon shop in a building halfway up Avenue C," writes Taylor Russell in *Lost & Forgotten: A True History of Snohomish's First Cemetery*. He built the first buggy ever made on Puget Sound in 1883 and sold it to a bachelor for \$120 – "very fortunate," as there were no roads for the owner to use his buggy (Whitfield).

In her 2025 book, Russell tells the story of how the Snohomish River froze over in the winter of 1884, shutting down the town's ability to receive expected goods, including a casket. Bakeman was called upon to build his first casket, then a second one in June, when he was also asked to conduct the funeral. Bakeman found himself attending the birth of the death-care industry in **early Snohomish**, which ran in tandem with the growth of his furniture business, anchored by a woman from Maine.

Opposites Attract

Nina Blackman was born in Bangor, Maine, in 1862 to George (1832-1905) and Frances (1838-1906) Blackman. She migrated from Michigan to Oakland, California, with her parents and older brother Arthur (1864-1929) when their father accepted a position with the National Cash Register Company. Nina graduated from Oakland High School in 1883 and then studied at a normal school, earning a certificate to teach primary school. She left her first teaching job in California to accept a position in the Snohomish Grammar School, commencing in February 1886. According to family historian Frances Wood's 2019 profile for the Snohomish Women's Legacy Project, "Nina arrived on the steamer and, as church bells summon the faithful to prayer, the blast of the whistle gathered the town to the wharf. Among the faithful

was Charles, and as he watched Nina disembark, he uttered the most quoted words in our whole family history, 'I'm going to marry her and buy her a sky-blue dress to match her eyes'" ("Nina Blackman Bakeman").

In an unfinished novel based on Nina Blackman's early life in Snohomish, her second daughter, Frances Bakeman Hodge, described how she imagined the scene as Nina stepped off the steamer: "[Nina] ... seemed fragile in figure and pastel in color. Her cream-colored hair under the soft pearly gray bonnet was like the finely spun curls of a young child. Her features and skin were soft and childlike, too, but the expression in her blue eyes was not that of an immature girl. She returned the curious scrutiny of the people on the dock with the calm glance of a poised woman" ("Nina Blackman Bakeman").

Blackman's brother Arthur preceded her arrival by only two months but was excited enough to write to his sister: "I like this place first rate ... They ought to call this place Blackman City, there are so many of them here." Indeed, one of the Blackmans, Nina's cousin Hyrcanus Blackman (1847-1921), was the Snohomish Grammar School Director who offered Nina the teaching position. The pay was expected to be \$45 or \$50 a month with "a chance for a raise" ("Nina Blackman Bakeman"). Following a successful first term, the Snohomish County schools superintendent selected her to present her teaching methods before the Territorial Institute in Seattle. "Nervous and humbled, she stood before a crowd of teachers, many of them old and experienced in the work, to present (her) simple ways of teaching" ("Nina Blackman Bakeman").

She eventually broke her engagement to a man in California. On June 20, 1887, she and Charles Bakeman were "quietly wed," according to Wood, who writes that Charles had been bucked off a horse, was bedridden, in need of daily care, and asked Nina to be his wife. They were an unlikely pair. "Charles liked to play cards; she did not. He liked to dance; she never danced. He was tall and lanky; she petite, probably just under five feet tall. Their first five years were buoyed by prosperity in Charles' furniture business. Box springs became the rage and he produced enough for the whole town" ("Nina Blackman Bakeman"). In December 1889, Nina, who had left teaching, gave birth to their first child, Inez Mildred (1889-1977). Son Guy Victor (1892-1919) arrived three years later.

Furniture, Funerals, Fire

In the 1890 U.S. Census, 9,891 persons listed "undertaker" as their occupation; 10 years later, the number had nearly doubled. Thus Bakeman was at the forefront of a fast-growing industry, operating his business out of a building on the corner of First Street and Maple Avenue, the site today [2025] of Bauer Funeral Chapel. His brother George, trained as an undertaker at the Eureka College of Embalming in San Francisco and the Champion College of Cincinnati, helped Charles "jumpstart his funerary business," writes Russell, whose book includes a colorful story of George dumping overstock coffins in the river. They resurfaced years later, water-logged and stuck on the banks, "and giving their finders a real fright" (*Lost & Forgotten ...*, 50)

In 1889, Bakeman's new three-story building at the southeast corner of First Street and Avenue B was ready for occupancy. "It could fit \$20,000 of elegant furniture," writes Russell, inside an "elaborately woodworked storefront." The structure also had a workshop stocked with his tools for both professions. By 1891,

Bakeman had "tripled the value of his furniture revenue" (*Lost & Forgotten ...*, 50). By the end of 1893, however, his prized building had burned to the ground. Fire broke out in the early hours of September 16, caused by an arsonist on his second attempt. Even though the fire department was located just up the hill at Second Street, the structure was quickly consumed with flames, fueled by oiled wood furniture, shooting out of every window. "Within minutes, the building's support beams gave way and the whole structure lunged with a terrific roar eastward into the gully below" (*Lost & Forgotten ...*, 50).

Bakeman's insurers refused to cover losses from the fire, forcing the couple, in their early 30s with two children, to give up their home and squeeze into a rental cottage at 317 Avenue B. "Charley wasted no time mourning his loss," according to grandson C. D. Bakeman (*Lost & Forgotten ...*, 51). According to family lore, Bakeman had grub-staked a miner who started the O & B Mine (Osborne & Bakeman) in the Cascade foothills near **Monte Cristo**. "The only recourse for Charles was to take to the hills, and work the mine" ("Nina Blackman Bakeman"), which he did for two years "and took out considerable value" (*An Illustrated History ...*, 850).

Undertaker and Coroner

By 1896, Charles was back in business as the Bakeman Furniture and Undertaking Company. As both businesses grew, he visited the finest funeral establishments in the state and adopted the most progressive ideas for his operation. In September 1906, he opened a two-story funeral parlor at 901 First Street, at the intersection with Union Avenue. Wrote the *Everett Herald*:

"The front entrance leads to a large office, fitted in natural woods and with a stairway leading to the upper story. Next to this outer office is an inner room for mourners while services are being held in the chapel, into which it also opens. The chapel is a large room running entirely across the building, with a vaulted ceiling, beautifully decorated in water colors. To the rear of the chapel is a work room with a cold vault in one corner. Back of this, opening on Union avenue is a carriage and hearse shed" ("Model Undertaking ...").

Bakeman provided comprehensive services: "Upon receiving word of a 'new client,' a staff member would pick them up in a 'dead wagon' and bring them back to Bakeman's for preparation. Bakeman (or his assistants) would distribute death notices to **local newspapers**, print handbills for display on public notice boards, and coordinate the ceremony accessories, including flowers and mourning wear" (*Lost & Forgotten ...*, 53). In addition, Bakeman served as **Snohomish County** coroner from 1885 to 1910, investigating deaths and issuing death certificates. As the county's population grew along with the number of deaths, his "dual role as county coroner and for-profit undertaker eventually sparked controversy" (*Lost & Forgotten ...*). Critics argued that only a physician should hold the coroner position.

Bakeman's 1906 building remains standing thanks to an extensive renovation in 2009. The wooden structure, now supported by a new concrete foundation, was commemorated with an exterior plaque from the Snohomish Historical Society.

Politics and Partnership

In 1899, Bakeman won a seat on the Snohomish City Council representing the Second Ward. His elected service would span many years, including seven years as Mayor pro tem (a council member who is selected to perform mayoral duties) and eight years as Mayor of Snohomish.

Meanwhile, he and Nina welcomed two more children, Frances Louise (1900-1988) and Charles Theodore (b. 1903). Nina continued to serve in civic positions over the years while raising the family. She was a charter member and served on the board of the **Women's Civic Club**, later called the Cosmopolitan Club. The club was dedicated to literature, child welfare, civic progress, and social culture. She was elected president of the Snohomish Parent Teacher Association and a trustee of the first Snohomish library.

As their businesses grew, Charles and Nina purchased the rental cottage, and over the years it was expanded into a nine-room home with entries from both Avenue B and Avenue A. Daughter Frances, who continued living in the home with her family, wrote, "The house on Avenue B was furnished with many New England antiques, but the extra lot on Avenue A was used for a garden, orchard, chicken yard and stable, a mini-farm, like the big farms where the Bakemans lived in Wisconsin" ("Nina Blackman Bakeman").

Bakeman sold his funeral business in 1907 to Emeric and Samantha Purdy, a couple with two young sons who intended to start a family business. The Purdys had graduated from Cincinnati College of Embalming the previous year, and perhaps Bakeman was curious to learn from them, because he quickly returned to work as the Purdys's partner. "C. H. Bakeman is so full of life and energy that he simply can't stand it to be out of business," reported the *Herald* ("New Partnership"). A decade later, in September 1917, Bakeman and Purdy dissolved their partnership. The *Herald* noted that Bakeman, in business for 34 years, had the second-oldest funeral business in the state, behind Bonney Watson of Seattle. The paper said Bakeman would continue with "his parlors in the Wilbur block," while the Purdys established an operation at their home. "The stock has been divided, Bakeman retaining the automobile hearse" ("Bakeman & Purdy ...").

New Callings

The year 1928 was Bakeman's final one as an undertaker, or, as he listed himself in a series of advertisements in the *Snohomish County Tribune* that year, Funeral Director. His advertisements were the subject of an October 11 editorial written by esteemed editor Thomas E. Dobbs, who called them "one of the most interesting series of advertisements ever published in Snohomish" ("An Unusual Series"). Bakeman was now 67 years old, and his advertisements indicated that his business had been established in 1884. Each ad featured a photograph from early Snohomish; the first was a popular photo credited to **Gilbert Horton** (1853-1936), titled "First Street from Avenue D," taken around 1885. Bakeman was proud of his beginnings as a businessman in pioneer Snohomish; his oft-repeated story was included in the ad, recounting how he bought a ticket from Wisconsin to Portland in 1883. "An unusual thing, if someone had told me then I was going to be an undertaker, I would have stayed in the east," he wrote (Advertisement).

According to Russell, "C. H. finally sold his business and left undertaking for good in 1929. The new owner, Andrew Whyte, retained the name, recognizing its strong local reputation, and reopened as Bakeman-Whyte Funeral Home." Following Whyte's death, his son took over alongside new partners Gerald and

Rhoda Bauer, "ensuring the business remained a local institution, still alive on First Street" (*Lost & Forgotten* ..., 54).

Selling the business freed up more time for Bakeman's political life. He had served on the city council and as mayor pro tem since 1914, and in 1926 the city council nominated him to serve as fulltime mayor. He appeared on the November 1926 ballot. "Snohomish voters will find three elections combined" when they vote in the city primary, reported the *Tribune*. Not only will they cast their ballots for national, state, and local offices, but they will also be asked to "express an opinion on the special bond election for the erection of a city hall and fire station ... It is divided into two questions, one asking whether the city shall bond itself for \$17,000 for the purpose of building a fire station, and the other asking whether it shall bond itself for \$10,000 for a city hall. Citizens must vote either yes or no on either or both propositions" ("Three Elections ...").

The bonds passed easily and Bakeman won the mayor's race. The fire station would replace wooden structures built around 1890 with a concrete building, and Snohomish's first city hall would be built on First Street. It would include a council meeting room, administrative offices, a police department, and a jail. Plus, the new civic building would be one door west of the Lon Brown Theater, which had been screening movies for two years. Bakeman took the oaths of office from the new "dads," as the *Tribune* referred to the city council members. Following a short post-election meeting, "the city council and officers of both old and new administrations partook of an oyster supper at the Kit Kat Cafe" ("Bonds Carry ...").

Water Fights, Water Rights

Bakeman served three terms as mayor. The third one was eventful, highlighted by a fight over the town's water supply. According to a March 5, 1931 *Tribune* story, "A proposal by the city of Everett to sell water to the city of Snohomish was made at the regular council meeting Tuesday" ("Everett's Water Plan ..."). The advantage of the Everett plan would be to save Snohomish from having to replace a failing 20-year-old dam 16 miles up the Pilchuck River. Everett's water comes from the Sultan River and was plentiful "enough for two cities," council members were told. The main line runs close by Snohomish on its way to Everett ("Everett's Water Plan ...").

Mayor Bakeman was adamantly opposed. "It would be the height of folly to adopt the Everett plan," he said. The issue then, as it has continued to be for every city council since, was water rights, reported by the *Tribune* to be worth at least a quarter of a million dollars, that the city would lose if it took Everett's water. Dobbs, the *Tribune* editor, expressed a firm "no" as well, pleading for the council to formulate plans "for the improvement of the headworks and the gravity line of the Pilchuck system" ("Everett's Water Plan ..."). He and Bakeman were persuasive. Work began on the \$20,000 project in July 1931, with anticipated completion in September 1931. The new Pilchuck Dam was dedicated on October 17, 1931. It would stand for 89 years, until it was removed in 2020, allowing the Pilchuck to again run free. The issue of water rights eventually worked its way through the courts, allowing Snohomish to keep its rights to the river and buy water from Everett.

Golden Years

Charles and Nina celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at the Seattle home of their daughter Inez (Mrs. H. Reed Fulton) on June 20, 1937. Seventy-three guests were invited, reported the *Herald*. Recalling their wedding day in 1887, Charles told the guests that their marriage ceremony took place after he had been "critically injured in a fall from a pony that had been frightened by a dog." He was bedridden, and Nina accepted his proposal to become his wife to tend to his injuries ("Mr. and Mrs. Charles ...").

Their 'marriage of convenience' stood the test of time. Nina died on August 9, 194, at age 79, at the home they had built together in Snohomish. A news item noted that A. H. Moll, Arlington mortician and Charles's cousin, was in charge of arrangements. Over time, daughter Frances, who was married to Paul H. Hodge (1894-1977), would take up residence in the home with her family. The house is still standing.

Charles's 90th birthday was front-page news in the *Herald* on October 22, 1949. He is pictured in his office, seated in a rocking chair with a pipe in the corner of his mouth, and wearing a suit with wide lapels. The story begins: "C. H. Bakeman may close his furniture store an hour early October 26 to observe his 90th Birthday, but don't bet on it. Charley Bakeman likes to work. In fact, he has to work. Not because he wolf is at his door, but because he wouldn't know what to do with leisure time" ("Snohomish Pioneer ..."). The story includes Bakeman's admission that "he came to seek his fortune in the timber field" but soon learned from the Blackman brothers, his wife's cousins, that market demand was limited to fir and cedar. They could not sell alder, maple, and spruce trees, though Bakeman could use them for making furniture. "That's how he got into the furniture field" ("Snohomish Pioneer ...").

The October 26 celebration dinner was held at the Eagles Hall, where Bakeman had been a member since 1904, a past president, and a trustee for 30 years; "he did not miss a meeting in 23 years," reported the *Herald*. Nearly 100 members of "Snohomish Aerie No. 195, FOE" came to salute him. There was a business meeting of the aerie; afterward, there was dancing with Walt's Hill Billys. "Games also were enjoyed" ("Bakeman Feted ...").

Charles Bakeman died on September 30, 1952, following a brief illness. He was living at his home at 317 Avenue B, which he had shared with Frances and her family for 14 years. Services were held at Bakeman-Whyte Funeral Chapel on First Street. In a happy postscript, "Years later, when Frances was straightening things in the attic, she uncovered a sky-blue brocaded silk dress, carefully saved among her mother's possessions. Charles had carried through with the second promise he'd made so many years before" ("Nina Blackman Bakeman").

This essay made possible by:
Snohomish County Community Heritage Project

The Tulalip Tribes



Charles H. Bakeman, ca. 1926

Whitfield's *History of Snohomish County*, Volume II, p. 601, Courtesy University of Washington



Peshtigo, Wisconsin, 1871

Courtesy Library of Congress



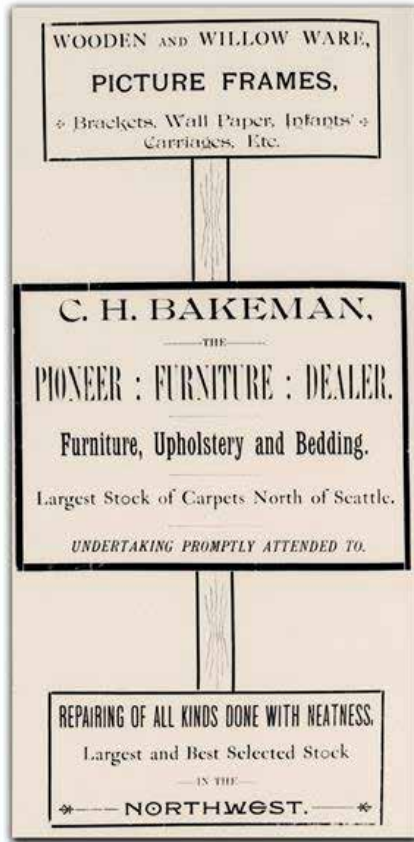
Nina Blackmsn Bakeman, Snohomish, ca. 1887

Courtesy Frances Wood Collection



Bird's Eye View of Snohomish, 1890

Library of Congress, G4284.S6A3



***Snohomish Daily Sun*, January 1891**

Courtesy Washington Digital Newspapers



Illustration of C. H. Bakeman Store, published in *Northwest Magazine*, Snohomish, March 1893

Courtesy *Northwest Magazine*



Bakeman Furniture building after fire, Snohomish, September 1893

Courtesy Snohomish Historical Society

FIRE AT SNOHOMISH.
The Bakeman Block Destroyed in the Early Morning.

The Post Intelligencer, September 17, 1893

FIRE IN SNOHOMISH.
Snohomish, Sept. 16.—Fire this morning destroyed the Bakeman and adjoining buildings. The loss is estimated at \$25,000; insurance \$9,000. Bakeman & company are the principal losers. Their loss is \$16,000, half insured. *Statesman Journal, September 17, 1893*

Snohomish, Sept. 16.—Fire broke out at 1:45 o'clock this morning in the basement of Bakeman & Co.'s furniture store. The fire department got to work promptly, but in a few minutes flames burst out all over the building. Rice & Gardner's meat market, adjoining Bakeman & Co.'s, now caught fire, and by this time it seemed though all Front street would be wiped out of existence. Ten minutes later the foundation of the Bakeman building caved in with the burning of the underpinning, the whole structure lunged with a terrific roar into the gully below, carrying Rice & Gardner's meat shop and the city fish market beneath it. Several firemen holding hose in the market building narrowly escaped being buried alive within the fiery debris. Good water service kept the fire from catching in the remainder of the block. The rear end of the Bakeman block overhung the gully and could be reached by the fire company only at great disadvantage. This was the seat of the fire from the beginning. The Bakeman building was heavily combusted before the alarm could be given. Notwithstanding this the flames were kept entirely inside.

The Victoria Daily Times, September 18, 1893

A conservative estimate places the total loss and insurance as follows:

	Loss.	Insur.
Bakeman & Co. furniture store and stock.	\$25,000	\$9,000
Rice & Gardner, meat market.	4,000	None
City fish market.	2,000	None
W. T. E. & Co., hardware.	1,000	None
W. T. E. & Co., office.	1,000	None
Rice & Gardner, meat market.	1,000	None
City fish market.	200	None
City of Snohomish, damage to dock.	100	None
Total.	\$34,000	\$9,000

The Post Intelligencer, September 17, 1893

Newspaper clippings about Bakeman Furniture fire, Snohomish, 1893

Courtesy *The Post Intelligencer*, *The Victoria Daily Times*, and *Statesman Journal*



Front page headline, *The Eye*, September 29, 1893



The Bakeman family (L-R): Charles, Guy, Inez, Nina, Snohomish, 1898

Courtesy Frances Wood Collection



Newspaper clippings about C.H. Bakeman, 1906-1920

Courtesy *The Daily Herald*



Nina Blackman Bakeman, Snohomish, 1925

Courtesy Frances Wood Collection



C. H. Bakeman Funeral Director advertisements, *Snohomish County Tribune*, 1928

Courtesy *Snohomish County Tribune*

C. H. Bakeman Announces the

OPENING

of the

BAKEMAN FURNITURE STORE

Saturday, Oct. 22

1 IN TRADE FREE 1

to every head of a family who visits our store Saturday, Monday or Tuesday. Get your dollar coupon then and apply it to any purchase of \$5 or more within one year.

WE are proud of our new store—we think you will also be proud of it and pleased with the splendid stock of furniture we have arranged for your inspection. We want you to see it, whether you are interested in buying now or not. Come in, register, and receive your Dollar Credit Coupon to use any time you see fit within one year.

BAKEMAN'S TIME PAYMENT PLAN ACTUALLY PAYS YOU

Under this plan we pay you interest on your first payment and all other payments until delivery is made. It means that by using this plan you actually save money over all other cash, credit, or Time Payment Plans. Ask us about it.

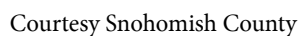
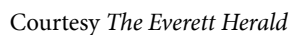
BAKEMAN FURNITURE

"When You Think of Furniture, Think of Bakeman."

Phone 564 First St., Next to Snohomish Hardware

Snohomish County Tribune, October 20, 1932

Courtesy *Snohomish County Tribune*





Pilchuck Dam site, 1923

Courtesy Washington Geologic Survey Photograph Collection

Sources:

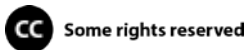
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Everett mystery begins with the murder of bakery owner William Buehrig on Halloween night, October 31, 1934.

By **Taylor Russell**
Posted 12/27/2025
HistoryLink.org Essay 23442

0:00 / 9:08

On October 31, 1934, shortly after 6 p.m., Everett baker William Buehrig is fatally shot by two young robbers. His family – wife Ellen and infant daughter Eleanor – lives in an apartment above the bakery at 2101 Colby Avenue and hears the gun shots, as does a baker working in the back of the shop. Outside, Halloween revelry aids the gunmen's escape: Shouting and men running are dismissed as holiday "pranks." Police investigate, but the case goes cold. Buehrig's wife and daughter will live for decades without answers. Only later will a confession – from a notorious repeat offender incarcerated at Alcatraz – lead to a conviction. For Eleanor, the mystery will linger until 2009, when, with help from librarians at the Everett Public Library, she will finally learn the truth about her father's demise.

Murdered for \$10

William Buehrig opened his **Everett** bakery, "one of the most modern in the city," in the summer of 1932, after completing a baker apprenticeship in Kentucky ("Colby Bakery Sold ..."). It was only his third year in America. A German-born immigrant, Buehrig had previously been a banker and a decorated submarine officer during World War I. One day, on a commuter train, he struck up a friendship with an American tourist, who offered to sponsor his immigration. Drawn by water and mountains, Buehrig headed west to the Pacific, where he purchased the Colby Avenue bakery of Miss Mary Hall. He loved outdoor sports, danced the polka and waltzes, and played an active role in Everett's German immigrant community. In late October 1934, he was still adjusting to the rhythms of his growing household: He and his wife, Ellen, had welcomed their first daughter, Eleanor, just two months earlier.

Halloween night that year was dark and rainy. Two young men, and a third accomplice parked around the corner in a stolen vehicle, were desperate for cash. Armed with a .32 caliber pistol, the pair entered Buehrig's bakery and ordered him to open the cash register. He refused. A struggle followed; one of the men lost his

checkered cap, and the cash register was knocked over. One shot was fired into the floor. The next struck William Buehrig in the heart, exited through his shoulder and stopped in a carton of waxed paper. The men grabbed what was in the till – \$10 – and ran. Buehrig died almost instantly. He was 34 years old.

The holiday's tradition of revelry helped the gunmen escape. An employee working in the back of the bakery assumed the loud voices were a particularly demanding "trick or treat." A neighbor who watched the gunmen run away busied himself with yardwork, believing them to be pranksters out to vandalize his shrubbery. Only after the gunshots did the employee investigate, as did Ellen, with baby Eleanor, living in the apartment above the bakery.

In the weeks that followed, local police arrested six suspects, but each had solid alibis. The case went cold. In early 1935, Ellen sold the bakery and, with her daughter and the ashes of her husband, returned to Germany. William was buried in his hometown.

Surprise Confession

Nearly a decade later, in 1944, a mailed confession landed on the desk of Snohomish County Prosecutor Leslie Cooper. It was postmarked from Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary on Alcatraz Island, San Francisco.

Henry (or Henri) Theodore Young, a bank robber, burglar, kidnapper, and killer, was known to prison staff as "one of the most cold-blooded prisoners at Alcatraz," wrote Eric Stevick of the *Everett Herald* in his 2010 story about the Buehrig case ("The Secret ..."). In the early 1930s, in Montana, Young bound, gagged, robbed, and dumped a man, still alive, into a boxcar, hoping he would freeze to death. Later, he robbed a bank, only to be caught when his stolen car got a flat tire.

While incarcerated, Young "racked up violations," including a 1937 work strike in which he dumped 400 pounds of vegetables onto the prison's kitchen floor ("The Secret ..."). In 1939, he joined three other inmates in an elaborate escape attempt. Over the course of a year, they cut through iron bars and, on a foggy night, paddled into San Francisco Bay on a rickety driftwood raft. The raft began to break apart; one escapee was fatally shot, and the others caught. Young was sent to solitary confinement.

Eleven days after being readmitted to the general prison population, Young stabbed one of his fellow escapees to death. Charged with first-degree murder, he insisted on being represented by the youngest public defenders available. They argued that the conditions at Alcatraz were so brutal that Young could not be held fully responsible – years of isolation and poor treatment from guards had damaged him psychologically. The jury bought it, convicting him of involuntary manslaughter, with only a three-year sentence.

His story was so notorious that decades later it became the basis for a major motion picture, *Murder in the First* (1995), starring Kevin Bacon. As Stevick wrote, the movie takes great liberties with the truth. "Young, for instance, was not the petty thief who stole \$5 from a grocery store to feed himself and his orphan sister as depicted in the movie. In the real world, Young and his cronies robbed a bank in Lind, Wash., of \$406. That was 1934 and less than a month after he had been released from another prison hitch ... The movie's

portrayal of Young in solitary confinement in a dark dungeon for three years also is untrue. So too is a scene of an associate warden crippling Young after an escape attempt. Nor did Young die at Alcatraz in the 1940s" ("The Secret ...").

In prison, Young read the Bible and books on philosophy. He began corresponding with his Aunt Amelia, a Catholic nun. In 1943, he wrote the letter confessing his role in the murder of William Buehrig. Raised Mormon, Young now claimed he wanted "to become a good Catholic," and confessed to every crime he said he had committed, including a car theft in Kennewick, two kidnappings near Spokane, a bank robbery in Tacoma, and the robbery of the bank in **Lind** (Adams County) just four days after the Buehrig murder ("The Secret ...").

Spared the Death Penalty

Authorities accompanied Young to Snohomish County to stand trial. He pleaded guilty. Also implicated were Sherman Baxter and John Baker, Young's accomplices. Baxter became the state's star witness, testifying that Young fired the fatal shot. The deceased's family did not attend the trial: By then, World War II was raging in Europe, and Ellen and Eleanor, now living in Germany, had no idea a trial was even taking place.

A jury of 10 men and two women was asked to decide Young's punishment: life in prison or death by hanging. They chose life, despite the prosecutor's insistence that Young was apt to escape prison again. "We are dealing with the most brilliant criminal ever to take the stand in this courtroom," prosecutor Leslie Cooper told the jury. "I am incapable of keeping up with him" ("The Secret ..."). Young swore he would do no such thing because he was studying for the priesthood.

Young was returned to Alcatraz, then was transferred in 1954 to the Washington State Penitentiary at **Walla Walla**. There, he worked in the cannery, plumbing shop, and on construction crews, though "he seldom attended Mass" ("The Secret ..."). His improved behavior earned him placement in a minimum-security unit. On June 8, 1967, he escaped. The FBI placed him on its Most Wanted list. Seven months later, he was spotted on a sidewalk in Kansas City – his hometown – by a citizen who recognized him from a true-crime magazine. Returned to Walla Walla, Young became eligible for parole in 1972, but within two weeks he disappeared again, having slipped away from his parole officer. In 1999, the Department of Corrections declared him legally dead. His ultimate fate remains unknown.

Answers at Last

Seventy-five years after that rainy Halloween night, in 2009, Eleanor Buehrig Vogel, by then a grandmother living in Michigan, reached out to the **Everett Public Library** to ask a question she had carried her entire life:

Who killed my father?

To her surprise, they had an answer. Eleanor and her mother had returned to the United States in 1947, never knowing the case had been solved. Librarians uncovered newspaper clippings of Henry Young's trial,

including one with a photograph of the accused. "I finally saw that face," Eleanor said. "I thought my dad must have looked into that face. It wasn't very pleasant" ("The Secret ...").

This essay made possible by:
Snohomish County Community Heritage Project

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William Buehrig, n.d.

Courtesy Everett Public Library



William Buehrig, German Navy, ca. 1916-1919

Courtesy Everett Public Library



Ellen and William Buehrig, n.d.

Courtesy Everett Public Library



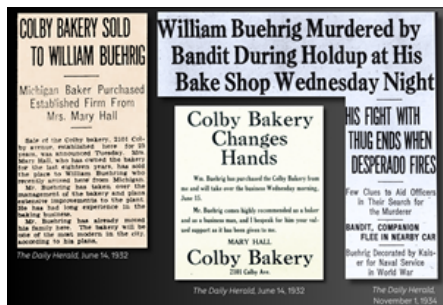
William Buehrig, n.d.

Courtesy Everett Public Library



Colby Bakery, Everett, n.d.

Courtesy Everett Public Library



Headlines about William Buehrig, 1932-1934

Courtesy *The Daily Herald*



Henri Young, Montana State Penitentiary, Deer Lodge, 1932

Courtesy Montana Historical Society Library and Archives

[illegible]

Henri Young's file, Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary, San Francisco, ca. 1935-1948

Courtesy National Archives Bureau of Prisons

January 22, 1943
Miss Amelia Young
Kansas City, Missouri

Dearest Aunt Amelia:

I don't at all understand how the six-o-six came out that you should have been told that; as in our church formerly, neither I nor you has never had the opportunity to take us into our church. I have all the time been in isolation and cannot go to church.

Aunt Amelia, my dear, the fact that I am a true convertant is definitely why I know I am going to be out of prison and a priest within five years. It is all a miracle; I grant you, but one that your prayers helped obtain for me; I never would have been a Catholic or even religious, were I not a true convertant. And do we wish you would question your priest as to what a true convertant is even after I give you these details. A priest can make it so clear by any illustrations that I haven't the paper to give you, I true convertant in a person who is given every one of his sins, he is made to do so this by God so that he will be clean enough to work for God on some specific task that God has in mind for that person to do. It is a miracle, a miracle of a human being going through Purgatory here on earth. Even your priest will tell you that I am the only human on earth who will know that I am a true convertant until God chooses to reveal it to his church, and I know that I am a true convertant who will be free and with you and a priest within five years.

That was ever so good to you to renew my name at Saint Jules Shrine. I hope some day to visit there with you. Then we can pay our respects to Saint Jules for persons and have long talks with the priests at his shrine.

And you as have done in the past, Aunt Amelia you might do now, send the prayer book and calendar you have for me directly to us here. But wait until I let you know the "Register" before you send them. They may have to be sent to Father Ignace; as I have been unable to turn up as a religion discussion. I know they are pleasing to God, Mother, and to Saint Jules.

lovingly yours,
Henry Young, 204-42

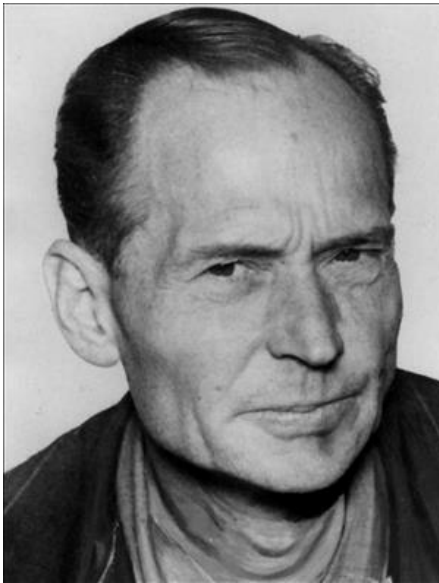
Henri Young letter to Aunt Amelia, 1945

Courtesy National Archives Bureau of Prisons



Eleanor Buehrig, Ottawa Hill High School, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1950

Courtesy Grand Rapids School District



Henri Young, FBI Most Wanted poster, ca. 1967

Courtesy Federal Bureau of Investigations

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Everett School District opens its first permanent school for children with disabilities on November 4, 1946.

By **Aina de Lapparent Alvarez**

Posted 12/04/2025

HistoryLink.org Essay 23426

0:00 / 7:39

On November 4, 1946, the Everett School District opens its first permanent school for children with disabilities in a room at Everett High School in north Everett. A year later, its story becomes linked to the district's nursery school, as the two programs begin sharing both space and scarce resources. These twin experiments in education — one serving children with disabilities, the other offering affordable care for working families — will grow together, compete for support, and survive largely through determination and local fundraising.

Opening a Program

The 1946 program for children with disabilities trailed a short summer class taught by Elizabeth Kempkes (1874-1970), Vida Kent (1876-1962), Mathea Boxeth (1884-1957), and Elizabeth Boxeth (1873-1954), following earlier home-visit work by Mabel Bult. The permanent school was funded by the State Department of Public Instruction, with Rachael Patterson (1876-1957) teaching academics and Vida Kent specializing in speech under the supervision of Deputy County Superintendent Dorothy Bennett.

In April 1947, a delegation of parents petitioned the Everett School Board to continue the nursery program at Cascade Terrace (5101-03 Evergreen Way) after federal funding ran out. No district funds were available, but the board agreed to remodel the basement at Cascade Terrace Administration Building to keep the nursery open. That same spring, the state approved financially supporting the nursery school, starting on July 1, 1947, with state support of 50 cents per six-hour day. Workers installed a large window, laid linoleum, and painted the space to ready it for children.

The nursery building itself had been sold to the district in 1943 by the U.S. military for one dollar, on the condition that it continue to provide childcare at a cost of 50 cents per day. In 1947, the program was moved

to 5101 Woodlawn Avenue, on a lot valued at \$8,000 but purchased for \$1,662.57. It was to serve jointly as the Handicapped Children's School and the district nursery.

Program Expansion

By 1950, the program had expanded. The *Everett Daily Herald* reported an open house at the Cerebral Palsy School in Cascade Terrace, one of 154 such schools nationwide. At the time the school opened, individuals with cerebral palsy were often called "spastics," a shorthand reference to spastic cerebral palsy. Local newspaper headlines thus referred to the program as a "School for Spastics." Gerald V. Kincaid (1907-2004), director of education for handicapped children in **Everett** and **Snohomish County**, described the school as a collaboration with the National Society for Crippled Children and Adults. Physical therapist Arline Bovee (1920-2010), one of only two teachers in Washington with specialized training from the National Society for Crippled Children and Adults, worked with the children. Bovee's students were supported by Easterseals, a national nonprofit that fundraises for services for people with disabilities.

A 1950 Everett School District report counted 123 children who required services: 98 with speech problems, four with hearing loss, 10 with cerebral palsy, two with polio, and others with various conditions. Teachers at Cascade Terrace earned \$180 a month for eight-hour workdays and received a \$10 monthly raise that spring. Space was limited, and by September several families had been turned away. When the proposed 1951 state budget eliminated nursery school funding, Everett's school board wrote to state senator Howard S. Bargreen (1906-1987) urging continued support and noting that more than 100 children were enrolled. It is unclear if Bargreen responded, but funding would continue to be a problem. In June 1954, the school board petitioned the state for emergency funds for the special-education program. The state said that no funding was available but offered hope for the next budget period.

By 1952, enrollment reached 45 at Cascade Terrace and Garfield School (located on 22nd Avenue between Maple Street and Walnut Street), up from just seven in 1949. Supervisor Martha S. Reilly reported overcrowded rooms and overworked staff. Plans to move part of the program to Baker Heights School (located at 12th Avenue and Poplar Street) were canceled after a federal freeze order, and Garfield School was used instead. Parents voiced concern about the relocation, but officials promised the program would continue "harmoniously" (Everett School Board records, November 24, 1952).

District records showed the postwar population boom increasing pressure on Everett's schools: 5,776 students in 1941, and 8,652 by 1952. Preschool programs for children with cerebral palsy, hearing loss, and temporary disabilities multiplied, but funding struggles persisted. In 1954, the district petitioned for emergency state funds for special education, but the Baker Heights building was found to be not up to code, and the city blocked use of the old administrative building. Director Gerald Kincaid resigned in April 1955. The program was reorganized under the personnel services department, led by Dr. Peter Zook (1919-1987) with Norman Kincaid (1928-2014) as supervisor of the Special Education Center.

In 1956, Everett consolidated its two nursery schools at Cascade Terrace under the direction of Mae Cunningham (1909-2003). The special education budgeted \$47,500 for salaries and \$3,000 for supplies.

Speech therapist Judith Ann Hamilton joined the staff, and by 1960, enrollment reached 122 children from several districts. Home-visiting services were added to support families who could not reach the center.

Statewide Efforts and Economic Uncertainty

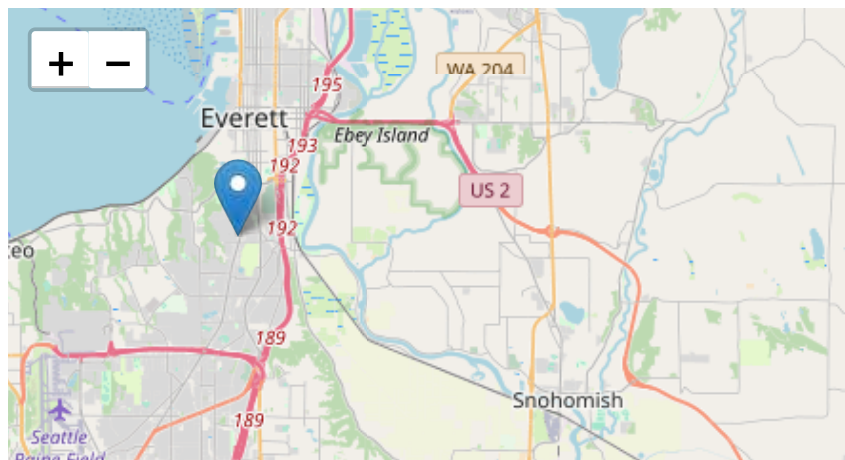
By the early 1960s, Everett's efforts were part of a nationwide expansion of special-education services. A 1963 *Everett Herald* report noted \$53 million in federal funds allocated over three years for training teachers to work with children with disabilities. Everett continued to grow its programs through the 1960s and 1970s, adding vocational training and community partnerships.

Economic shifts in the early 1980s brought new challenges to the nursery school. **Boeing layoffs** sharply reduced enrollment from 76 children during the 1980-1981 school year to 22 the following year. The building, licensed for 66 children, operated at a loss of \$80,000 between 1979 and 1985, with repair costs estimated between \$30,000 and \$70,000. On February 5, 1985, the *Everett Herald* reported that the Everett Early Childhood Center would close on August 31 unless 50 new full-time students enrolled to make it self-sustaining. School fees rose the following year, but enrollment remained low.

The building at 5101 Woodlawn Avenue stayed in district use until 1998, when the program transferred to Faith Lutheran Church. Over five decades, the school that had once housed a nursery became a cornerstone of Everett's early special-education efforts — a site where generations of teachers, parents, and children built the foundation for inclusive education and community care in Snohomish County.

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 Snohomish County Community Heritage Project

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5101 Woodlawn Ave, Everett, 1950

Courtesy Everett Public Library



Newspaper clipping about new school program for children with cerebral palsy, Everett, June 27, 1946

Courtesy *The Daily Herald*



Newspaper clippings about Everett school for disabled children, 1946-1951

Courtesy *The Daily Herald*



Newspaper clippings about Cascade Terrace nursery school, 1947-1975

Courtesy *The Daily Herald*



Newspaper clippings about Cascade Terrace child care center, 1952-1984

Courtesy *The Daily Herald*

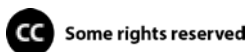
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Fire destroys C. H. Bakeman's furniture store in Snohomish on September 16, 1893.

By **Warner Blake**
Posted 11/17/2025
HistoryLink.org Essay 23373

0:00 / 4:50

On September 16, 1893, fire breaks at C. H. Bakeman's furniture store in Snohomish. Firefighters arrive quickly, but too late to save the building from total destruction. The setback will force Bakeman to sell his home and move his family into a rental cottage, but Bakeman will rebound, opening a new furniture store in 1896, operating a successful funeral business, and later serving three terms as Mayor of Snohomish.

Burned Out

Charles H. Bakeman (1861-1952) had moved into his new three-story building at the southeast corner of First Street and Avenue B in **Snohomish** less than four years earlier, in 1889. The storefront feature elaborate woodwork; inside Bakeman's store was an estimated \$20,000 worth of elegant furniture.

On Friday, September 16, 1893, a young man who worked in a chop house near the Wilbur Drug Store was walking with Judge Wedekind east on First Street when they spotted flames coming from behind the store. They called out "Fire!" Soon, the ringing alarm bell brought the fire department and residents from all directions to the intersection of First Street and Avenue B. The building, one of only two three-stories structures on First Street, was soon engulfed in flames, and "while the firemen were playing on the blaze the foundation, which had been eaten out by the fire, gave way; the walls spread apart at the foot, and the tall structure toppled over and sank," reported *The Eye*. "Fortunately, no one was in the building," the account continued, and "the falling mass acted as an extinguisher on the fire and the men had little trouble in controlling it" ("Bakeman Burned Out").

It was not the first time someone had tried to burn down Bakeman's Furniture Store. *The Eye* reported that two months earlier, on July 16, a fire broke out in the basement. "The fire was evidently of incendiary origin, but nobody seems to have worried about it" ("Bakeman Burned Out"). Not only did none of the tenants move out, but they took no precautions to "insure their goods" ("Bakeman Burned Out").

Several tenants lost their place of business with the collapse of Bakeman's building. A fish market, a meat market, and Ambrose Long's fruit stand were lost, as were the law library and abstract books of Headlee & Headlee, worth an estimated \$4,000. Dr. Keefe's loss was listed at \$2,000; Dr. McCain, \$1,000; L. H. Coon, \$1,000; and W. T. Elwell, \$250. Elwell, the Snohomish City Clerk, "found the city records and papers badly damaged by water, but in state of preservation that admits of their being copied" ("After The Late Blaze").

Bakeman's loss was placed at \$17,500 – \$8,000 for the building and \$9,500 for the stock. While *The Eye* reported he had \$8,500 in insurance, he never received a payout. Grandson C. D. Bakeman wrote that Bakeman went to Chicago to fight it, but still no payout. He and his wife, Nina, with their two young children, lost their home and moved into a rental cottage at 317 Avenue B while Charles went to work in the mines at **Monte Cristo**, which proved productive according to the 1906 *An Illustrated History of Skagit and Snohomish Counties*: "For two years he worked the O & B Mine and took out considerable value" (*An Illustrated ...*, 850). But the first act of Bakeman's story of redemption was to place a three-quarter-page advertisement in *The Eye* shortly after the fire, claiming "Burned Out! But Still in Business" (C. H. Bakeman advertisement). In another 35 years, Bakeman would publish an ad in the October 25, 1928, *Snohomish County Tribune*, featuring a photograph of his lost building.

The account in *The Eye* concludes with positive news. As was the practice at the time, city council members would meet in the business office of the City Clerk. As Elwell was without an office, city council meetings were moved to the White Building. Architect and contractor J. S. White (1845-1920) built his two-story brick building, one block east, on Avenue A, with an oversized room on the second floor, which White told a reporter was designed for a doctor who wanted to open a hospital, but failed to follow through. The first council meeting in the White Building was held on Wednesday, September 20, 1893. In early October, the fire department presented a bill to the city council for \$118 for services at the Bakeman fire. It stated, "Forty-one men participated and 185 hours were devoted to extinguishing the flames" ("Council's Busy Night").

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Bakeman Furniture building after fire, Snohomish, September 1893

Courtesy Snohomish Historical Society

FIRE AT SNOHOMISH.

The Bakeman Block Destroyed in the Early Morning.

The Post-Intelligencer, September 17, 1893

FIRE IN SNOHOMISH.

Snohomish, Sept. 16.—Fire this morning destroyed the Bakeman and adjoining buildings. The loss is estimated at \$25,000; insurance \$5,000. Bakeman & company are the heaviest losers. Their loss is \$15,000, half insured.

Statesman Journal, September 17, 1893

A conservative estimate places the total loss and insurance as follows:

	Loss.	Insur.
Bakeman & Co., furniture store and stock	\$15,000	\$5,000
Readman & Hession, law library and stationer's	2,500	None
Dr. Jones, office	1,500	None
J. H. Jones, law office	1,500	None
W. F. Smith, office	1,500	None
Home & Country, meat market	25	None
City Fish Market	25	None
A. Long, fruit stand	25	None
City of Snohomish, damage to dock	100	None
Total	\$21,825	\$5,000

The Post-Intelligencer, September 17, 1893


Snohomish, Sept. 16.—Fire broke out at 1:45 o'clock this morning in the basement of Bakeman & Co.'s furniture store. The fire department got to work promptly, but in a few minutes flames burst out all over the building. Rice & Gardner's meat market, adjoining Bakeman & Co.'s, now caught fire, and by this time it seemed as though all Front street would be wiped out of existence. Ten minutes later the foundation of the Bakeman building caved in with the burning of the underpinning, the whole structure lunged with a terrific roar into the gully below, carrying Rice & Gardner's meat shop and the city fish market beneath it. Several firemen holding hose in the narrow building narrowly escaped being buried alive within the fiery debris. Good water service kept the fire from catching in the remainder of the block. The rear end of the Bakeman block overhung the gully and could be reached by the fire company only at great disadvantage. This was the seat of the fire from the beginning. The Bakeman building was hoisted before the alarm could be given. Notwithstanding this the flames were kept entirely inside.

The Victoria Daily Times, September 18, 1893

Newspaper clippings about Bakeman Furniture fire, Snohomish, 1893

Courtesy *The Post Intelligencer*, *The Victoria Daily Times*, and *Statesman Journal*

BURNED OUT!



But Still in Business.

C. H. BAKEMAN & CO.

Whose furniture store was burned on the night of Sept. 15th, have purchased the Snohomish Trading Co.'s stock of new and second-hand furniture, which they are closing out at purchasers' own prices, in order to make room for several carloads of furniture just ordered by telegraph.

PACKARD BUILDING,

First Street, near Cedar, - - Snohomish, Wash.

The Eye, Snohomish, October 6, 1893

Courtesy Washington Digital Newspapers

BURNED OUT!



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PACKARD BUILDING,

First Street, near Cedar, - - Snohomish, Wash.

The Eye, Snohomish, December 13, 1893

Courtesy Washington Digital Newspapers

Sources:

"Council's Busy Night," *The Eye* (Snohomish), October 5, 1893, p. 1; "After the Late Blaze." *Ibid.*; September 21, 1893, p. 1; "Bakeman Burned Out." *Ibid.*; September 18, 1893, p. 1; C. H. Bakeman advertisement, *Snohomish County Tribune*, October 28, 1926, p. 8; Warner Blake, "J. S. White Our First Architect," *Snohomish Stories*, 2017, p. 85; *An Illustrated History of Skagit and Snohomish Counties; Their People, Their Commerce and Their Resources, With an Outline of the Early History of the State of Washington* (Chicago: Interstate Publishing Company, 1906), pp. 850-851; Charles D. Bakeman, a biographical summary of his grandfather sent in an email, January 1, 2025, in possession of the author.

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Gaeng, Betty Lou (1927-2023)

By **Starlyn Stout**
Posted 10/03/2025
HistoryLink.org Essay 23374

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Betty Lou Gaeng (1927-2023) was a writer, genealogist, and historian and a long-time resident of the Lynnwood and Edmonds areas of south Snohomish County. Gaeng was dedicated to preserving stories and engaging the community through local history and memories. She published a regular column titled "Looking Back" on Snohomish County news sites and published two books on Edmonds history. Gaeng served on the Edmonds Cemetery Board, and volunteered for the Edmonds Historical Museum, the Lynnwood-Alderwood Manor Heritage Association, and the Sno-Isle Genealogical Society. Her writing featured themes of nostalgia, mystery, genealogy, gratitude, and personal sacrifice. Gaeng had a gift of weaving her own personal and family stories into the larger community histories that she preserved. In so doing, she warmly invited others to imagine the past through her lived experiences.

Lynnwood Pioneer

"I'm a pioneer here," Gaeng stated with a look of amusement during an oral history interview in 2010 ("Snohomish County Historians ..."). It was a strange assertion for someone to say in modern times, but for a young community such as **Lynnwood**, which was **incorporated in 1959**, Gaeng could claim it.

Betty Lou Gaeng was born on January 29, 1927, the third of six children, to parents Marie and Walter Deebach, Sr., in **Yakima**. Gaeng spent her earliest years in Seattle. In 1933, the family left the city for an opportunity 15 miles north of Seattle in the small community of Alderwood Manor. Betty spent most of her life in the Alderwood Manor, Lynnwood, and **Edmonds** areas of south Snohomish County.

During World War I, Walter Deebach, Sr., served in France and lost a lung as the result of a gas attack. He returned from war with an interest in art, attended art schools in Chicago and Seattle, and became a commercial artist. But his work could not sustain a family during the Great Depression. Deebach found himself among the unemployed when his daughter Betty was 3 years old. Deebach moved his family to Alderwood Manor for the cheap land, but he was no farmer. Unable to support his family through

agriculture work, Deebach instead worked for the WPA (Works Progress Administration) and painted the community's first street signs.

The Deebach family's land in Alderwood Manor was overgrown and lacked electricity, but the family directly benefited from New Deal Programs like the REA (Rural Electrification Administration) and the WPA, as well as school lunch and improvement programs.

In 1938, Deebach entered FBI training in Seattle. He later served as Deputy Sheriff for the Snohomish County Sheriff's Department. This career provided Gaeng early exposure to the law and law enforcement, which would serve her later in her own career.

Gaeng wrote:

"My father ... was the identification officer. This was a relatively new field for local law enforcement. Fingerprint identification was still in its infancy as a tool in solving crime, and he was one of those to receive training in that field at the FBI headquarters in Seattle. The Seattle office had only reopened in March of 1938 on a permanent basis after its closure in 1932" ("Law Enforcement in Snohomish County").

Walter Deebach, Sr. was involved in everything. Even after he retired from being a deputy sheriff and volunteer fireman, he continued serving as a "representative, a lobbyist and a rehabilitation officer for veterans, particularly Veterans of Foreign Wars" ("Betty Lou, Her-Story").

Depression-Era Childhood

As a writer, Gaeng drew from her memories and experiences as a Lynnwood pioneer and longtime resident. In one article, Gaeng shared an anecdote from her childhood growing up in Alderwood Manor:

"It was a time when the song 'Brother Can You Spare a Dime' had become the anthem for our entire country as we struggled through the Great Depression. Introduced in 1932, the song was an instant hit when Bing Crosby sang it on the radio. It was also the year when, as a 6-year-old, I saw the stump farms of Alderwood Manor for the first time" ("Before Lynnwood").

As a child in a large family, Betty Lou Deebach loved to learn. She was intelligent, quiet, and loved to write from an early age. She chronicled her family's experiences during **the Great Depression** and the impact it had on Seattle.

Gaeng wrote about her family's move from Seattle to Alderwood Manor, a small community planned by the Puget Mill Company, in 1933:

"We became the owners of a ten-acre chicken farm on Manor Way in what was pretty much the wilderness part of Alderwood Manor ... an established, although long-deserted, farm" ("Before Lynnwood"). Advertised as Alderwood Manor *Ranchettes*, "some of the real estate might better have been referred to *Shackettes*" ("Before Lynnwood").

The Deebach family's nearest neighbor was a mile away. Gaeng remembered, as if to punctuate the contrast with their former city life, "Mother shot a cougar off the back porch" ("Before Lynnwood").

Father's Influence

When she was 15, Gaeng's father, Walter Deebach, Sr., took her to visit a naval hospital. Gaeng met young men who "were so severely injured, they couldn't pen letters back home," wrote *Everett Herald* reporter Rikki King in a profile of Gaeng ("Betty Lou Gaeng, 91"). Gaeng was inspired to help them write letters. King said, "If they weren't sure what to say, she described the hospital scenes and told their loved ones why she was there" ("Betty Lou Gaeng, 91...").

After Gaeng graduated high school in 1945, she went to work for her father assisting veterans filing claims for housing, education, and survivor's benefits. Her father put her in charge of working with the widows of fallen soldiers. She worked alongside her father, organizing records and traveling for four years. This time together working alongside her father contributed a great deal to who Gaeng would become.

Deebach would not allow his daughter Betty to go away to school. There was an age gap of seven years between her and the next three siblings in the family. Betty had become like a second mother to them. She would take them to the movies in Seattle, take them swimming, or plan a picnic for them. At the time, there were no scholarships or financial aid for young women. Despite her ambitions and aptitude for her studies, Betty Deebach remained at home.

Marriage, Family, and Paralegal Career

In 1949, Betty married John Fussner. His work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service took them to Juneau, Alaska. The couple had five children: Marilyn, Rick, Julie, Dan, and Timothy. (Timothy died at only 8 months old in 1956.) John's battle with depression and alcoholism led to their divorce in the mid-1960s. Betty moved with the children from an apartment in Stockton, California, back home to **Edmonds**. She moved across the street from her parents and found work as a paralegal.

She was so gifted in her ability to research that she was often given work outside of her job description. In a 2010 interview, Gaeng recalled that she was so good at her job in the early 1960s that the Attorney General of the United States had investigated her for practicing law without a license. Gaeng had considered going to law school and was offered a job in Australia. She declined the opportunities to provide more stability for her family.

Gaeng did, however, pursue some writing while raising her family. Gaeng's daughter, Marilyn Courtade, remembers that her mother had written for *Reader's Digest* and had written letters to the President on a few occasions when she was young.

Betty Lou married Fred Gaeng (1922-2000), a commercial fisherman in Alaska, in 1973. After Fred Gaeng passed away in 2000, Betty dedicated herself to historical research and volunteering for local heritage and genealogy organizations. According to Marilyn Courtade, Gaeng became much more outgoing, inquisitive,

and fulfilled in her later years. Eventually she would take on the role of a culture keeper and chronicler of community history for Edmonds and Lynnwood.

Writing the History of Lynnwood

"I don't just write history. I am history," Gaeng told an *Everett Herald* reporter in 2018 ("Betty Lou Gaeng, 91..."). This quip captures Gaeng's sense of self and her significance to the community. By drawing from her own life, Gaeng secured her role as south Snohomish County's most trusted source for local history.

In Lynnwood, where 66th Avenue W now (2025) runs, the **Seattle-Everett Interurban Railway** line "fueled the dream of the community" when Gaeng was a child ("The Birth and Evolution of Highway 99 ..."). South Snohomish County's roadways, now laden with traffic and construction, were once only able to accommodate horses and wagons. Gaeng grew up as her community developed.

In a 2018 article for *Lynnwood Today*, Gaeng described the development of early Lynnwood:

"Amid a forest, they cleared and platted about 11 acres of land and named it Seattle Heights and on January 24, 1910, it was recorded. Then they began selling their land in one-acre tracts. The land company had high hopes that the settlement they were planning would grow and one day become a bustling town—maybe even a city. The land company and a group of residents known as the Seattle Heights Improvement Club had big dreams. The improvement club members organized and rolled up their sleeves for the work ahead of them. Soon they built a clubhouse to serve the community, and in 1918 a one-room schoolhouse opened." ("The Birth and Evolution of Highway 99 ...")

In 1962, most Alderwood residents voted in favor of annexation by Lynnwood City. As a result of this union, the population of Lynnwood grew by more than 2,000. Today (2025), Lynnwood is the fourth largest city in **Snohomish County**, with a population of over 40,000 residents and the highest concentration of retailers in the region. In an article about Lynnwood's beginnings, Gaeng explained: "Because of Lynnwood's annexation of a large part of Alderwood Manor, as well as sections of other nearby communities, diverse histories have been blended" ("Lynnwood Beginnings").

After raising a family and working as a paralegal, Gaeng turned her lifelong fascination with history and her deep knowledge of south Snohomish County into a writing career. She published a regular column titled "Looking Back" in *My Edmonds News*, *MLTnews* and *Lynnwood Today* and authored the book *Etched in Stone: Dedicated to the Young Men of Edmonds School District 15 Who Lost Their Lives to War* (2010) and *A Place of Tradition: Edmonds Memorial Cemetery and Columbarium* (2021). Gaeng served on the Edmonds Cemetery Board, worked with the Edmonds Historical Museum, the Alderwood Manor Heritage Association, and the Sno-Isle Genealogical Society.

Betty Lou Gaeng's writing offered a meaningful sense of place for the Lynnwood area. Her articles about local history helped connect residents with the community and the environment in south Snohomish County.

Gaeng was considered a regional treasure because of her contributions to her community's sense of place and her many historical projects.

"Betty is singlehandedly giving me more Snohomish history than I ever thought possible on my own," a reader named Bruce Gilbert commented on one article on *Lynnwood Today* ("A Place Called Moser Lake").

Another researcher, Annaliese Johnson, came upon Gaeng's work and commented: "This article is so awesome! I am a descendant of Bessie and was writing a paper for school about my family heritage... It is so amazing to see that my family has been written about" ("Lily Cordelia Breed").

Gaeng's work connected with people, just as she did. She enjoyed taking the bus, being around people, and listening to them. When she shared her memories of the past, she offered a space for community to grow during deeply divisive times.

Family History Discoveries

In her published work on local history, Gaeng did not engage with history as an impersonal, academic discipline. Instead, she wove memories into her narratives to create richer stories and to facilitate human connection. She was careful to avoid contentious topics like politics or religion, and she resisted the urge to express her own opinion when writing about local history.

On a more personal level, Gaeng confronted challenging topics in her work as genealogist and researcher. She learned late in life that her father Walt Deebach, Sr. was Jewish. This was a fact that he had concealed from her mother, who likely would never have consented to marry him had she known. To knowingly marry a Jewish man would have been at odds with Gaeng's mother's sense of identity and proud American heritage, which could be traced to early colonial times.

As the designated historian for her maternal family, the Ruffners, Gaeng sometimes faced the mistakes of her family's past. She would assist the descendants of black slaves whose genealogical paths intersected with her own. In an oral history interview, Gaeng admitted: "I always felt guilty because my family owned slaves. In fact, [the records I uncovered] came from my family's plantation. I did their genealogy for them – they call me their 'English Sister'" ("Snohomish County Historians...").

Celebrating Change

Despite grappling with difficult truths like a legacy of slavery, Gaeng's writings of the past celebrated the origins, achievements and sacrifices of people rather than their failures and pain. She partnered with the **Tulalip Tribes** on a research grant to uncover their genealogical history and wrote many articles about indigenous women whom Gaeng admired.

Gaeng was mindful of the necessity and value of change. And no place in Snohomish County had changed as drastically as Lynnwood City during her lifetime. In three separate articles, she wrote about the old Masonic Temple that is still located near the current Lynnwood Convention Center. Gaeng remembered a time in 1933, when she was a first grade student in a school play staged at the lodge. Her school didn't have

an auditorium or a stage to host the production. Her mother made her a fairy costume out of crepe paper. Dances, movie screenings, and all of the local school events were held at the Masonic Temple. It was a critical part of some of her earliest and fondest memories.

When that same building was converted into places of worship for diverse immigrant communities, Gaeng's response demonstrated that a warm remembrance could exist alongside a graceful embrace of change.

She wrote:

"Recently, as I walked by this building at 19425 36th Ave. W. in Lynnwood, I began noticing that something was happening. A short time ago, the for-sale sign was gone, and then the sign identifying the building as the Vietnamese Alliance Church of Lynnwood was removed. Now in its place, there is a new sign for another church — the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. A banner now hangs over the main entrance. I understand the green, yellow and red colors are those of Ethiopia. For the congregation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, may I personally extend a welcome and a wish that you experience good fellowship and peace in your new house of worship" ("Looking Forward to New Life for Historic Lynnwood Building").

Gaeng's contributions to the region's history were an expression of love and gratitude for the places, people, and institutions that made her who she was.

Writer, Historian, and Genealogist

In a 2020 profile on MyEdmondsNews.com, Gaeng said:

"I really don't know what I am – a writer, a historian or a genealogist. I work at each and usually combine them ... Having actually known some of the pioneers of Edmonds, or the descendants of pioneers, has allowed me to write about local history with a personal touch" ("Contributor Close-Up").

After her mother died in 1985, Gaeng discovered a box among her belongings that was labeled "For Betty." Though not a writer or historian herself, Gaeng's mother kept everything she had come across from the family's history for her daughter. Gaeng learned that she had come from a long line of storytellers. Both her grandfathers were newspaper men. A great uncle, William Henry Ruffner (1824-1908), had been a territorial reporter whose predictions of Seattle's future seem prophetic for the time. Ruffner Street in the **Magnolia neighborhood** was named for him.

A great aunt who lived with Gaeng's family was once a law secretary and "a great writer" ("Snohomish County Historians..."). She painstakingly chronicled the family's history long before there were computers. "All families have stories," Gaeng asserted in 2010 ("Snohomish County Historians..."). All families have a mystery, and Gaeng found great satisfaction in helping people solve theirs.

In an article about genealogy, Gaeng wrote:

"If you are new to the field of genealogy, be warned – there are a lot of hazards just waiting for you. Some research providers on the Internet seem to advertise that there is a clear path all laid out and

waiting just for you. Not so. The path has a lot of curves and holes in it, and if you are not careful you could very easily fall into one of those holes" ("Genealogy 'Booby Traps").

Gaeng helped adoptees research their biological families. While Gaeng could not facilitate reunions, she could help guide the discovery. In her own family, Gaeng's mother had severed ties with their biological grandmother. Gaeng's grandmother was a complicated woman who had been married nine times.

Gaeng wrote that it "took me eighteen years to find [my grandmother] through all the different marriages. Sometimes you have to go through the back door - I found her through her younger brother's obituary. She had survived him, and I found her 'final' [married] name" ("Snohomish County Historians..."). It was a deeply emotional and cathartic experience for Gaeng, who delivered roses to her grandmother's burial place with her daughter Marilyn Courtade. She discovered an extended family who could tell her more about who her grandmother was.

Full Circle

In 2020, Gaeng reflected on her work as a writer and historian:

"In my 70s, having raised four children and buried two husbands, I looked for something to do with whatever time was left for me. So, here I am, over twenty years later, still working at what I chose to do with the rest of my life. I became involved in volunteer activities, where my knowledge of the history of the people, events and places of Snohomish County were helpful" ("Contributor Close-Up").

In 2003, Betty returned to her roots when she moved into Lynnwood's new Alderwood Court apartments west of **Alderwood Mall**. She wrote, "I arrived full circle," settling just a stone's throw from that chicken farm in what is no longer a wilderness ("Full Circle"). In her 90s, Betty was an avid walker. She described walking around town and talking to God about the things she had learned and the people she was researching:

"The names were so familiar, and their stories ... they became like family... The empathy is there. Brings me close to what we're supposed to be – feeling their pain, their happiness. It's made me a better human being, I think." ("Full Circle").

Gaeng, who helped her raise her siblings before raising and supporting a family of her own, got a late start pursuing her passions in life. Her story may be an inspiration for other women to find their passions, no matter their age. Gaeng spent her retirement years – roughly two full decades – in search of histories to share with others. In January 2019, at the age of 92, Betty was hit by a car and broke her hip and shoulder. She found it difficult to live independently. She moved near her son in Anchorage, Alaska, but still contributed stories and perspectives to the south Snohomish County community that was her home.

In 2017, she reflected on her long life and her childhood in Depression-era Snohomish County: "Everything is much changed, but my memories of the past and what seemed to be a good life during a tumultuous time remain" ("Growing Up as a Child of the Great Depression").

Gaeng was well aware that local history and her own memories were deeply connected. In 2020, she reflected:

"I remember the days of the shingle mills on the Edmonds waterfront and the sounds of the whistles when the workers' shifts changed. Also, the old foghorn that guided the ferry into the dock when the fog was too thick to see much of anything. I remember when we still had a few trains powered by steam ... my memories and local history intertwine, so it does give me an advantage when I look back."
("Contributor Close-Up")

Through her writing, Gaeng amplified the stories of those around her with warmth and reverence, and she crafted a strong sense of place in the Lynnwood area. With those stories, her legacy endures. Betty Lou Gaeng died in 2023 at the age of 96.

Articles written by Betty Lou Gaeng can be found on the Lynnwood-Alderwood Heritage Association website at <https://alderwood.org/betty-lou-gaeng>.

This essay made possible by:
Snohomish County Community Heritage Project

The Tulalip Tribes



Betty Lou Gaeng, Alaska, 1973

Courtesy Betty Lou Gaeng's collection



Walter A. Deebach portrait of Betty Lou Deebach, Snohomish County, 1940

Courtesy Marilyn Courtade



Chicken coops, Alderwood Manor, n.d.

Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections [PH Coll 256.28]



Alderwood Manor, ca. 1929

Photo by Webster & Stevens, Courtesy MOHAI (1983.10.3630.4)



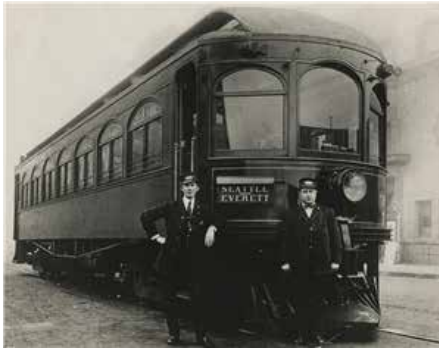
Alderwood Road, later SW 196th Street, Lynnwood, n.d.

Courtesy UW Special Collections (9459)

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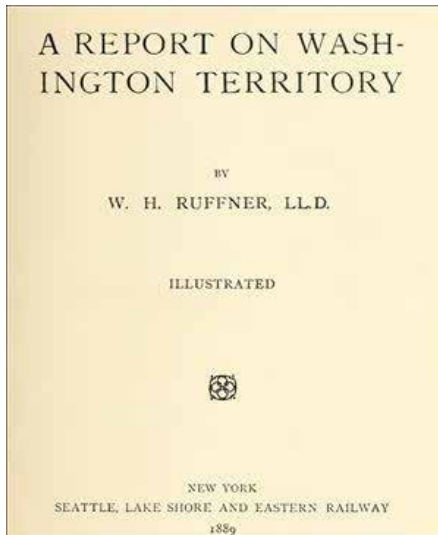
**Betty Lou Gaeng describes Alderwood when she moved there with her family,
in the 1930s**

Courtesy Lita Sheldon, interview by Margaret Riddle



Everett-Seattle Interurban, Seattle, ca. 1920

Courtesy Seattle Public Library Seattle Room Digital Collections (spl_shp_41549)



William Henry Ruffner's *Report on Washington Territory*, 1889

Courtesy University of California Libraries



Betty Lou Deebach, Edmonds, 1945

Courtesy Marilyn Courtade



The Robert Burns Masonic Temple, Alderwood Manor, 1936

Lynnwood-Alderwood Manor Heritage Association and Museum



THIS LUCKY inductee hit the jackpot getting two farewell kisses from V. F. W. girls Betty Deebach (left) and Carolyn Slack. Meanwhile Walter A. Deebach, state V. F. W. service officer and Emmett "Moon" Mullin, attired in World War I outfits that didn't fit, gave the osculating session the once-over. Note the eager expression on the face of the inductee at the extreme left of the picture. (Seattle Times Staff Photo by Vic Condiotti.)

Betty Lou Deebach (left) and Carolyn Slack kiss a V.F.W. inductee, February 1, 1949

Courtesy *The Washington Veterans News*

01:28

Betty Lou Gaeng describes working with her father in the 1930s and 1940s

Courtesy Lita Sheldon, interview by Margaret Riddle



Lynnwood, 1959

Courtesy Lynnwood Chamber of Commerce

Deebach Named to VFW Service 'Hall of Fame'

EDMONDS — Walter A. Deebach, 610 Glen St., Edmonds, service officer of the Department of Washington, Veterans of Foreign Wars, was honored at the national convention in Cleveland, Ohio, being elected to the "Service Officers' Hall of Fame." This honor is given to those service officers who have demonstrated, through years of devoted service, their outstanding qualities and abilities in the field of service and rehabilitation.

Deebach was born Aug. 25, 1898, in Mankato, Minn., and entered the service June 9, 1917, serving overseas in World War I with Battery B, 151st Field Artillery, 42nd (Rainbow) Division, under Division Commander Douglas MacArthur.

He served in the Baccarat Defensive Section at St. Mihiel, at Champagne, at Chateau Thierry, Meuse-Argonne campaigns and the Army of Occupation in Germany. He was gassed in the St. Mihiel and Chateau-Thierry campaigns and was discharged with total disability for which he was hospitalized 16 months.



WALTER DEEBACH

The Everett Daily Herald, September 25, 1964

Courtesy *The Everett Daily Herald*



Betty Lou and Fred Gaeng, 1976

Courtesy Lynnwood-Alderwood Heritage Association



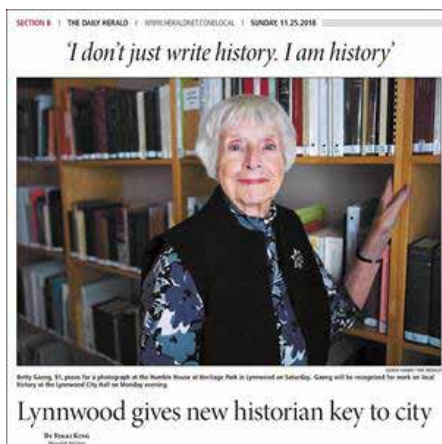
Site plan, Alderwood Mall, 1978

Courtesy University of Washington Libraries Digital Collections (PH Coll 339.A20)



Betty Lou Gaeng next to memorial monument, Edmonds Memorial Cemetery and Columbarium, Edmonds, March 17, 2018

Courtesy Marilyn Courtade



***The Daily Herald*, November 25, 2018**

Courtesy *The Daily Herald*



Betty Lou Gaeng, March 23, 2019

Courtesy Lynnwood-Alderwood Heritage Association

Sources:

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Monte Cristo Forest Camp (Snohomish County) is dedicated and transferred to the U.S. Forest Service on August 19, 1951.

By **Melinda Van Wingen**
Posted 11/24/2025
HistoryLink.org Essay 23416

0:00 / 8:26

On August 19, 1951, a new campsite at Monte Cristo is transferred to the custody of the U.S. Forest Service following a public celebration and ceremony. The dedication marks the culmination of several months of work and civic leadership by members of the Earl Faulkner Post No. 6 of the American Legion in Everett. The project's primary goal is to boost Snohomish County tourism through improved public amenities near the Mountain Loop Highway. **Monte Cristo** was a profitable mining community rich with gold and silver ore in the late 1890s. After a mining bust in the 1920s, the rugged mountain town was largely used as an alpine resort and a popular day-trip destination for railway visitors from Bellingham, Seattle, and Everett. By the 1930s, Monte Cristo was cut off from rail access and faded away as a ghost town. After World War II tourism picked up again, but road conditions and limited camp facilities made public access difficult. The camp took advantage of improved county roads and created a welcoming stop for visitors to the old ghost town district.

The Need for a Monte Cristo Campsite

In January 1951, the Earl Faulkner Post No. 6 of the American Legion in **Everett** announced plans to open a parking area at Monte Cristo. A news article observed: "Many persons make the trip to the mountain resort district to hike the 'wonderland' trails" ("Monte Cristo Camp Site Assured ..."). However, parking and recreation amenities were scarce around the ghost town of Monte Cristo, where much of the land was privately held. Monte Cristo was difficult to access from the popular **Mountain Loop Highway**, despite its past prominence in the county's economic and recreation history.

Legion member A. H. Reiser (1902-1970) of Edmonds donated part of his Rattler Mining Claim land in Monte Cristo for the camp site project. The camp at Monte Cristo was designed to fill an important gap in publicly accessible amenities in this stretch of the mountain. The *Everett Herald* noted: "Fine camps for

public use are found along the Mountain Loop Highway but the spur road to Monte Cristo had none. The Forest Service's efforts to set up picnicking places along this stretch met with little opportunity as all of the land in the area is privately-owned" ("Dedication Held...")

Once the snow melted that spring, Legion members hosted a series of work parties in Monte Cristo to clean up the land and build a public camp ground. Mountaineer Harold A. "Happy" Annen (1895-1969) chaired the camp committee.

The Road to Monte Cristo

Monte Cristo was once easily accessible by daily rail routes to support mining endeavors and then tourism. The Hartford Eastern Railway carried significant recreational traffic to the **Big Four Inn** and Monte Cristo until a flood in 1932. Without industrial mining or recreational train access, the old buildings decayed, and Monte Cristo became a ghost town cut off from other **Snohomish County** communities.

Waves of ambitious hoteliers sought to turn Monte Cristo into an alpine resort. Tourism boomed after World War II as more Washingtonians had access to wealth, leisure time, and personal vehicles to make the trek to the mountains. But Monte Cristo Road, a county road branching off from the Mountain Loop Highway near Barlow Pass, regularly washed out in winter and needed repairs. Access was inconsistent and unpredictable. A report in the *Everett Daily Herald* noted:

"Not only does the drive to Monte Cristo involve outstanding scenery but the area abounds in early history of the district ... Hopes are for a more permanent road into this area within a few years. In the meantime, the Legion is preparing the picnic area which can be used for those who would chance a few miles of rough road or will await the heavy travel which is inevitable in the years to come" ("Road is Opened...").

The road from Monte Cristo extended another mile into the mountains at the trail head to Glacier Basin. As the *Herald* described it: "It is through a portion of the county's if not the world's finest scenery" ("Mountain Road is Opened Again"). Another stretch of road in the area re-opened during the summer of 1951 after a logging operator used power saws to cut fallen logs that blocked the way.

American Legion volunteers took advantage of the open roads to access Monte Cristo throughout the summer. The group hosted a series of work parties to transform Reiser's donated land into a public campsite complete with tables, seats, toilets, and camp stoves. The new campsite included a cairn decorated with photos from Monte Cristo as it looked in its industrial past and in its ghost town present.

Dedication Ceremony

An all-day picnic celebration was held on Sunday, August 19, 1951, at the new campsite. A dedication ceremony was held at 3 p.m. to mark the completion of the program and to officially deed the campsite to the U.S. Forest Service. Legion commander Bob Weller transferred the deed to the campsite to U.S. Forest Ranger Ed Anderson. H. Phil Bradner, an American Legion member from Bellingham and a supervisor of

the Mount Baker National Forest, served as program emcee. Reverend Herbert Neve offered an invocation, and attendees sang the national anthem.

The Monte Cristo "old-timers" – individuals who lived, worked, or attended school in Monte Cristo during its 1890s mining heyday – were honored during the ceremony. The new forest camp represented not just the future of mountain tourism and forest recreation; it served as a monument to the community's historic past. With good humor and a nod to both the past and present of Monte Cristo, John Andrews, the previous owner of the Monte Cristo Inn, abdicated his role as the "Count of Monte Cristo" ("New Forest Camp ..."). He handed the title over to his successor Del Wilkie, who along with his wife Rosemary, had recently assumed ownership of the Monte Cristo Resort.

Enid Nordlund (1906-2003), an unofficial historian of Monte Cristo, was among the partygoers that day. Nordlund described the celebration in her diary: "At 3:00 we dressed up in our old 1890 clothes and went to the camp ground. Nice program. Met a lot of old timers. Roe Davis took a lot of pictures. Had dinner at Mabel's. Left at 8:30. Got home at 11:00. Swell time" (Enid Thrall Nordlund diaries).

Camp Use and Tourism

Outdoor enthusiasts immediately put the new camp to good use. The week before the official dedication ceremony, a group of 20 hikers from the Oregon-based Mazamas climbing club camped at the site before heading deeper into the mountains. In late November 1951, a group of Seattle Mountaineers braved the snow and used the camp as a base for their winter exploration of the basin around the south fork of the Sauk River.

The Wilkies relished their role as proprietors of Monte Cristo tourism. According to historian David A. Cameron: "... the Wilkies put great effort into promoting their 'ghost town' theme. With small cabins in the former railroad yards (turned into a parking lot), a lunch counter and tiny museum in the resort/residence building (moved to the former Boston-American cookhouse), and cheap attractions such as 'Slippery Sam' (a dummy lying in a board coffin), the seasonal business did well" ("Monte Cristo").

Efforts to expand Monte Cristo as a premier resort destination continued for another 30 years. But investors could not turn a profit there due to the short summer tourist seasons, heavy rainy seasons, and steep, snowy slopes that were inhospitable for skiing. Road conditions and inconsistent access presented additional challenges for any attempts to further develop the site. In the wake of a **devastating flood** on December 26, 1980, Snohomish County decided against rebuilding the road to Monte Cristo after it washed out.

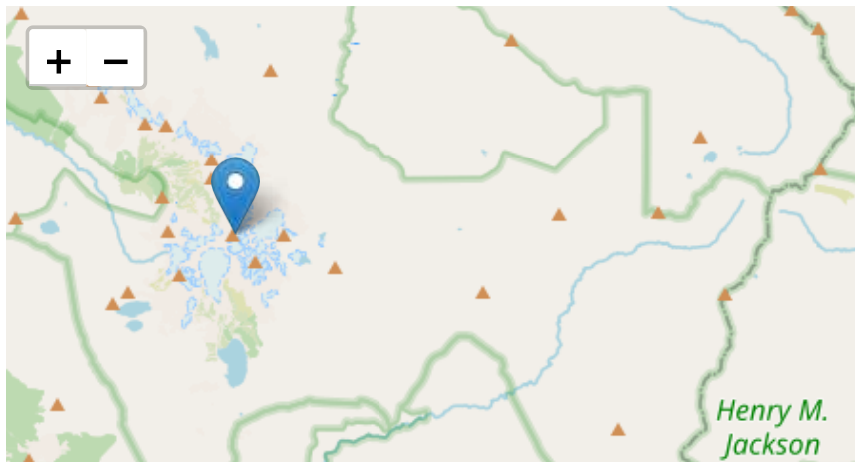
Modern Monte Cristo

Following the 1980 flood and a 1983 arson that gutted the old, abandoned Monte Cristo Resort, a group of concerned citizens who knew and loved the area formed the Monte Cristo Preservation Association. That group, which remains operational today (2025), worked with Snohomish County to reinstate public access to the old ghost town site. The U.S. Forest Service continues to manage the Monte Cristo camp site that was dedicated in 1951. The campsite is no longer maintained as a public campground.

This essay made possible by:

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Monte Cristo campground dedication, Monte Cristo, August 19, 1951

From the Forrest Johansen Collection, Courtesy Louise Lindgren



Monte Cristo, ca. 1895

Courtesy Washington State Historical Society (2021.12.1)



(L-R) Hap and Mabel Annen, Margaret Glassberg, Garda Fogg, and Ed Nordlund, Monte Cristo, ca. 1948

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



The Daily Herald, June 20, 1951

Courtesy *The Daily Herald*



American Legion work party, Monte Cristo camp, ca. 1951

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



Monte Cristo camp headlines, 1951

Courtesy *The Daily Herald*



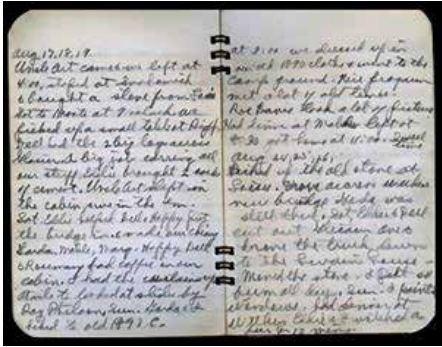
American Legion work party, Monte Cristo camp, ca. 1951

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



Work party builds camp tables out of old bridge planks, Monte Cristo campsite, ca. 1951

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



Enid Nordlund's diary entry about campground dedication, Monte Cristo, 1951

Courtesy Louise Lindgren



Monte Cristo, June 19, 2010

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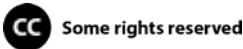
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Nordlund, Enid (1906-2003)

By **Melinda Van Wingen**
Posted 11/24/2025
HistoryLink.org Essay 23415

0:00 / 21:24

Enid Nordlund (1906-2003) was a naturalist, hiker, collector, and longtime resident of Snohomish County who served as Monte Cristo's unofficial historian. Nordlund's relatives were residents of Monte Cristo in the 1890s during its mining heyday, and she felt a duty to preserve stories, photographs, and artifacts associated with that town's history. Nordlund's lifelong love of hiking and botany began as a child. At 14, she began working at her family's nursery, Thrall Flower Garden in Everett. In 1951, Nordlund and her husband Charles "Ed" Nordlund built a cabin in Monte Cristo, where they spent many happy weekends as part of a tight-knit mountain community. Nordlund had a gift for forging relationships through photographs and memories and through flowers and nature. Nordlund donated a substantial collection of films, photographs, and scrapbooks documenting both the cultural and natural history of Snohomish County to the Everett Public Library. Her legacy includes a financial bequest to the library to support her twin passions of local history and gardening education as well as a scholarship fund for Everett Community College students.

Early Life

Enid Amelia Thrall Nordlund was born in **Snohomish** on January 24, 1906, to Charles Thrall (1861-1958) and Anna Ward Thrall (1867-1960). Nordlund, affectionately called "Babe," was the couple's youngest child. The Thralls's son Dennis died in infancy. Their eldest daughter, Geraldine Thrall (1898-1918), died from a mysterious case of typhoid while attending teacher training school in **Bellingham**. Nordlund was only 12 years old when Geraldine died. Nordlund and her sister Dorothea Thrall Cromwell (1903-1993) grew old together and remained close throughout their long lives.

Nordlund's father, originally from Wisconsin, moved to Washington Territory to file a timber claim near Snohomish in 1888. He lived in **Snohomish County** for the remaining 70 years of his life. Nordlund's mother, originally from Michigan, moved to Snohomish to teach. There, she met and married Thrall in 1895. In 1913, the Thralls moved their family from Snohomish to **Everett** after inheriting eight lots of land

at 3516 Paine Avenue. The Thralls's land included an orchard at one end and a swamp at the other. Over time, Anna Thrall shifted her focus from teaching children to growing plants. She transformed the land into an inviting garden, complete with a greenhouse, goldfish pond, and countless perennials.

Nordlund's childhood playmates included siblings Marie and **Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson** (1912-1983); the latter would one day become a U.S. senator. The board game crokinole was a favorite pastime for the friends, who often spent afternoons together in Nordlund's backyard. Nordlund and her sister Dorothea were active in the children's pageants and festivals sponsored by the Evergreen Homestead of the Brotherhood of American Yeomen, a fraternal organization. Nordlund participated in Glee Club and studied Home Economics at Everett High School, from which she graduated in 1924.

In 1920, Nordlund's mother, Anna Thrall, turned her love of gardening into a successful business. She opened the first commercial nursery in the Everett area on the family's property in the **Riverside neighborhood**. Thrall Flower Gardens specialized in perennials and rockery plants. Nordlund, then 14, went to work for her mother and spent many long hours after school transplanting and potting plants and learning the family business. Nordlund became so fascinated by plants that, when she was not in school or working, she was often found studying the dictionary at the nearby public library. She loved learning about plants' Latin names and figuring out the correct pronunciation.

Around the holidays each year, Nordlund and her sister took up wreath-making as a side business. They gathered holly, made wreaths, and delivered each one for 25 cents a piece. The sisters were so proficient at wreath-making that Nordlund once claimed she "could make a wreath in six minutes flat" ("County's 'Lupine Lady'"). Nordlund and her sister continued to make and sell wreaths together for more than 50 years.

Trails Full of Flowers

The Thrall family often enjoyed nature excursions on Sundays. Alongside her parents and sister, Nordlund developed her love of hiking and deepened her fascination with the natural world. In May 1918, at the age of 12, Nordlund embarked on her first strenuous hike. Nordlund and Dorothea hiked to Lake Serene on Mount Index. It was too early in the season for such an ambitious climb for hikers of their limited experience. Nordlund once reminisced:

"There was snow and we had to hike clear up from the Stevens Pass Highway. We crossed a swinging bridge and went two and a half miles just to get to the start of the trail. We didn't have slacks in those days, just dresses. Of course, we were soaking wet. It's a wonder that experience didn't 'turn us off' to hiking" ("County's 'Lupine Lady'").

Rather than turn her off from hiking, the experience must have sparked something essential in Nordlund. She would return to the Cascades again and again for the rest of her life.

Nordlund soon combined her love of flowers with her love of trails. Her friend, writer Louise Lindgren, noted: "Nordlund developed a habit of taking along flower seeds and planting them along the way. Trays of

leftover sedum plants were carefully inserted in the crevasses of the natural 'rockery' walls of Robe Canyon" ("County's 'Lupine Lady'").

Nordlund loved experimenting with different wildflowers to see what would grow the best in the mountains. Alpine Swiss bluebells, Edelweiss, lupine, columbine, and foxglove were among her favorite flowers to plant. She particularly loved that Edelweiss could evoke powerful nostalgia for immigrants from the Swiss and German Alps.

For the most part, Nordlund strategically placed the flowers off the beaten path away from visitors. She said, "I planted them way up on the side of different mountains because you wouldn't dare plant them anywhere near a trail; they'd pick them or dig them up" ("Enid Nordlund Interview"). Nordlund's careful planting and wildflower restoration beautified and transformed many trails throughout Snohomish County's mountain areas.

Unlike many other **hiking and mountaineering women** of Nordlund's era, Nordlund was content to stay close to home. She left Washington only once in her life, when she traveled to California in June 1932 to visit a relative. Nordlund found a lifetime's worth of wonder, pleasure, and adventure in the Cascades.

A Heart in Monte Cristo

In 1924, Nordlund made her first visit to **Monte Cristo**, an old mining town flanked by mile-high peaks at the head of the South Fork Sauk River. An aunt and uncles on both sides of her family had lived and worked there in the 1890s during its gold- and silver-mining heyday. She grew up with stories about the old mining town, where an uncle ran the dairy store and met the daily train from Snohomish to receive provisions and where an aunt sold jeans, socks, magazines, cigars, and other supplies at the Golden Rule Variety Store. She was curious and longed to visit.

By the 1920s, Monte Cristo was no longer a profitable mining area, but it was a popular mountain resort due to its scenic beauty and relatively easy accessibility by train from Everett, Bellingham, and Seattle. For most visitors, Monte Cristo was simply a fun day trip. But for Nordlund, it became a lifelong love affair. As her friend and Monte Cristo historian Phillip R. Woodhouse wrote: "Enid had first visited Monte Cristo on August 5, 1924, and her heart never left" (Woodhouse, 255).

Nordlund was dating Norman Robley "Bob" Lucas (1906-2002) in the summer of 1924. Lucas surprised Nordlund with train tickets to Monte Cristo, which were expensive, especially for a couple of teenage sweethearts. In a 1998 oral history interview, Nordlund said she had been "thrilled" and explained: "You had to save up. And oh, I was so surprised because I always wanted to go to Monte Cristo" ("Enid Nordlund Interview"). She and Lucas sat in an open gondola car for a dramatic train ride through six tunnels. Passengers had to put their heads on their knees and cover their hair to protect themselves from chimney sparks in the tunnels. She recalled, "And oh boy, that was a picturesque ride up there through those tunnels, through Robe Canyon. Oh that was just beautiful!" ("Enid Nordlund Interview"). The train stopped first in Robe and then in Silverton, where the passengers were greeted by live music. Monte Cristo marked the end

of the line. Many visitors were content to stroll along Dumas Street, shopping and eating. More adventurous visitors hiked to Glacier Basin and Silver Lake.

Love and Marriage

After that first visit, Nordlund and Lucas returned to Everett and resumed their daily lives. But Nordlund would remain forever drawn back to Monte Cristo by her family history and her love of nature. Lucas and Nordlund had an on-again, off-again relationship throughout their 20s. They settled down with other partners but remained lifelong friends.

In 1934, Nordlund married another suitor, Spokane native Charles "Ed" Nordlund (1907-1986). When Enid and Ed married, the country was deep into the Great Depression. Ed Nordlund's stable job in the grocery and produce business made him an attractive and practical choice. The couple made a home in **Kenmore** (King County), for the next 20 years. Enid Nordlund established her own rockery planting service and frequently visited Everett to help with her mother's business.

In 1954, the Nordlunds moved back to Everett permanently. Their bungalow at 3601 Smith Avenue was on one of the Thralls's original eight lots. Nordlund tended her Everett garden with great care for many decades. Louise Lindgren once observed: "The yard of her 1898 home is filled with old-fashioned perennials and delicate forest plants. Red and white trilliums grow side by side with little-known mosses and ferns" ("County's 'Lupine Lady']"). Nordlund's sister and brother-in-law lived in a house just steps away.

When the couple married, Ed offered Enid financial security and stability. In turn, Enid offered Ed a sense of wonder at the natural world. The couple made frequent weekend excursions to Monte Cristo. In 1948, after years of visiting and saving, they purchased a plot of land on Dumas Street, the former main street of old Monte Cristo, and set to work building a cabin – and a community – in what was by then a ghost town.

Cabin and Community

Construction began on the Nordlund cabin in 1949, and they took to the task intentionally and resourcefully. Lumber and other building supplies were easy to come by in Monte Cristo. The town was littered with wrecked, abandoned, and snow-crushed buildings. Usable material was free and plentiful. For two years, the Nordlunds built their cabin with salvaged materials and bits and scraps from other pieces of Monte Cristo's past. The cabin was completed in August 1951. Historian Phillip R. Woodhouse described it as "a potpourri of Monte Cristo history, with timbers from the concentrators, window frames from the old assay office, and a door from the Monte Cristo Inn" (Woodhouse, 255).

Nordlund, a diligent diarist, recorded the details of bucolic hikes alongside the grueling manual labor of hoisting rafters, laying shake shingles, installing doors and windows, and pulling nail after nail from salvaged boards as the couple constructed their cabin. An entry dated August 3, 4, 5, 1951 read: "A red letter day! Moved in to our cabin. My dream come true" (Enid Thrall Nordlund diaries). The next week, when the couple slept in the cabin for the first time, she wrote: "My dream come true, my 'Valahalla'" (Enid Thrall Nordlund diaries).

The Nordlunds's cozy cabin was heated by a wood-burning cook stove and filled with memorabilia. In her Everett home, Nordlund gathered artifacts and glass slides from Monte Cristo's mining era. She collected scrapbooks and photo albums from friends and fellow mountaineers to preserve Monte Cristo's history. Nordlund deepened her connection with nature as she recorded observations about plants and animals in her journals. She was fond of the creatures she encountered in Monte Cristo and named her favorites. Mercedes the deer was a regular visitor, as was Cheeky the squirrel. Nordlund was at once playful and quietly observant. She recalled:

"And the wildlife was so interesting. You know, we fed them ... It was fun to see what they liked. I tried different things, you know, like bananas and tropical fruit. And you know, they didn't like any of it! The only one that would eat a banana was a martin" ("Enid Nordlund Interview").

Nordlund offered trail tours and illustrated lectures on Saturday nights in her role as Monte Cristo's leading volunteer naturalist and educator. Nordlund's friends gathered visitors in Verlot and from nearby campgrounds and welcomed them to the Monte Cristo Inn every Saturday evening at 8 o'clock. She described the scene:

"And so that lodge would be just full of people. They'd be sitting on the floor and all over. And of course, Wilkie [Del and Rosemary Wilkie, owners of the Monte Cristo Inn] made good out of it because they were drinking pop and eating ice cream cones or hamburgers. But they enjoyed seeing all the scenic places around there and places to hike to" ("Enid Nordlund Interview").

Nordlund welcomed many visitors to Monte Cristo over the years. She remembered:

"I was going to put it into a scrapbook because you could read that and tell just who was up there: old Scoop Jackson or the mayor of Seattle. He came up there a lot ... He was quite a hiker, climber, you know. And the Seattle Mountaineers, they were up there. There was a lot more going on at Monte Cristo than you ever realize" ("Enid Nordlund Interview").

The Nordlunds were at the center of a tight-knit Monte Cristo community for decades. She reminisced: "Oh, it was sure fun! I sure enjoyed my stay at Monte Cristo because it was so versified – the history and then all the plants. And there was always something going on" ("Enid Nordlund Interview").

A favorite tradition was an 1890s theme party held in October after the busy tourist season. "It was just gorgeous – the sides of the mountains. And we either had to dress up in 1890 outfit or come as a miner. And oh, we sure had fun at those parties" ("Enid Nordlund Interview"). Nordlund's sister, friend, and husband played live music on pianos, saxophones, and violins. Mountaineer Harold "Happy" Annen (1895-1969) and a supervisor of the Mount Baker National Forest were often among the regular party guests. Garda Fogg (1878-1976) of Tacoma was the self-proclaimed "Mayor of Monte Cristo" and another close friend.

The Nordlunds's cabin was an inviting space. Woodhouse, who wrote a book on the history of Monte Cristo, noted that he "spent many post-hike dryouts in the warm, friendly cabin with its memorabilia from the mining days," which inspired him to seek out the history of Monte Cristo (Woodhouse, 275).

By the late 1970s, the Nordlunds were ready to turn their cherished cabin over to someone younger who would appreciate and maintain it. They wanted someone "who had a feeling for the history" ("Holding Fast to County History"). They chose their friend David Cameron (1941-2025), a Cascade High School teacher and Snohomish County historian, as a "worthy heir" to the cabin and all the precious memories it held ("Holding Fast to County History").

Connecting through Collecting

The Nordlunds, as well as Enid's sister Dorothea Cromwell, were avid collectors. Cromwell operated an antiques business in Everett, reselling many of the wares she came across. For her part, Enid Nordlund held onto her treasures. In 1998, for example, Nordlund shared a fond memory about her uncle Arthur Thrall, who had worked in Monte Cristo in the 1890s. "I got to hear a lot about it, even when I was only five years old in Snohomish. And Uncle Art had brought back a nice big piece of ore, and I still have it" ("Enid Nordlund Interview").

The sisters both loved to collect antique bottles, many of which they found on trails while hiking routes between Everett and Monte Cristo. The sisters enjoyed studying history books in search of old homesteads and town sites with saloons along the Monte Cristo railway to find their bottles. The Nordlunds strung many bottle tops around their cabin as decor and reminders of Monte Cristo's colorful past.

Ken and Vida Martin met Enid Nordlund in the 1990s while working on a book about gold mining in Washington. Nordlund gifted the pair a miner's hat from the 1890s that she had discovered near Glacier Basin in 1951. She also gave them the tried-and-true plans for a homemade mousetrap handed down from a miner at Silverton. The trap, which used a pail of water, milk can, wire coat hanger, and a smear of bacon grease, was highly effective. "It didn't catch just one mouse at a time. In one week we had about 17 in there. When you're out in the woods, there are lots of mice," Nordlund said ("Mining Buffs Strike Gold ...").

Nordlund's spirit of generosity was apparent in her relationship with the younger generations of nature and history lovers she met in the mountains. David Cameron, Louise Lindgren, and Forrest Johansen (1952-2019) were among those whom she identified as worthy trustees of Monte Cristo history and heritage. Johansen considered Nordlund to be "the smartest person" he knew, and he spent years organizing and documenting her collections of historical materials to benefit other Snohomish County historians (Riddle interview with author).

Before Nordlund nurtured friendships with younger generations of history lovers, she first cultivated relationships with as many Monte Cristo "old-timers" as possible. She met them on trails and campsites, struck up conversations, and acquired a large collection of stories and photographs through those connections. She recalled seeing an elderly man at a campsite once:

"I could just tell by the way he looked. He'd stand there and look like he was coming home to something. And so finally, I got the idea. I'm going to go and see if he is. Sure enough, he'd worked there in the 1890s. And then I asked him if he had any old pictures of Monte Cristo, and almost all of them had one or two" ("Enid Nordlund Interview").

Nordlund made a point of looking for Monte Cristo old-timers on each camping trip. "I would watch for somebody that looked like a pioneer," she said ("Enid Nordlund Interview"). Nordlund would invariably borrow and copy their photographs to add to her collection and listen to their stories of Monte Cristo's heyday. Most of Nordlund's photograph collection was gifted from Elizabeth Kyes, proprietor of the Monte Cristo Mercantile in the 1890s.

A Legacy of Lifelong Learning

Enid Thrall Nordlund died peacefully on October 11, 2003, at the Marysville Care Center. At the age of 97, she had survived her sister, her husband, and many dear friends. At Nordlund's request, her ashes were scattered near her beloved Monte Cristo cabin.

Louise Lindgren described Enid Nordlund as a "lady who spent much of her lifetime nurturing and sharing nature's offspring" ("Perspectives on the Past"). Shortly before she died, Nordlund gifted Lindgren forest perennials and ferns "so they grow along with my memories of her in our garden in Index" ("Perspectives on the Past"). Today (2025) those flowers continue to thrive.

In 2003, the **Everett Public Library's** Northwest Room received a gift of \$50,000 from Nordlund's estate as well as a priceless collection of photographs, slides, films, and interview tapes that document aspects of Snohomish County history throughout much of the twentieth century. It was the Northwest Room's largest individual gift. Nordlund had spent many hours at the library when she was young – studying botany and history – and she returned again when she was old to do the same. According to library documentation, the gift reflects Nordlund's two passions: "the beauty of our Pacific Northwest and the history related to it" ("Nordlund Fund").

At the time of the gift, Everett Public Library historian David Dilgard (1945-2018) remarked, "Some people have a deep, abiding love of local history, and she was one of them. She was definitely the woman you'd go to first to get information about Monte Cristo" ("History Lover's Bequest ...") For more than 20 years, the interest earned from the original \$50,000 endowment has been used to fund library programs on local history and regional gardening and to purchase and preserve relevant books and other library materials.

Nordlund also made a significant financial contribution to Everett Community College. The Enid Thrall Nordlund scholarship was established through a bequest of her estate "to assist needy students with their education" (Denn email). It is unknown how many total students have benefited from Nordlund's gift, but since 2016, about 70 students have received a total of \$120,000 in scholarships. Just as her memory flourishes in the hearts and gardens of her friends, Nordlund's legacy in Snohomish County lives on through her library and college contributions.

This essay made possible by:
 Snohomish County Community Heritage Project

The Tulalip Tribes



Enid Nordlund, Monte Cristo, ca. 1930s

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



Thrall Flower Garden business card and clippings, 1920s-1931

Courtesy Louise Lindgren and *The Daily Herald*



Monte Cristo, 1897

Photo by Gifford Pinchot, Courtesy United States Forest Service

02:08

Enid Nordlund recalls her first train trip to Monte Cristo, 1998, Everett

Courtesy Lita Sheldon



Railroad tunnels between Everett and Monte Cristo, 1900

Courtesy Seattle Public Library, Seattle Room Digital Collections (spl_nwp_00165)



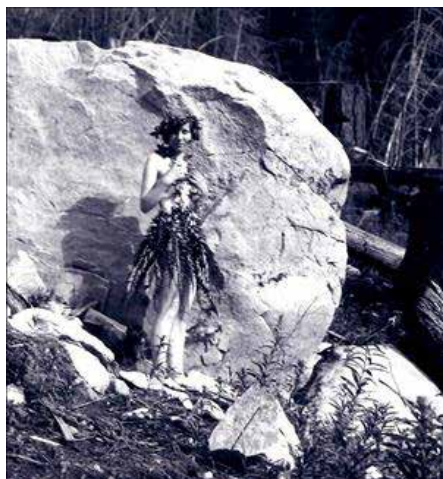
Hartford Eastern Railway, in front of Big Four Inn, Monte Cristo, ca. 1923

Courtesy University of Washington Libraries Digital Collections (PH Coll 1470.21)



Enid Nordlund holding a dog, ca. 1935-1945

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



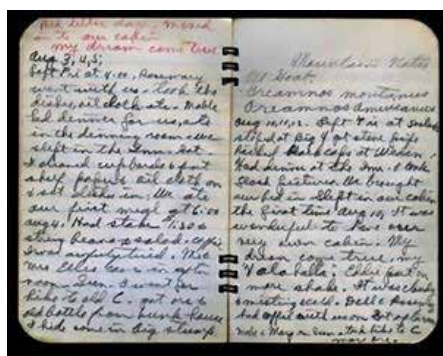
Enid Nordlund in costume, Monte Cristo, n.d.

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



Ed Nordlund building Monte Cristo cabin, 1949

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



Enid Nordlund's cabin diary, Monte Cristo, August 1951

Courtesy Louise Lindgren



The Nordlund Cabin, Monte Cristo, 1951

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



Hap Annen and Mabel Annen, Granite Falls, ca. 1919

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



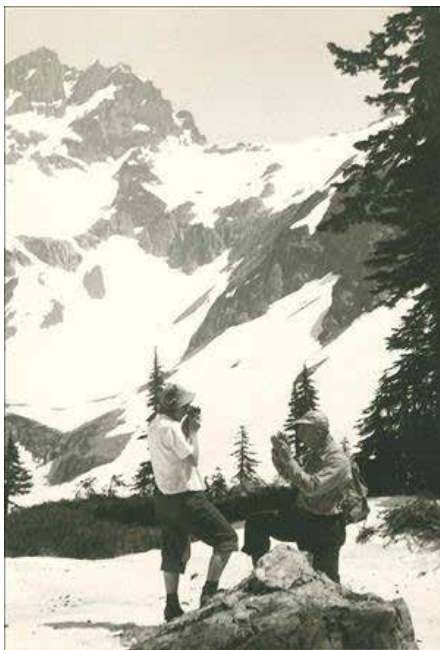
Enid and Ed Nordlund (far left) with friends, Thanksgiving, Monte Cristo, ca. 1951

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library

01:02

**Enid Nordlund describes the wildflowers she planted around Monte Cristo,
Everett, 1998**

Courtesy Lita Sheldon



Enid Nordlund (L) and Phil Brandner, Glacier Basin, 1955

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



Interior Nordlund cabin, Monte Cristo, 1965

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



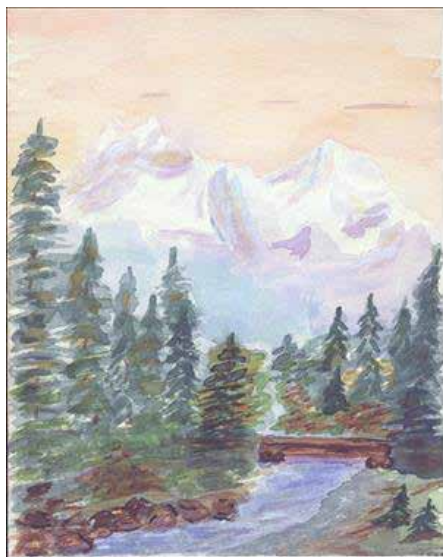
Enid and Ed Nordlund, inside their Monte Cristo cabin, 1965

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



Enid Nordlund and Jim McGough, ca. 1990

Courtesy Louise Lindgren



Watercolor by Enid Nordlund, n.d.

Courtesy Louise Lindgren



Lake Serene, June 30, 2013

Courtesy Joshua CC BY-ND 2.0



Enid Nordlund, Monte Cristo cabin, n.d.

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



Ed Nordlund and Garda Fogg, n.d.

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



Enid Nordlund, Monte Cristo, n.d.

Courtesy Enid Nordlund Collection, Northwest Room, Everett Public Library



Enid Nordlund, Everett, February 1991

Courtesy Louise Lindgren

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The Seybert Tragedy: Snohomish County's First Sensational Murder

By **Taylor Russell**
Posted 12/18/2025
HistoryLink.org Essay 23433

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In the mid-1850s, when Snohomish County was young and Washington still only a territory, Charles Seybert (1824?-1874) staked a claim on the Snohomish River, just opposite the future site of Lowell. It was a wild place: hard living, few laws, and disputes often settled with brutal force. Seybert himself would meet a grim end in 1874, one that left even the most hardened pioneers shaken. His death led to one of the region's earliest murder trials, prying open the private life of the Seybert family and making national headlines, thanks in part to the unique defense crafted by Snohomish lawyer Eldridge Morse.

Grisly History

"Charles Seybert, who loved ugly quarrels,
Raised his offspring with punches and snarls.
But son Ed took an axe
And with several whacks
Made a gentler parent of Charles"
– "Thorns of the Tree He Planted," in *Dark Deeds*.

Much of what is known about the Seybert murder case comes from a history written by a Seybert descendant, Diane Janes. Her account is broad yet protective of her family's legacy. She omits a key fact: her great-great-grandfather Charles Seybert first came west because he was ostracized in his hometown for killing one of his lodgers.

Charles Seybert was born around 1824 in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. His family was among the first settlers in Salem township, and established a gristmill, sawmill, clothery, and distillery. They had the means to send their son to college (something rare at the time), and then he ran his own shop in Beach Haven, selling liquor and medicines. In June 1850, Charles advertised the property for sale: "large and commodious

store and dwelling house, barn, outhouses, bridge across the canal, sheds and other convenient features" ("Valuable Property ...").

A year later, the same property appeared in the papers – this time as the scene of a murder. Charles had shot his lodger, Demott Stookey, a poor man whose room and board the county was paying. Charles claimed Stookey had threatened him, and one evening cornered him in his bedroom with a knife. Forced to defend himself, Charles fired a gun. A newspaper headlined the story "Cold Blooded Murder" and painted Charles as "5 feet 10 or 11 inches high, slender, thin face, dark complexion, hair, and eyes, down look, rather slow to speak, awkward gait, and rather resolute in manner" ("Cold Blooded Murder ..."). Other reporters described Stookey as a "creature" with "ferocity of temper ... subtle and dangerous disposition" ("We learn that ..."). At trial, the jury found Seybert not guilty, though public opinion seemed to lean the other way. Soon after, in March 1853, Charles married a local girl, Caroline Wirt, and promptly boarded a New York ship bound for San Francisco.

Settling in Washington Territory

After a three-month journey, the Seyberts boarded another ship, the *Tarquinia*, and sailed north. Among the ship's cargo was the first library collection of Washington Territory: 2,000 volumes, as well as maps, globes, and other materials. The ship was commanded by Captain William Robertson.

They continued on to Ebey's Prairie on **Whidbey Island**. A few weeks prior, its namesake, Isaac Ebey (1818-1857) had been beheaded by Haida raiders, but this did not deter the Seyberts. Captain Robertson held land claims there, and he showed the Seyberts an available tract of land west of his. Seybert filed for 640 acres through the **Donation Land Claim Act**. The Seyberts built a cabin and purchased some cows. In 1855 they welcomed their firstborn son, John Bernard, followed by a second, James Edward, two years later. During those years, Seybert enlisted in Washington Territory's Volunteer Regiment, served in the **Treaty Wars** of 1855 to 1856, and helped establish the first military fort on Ebey Slough.

By 1857, Robertson and Seybert had fallen into a bitter land feud. Robertson accused him of laying stakes within the bounds of his claim. The argument got so heated that Robertson rolled a cannon onto the front lawn, loaded it with a nine-pound ball, and aimed it squarely at the Seybert cabin, threatening to blast it off the face of the earth. Seybert was away at the time, but Caroline, with baby Eddy in her arms, stood defiantly in the doorway and shamed Robertson into backing down.

The episode left Seybert once again on uneasy footing with neighbors. He sold the land and cabin, removing his family to a different claim along the Snohomish River. The site was across from the logging camp of **E. D. Smith** (1837-1909), and a few rough shops and saloons. Seybert's "ranch" was perfect for farming: river bottomlands, tilled by oxen, grazed by cattle and sheep, and soon planted with hay, an orchard, and other necessities.

Seybert found employment almost immediately. The fledgling **Snohomish County** needed someone to collect annual taxes from the scattered settlers. He was entitled to a percentage of what he collected. He took his fee and continued on as sheriff, and later probate judge, through 1867.

Horrific Act

Seybert's position among Snohomish County's early settlers was a paradox. He was a hardworking farmer, willing to serve the public good; yet, rumors of wife-beating and child abuse circulated. In 1863, after nine years of marriage, Caroline filed for divorce. She fled to San Francisco, leaving the boys with Seybert – whether for lack of means or fear of taking them is unclear. A decade later, she returned with a new husband, Charles Duane, a notorious "desperado," to retrieve them. Seybert pursued her back to San Francisco and managed to bring their youngest, James Edward, back north again.

By then Charles had also remarried, though only by common law. His new partner was Sis-Que-Qua, or Mary, a Coast Salish teenager with whom he had a daughter. It is possible, but not certain, that he met her at the dance hall across the river, where white settlers paid to dance and drink with Native women.

During the waning months of 1873, as a long winter approached, tensions in the cabin intensified. Sixteen-year-old Edward was an anxious, fearful teen, regarded as being "of weak mind" ("A Murder Trial"). The *Puget Sound Dispatch* described him as "half-witted, said to be made so by the cruel beatings inflicted by his father" ("Murderer Caught"). Charles Seybert was irritable, plagued by dental problems, and Mary, pregnant again, had fallen ill and gone to stay with family.

In mid-February 1874, with his father away in Seattle, Edward went hunting and lost a prized firearm. For two or three days he ate nothing, dreading his father's return. When Seybert came back, he threatened to kill the boy if he did not find the gun the next morning. Edward's anxiety grew.

In the gray pre-dawn hours of February 23, Edward awoke, gripped by fear. He quietly left the bed he shared with his father and retrieved an axe. As Seybert rose from his slumber, Edward struck him with six blows across head and shoulders, any one of which "would have been fatal" ("A Murder Trial"). (The axe had been bought on credit at E. D. Smith's general store for \$4.62 the previous fall. Smith had to wait through Seybert's probate hearing for payment after death.)

Edward fled to the river's edge and pushed off in his canoe along with some meager provisions. He headed northwest, downstream.

Escape!

The village of **Lowell** awoke to the screams of 4-year-old Johanna, Charles Seybert's daughter. Neighbors rowed across the river and entered a blood-spattered cabin. At first, they suspected Native American raiders may have done the deed and feared Edward had been kidnapped. It soon became clear that the boy himself was the sole suspect.

Edward fled south. On Saturday night, five days after the murder, he appeared in bedraggled condition at the McAllister home in South Seattle, asking for work and a place to sleep. The family had once homesteaded near the Seyberts, and they knew of the manhunt. They gave him shelter in the cellar, locked the door, and called for the city marshal, who quickly took the boy into custody.

Under the headline "Arrest of a Young Patricide," the paper reported on Monday that Edward was taken to the town of **Snohomish** aboard the steamer *Zephyr*. By Tuesday, he had confessed. He said he killed his father to save himself after his life was threatened. A week later he was boated to the **Kitsap County** jail in Port Madison to await trial.

Edward's cellmate was Sam White, a volatile criminal transferred to Port Madison "after nearly destroying the jail in Seattle" (*Dark Deeds*). The Port Madison jail was the territory's closest thing to maximum security: a basement dungeon reachable only by a guarded trapdoor. This posed little challenge for White. Near midnight on April 14, 1874, the jailer went down to secure the cells for the night, leaving a boy upstairs to watch the trap door. White was able to grab the jailer and toss him into a cell. Under White's direction, Edward scrambled up the ladder before the hatch could be shut. They locked up the boy and vanished into the night.

Swift Verdict

Two days later, at about 10 p.m., Edward showed up at the fishing station of Robert Fenton and "asked to be ferried across to the mainland" ("On the evening of ..."). The next morning, Fenton took him instead to the Port Madison sheriff. This time, Edward awaited his trial with resignation. The court ordered him committed to the **asylum** in **Steilacoom** for an assessment of his sanity. His stay there was brief: his bail, an astonishing \$1,000, was raised by his mother, who had come north from California. She was lodging in Snohomish, getting counsel from pioneer attorney **Eldridge Morse** (1847-1914) and preparing her son's defense.

Edward's trial began on Thursday, February 4, 1875, as case number 923 of the Third District Court in King County. A grand jury had indicted him for murder in the first degree. The state's case was led by prosecuting attorney George McConaha. The defense was led by James McNaught and Charles Emery, both of King County, as well as Morse. Judge **Orange Jacobs** (1827-1914) presided over the packed courtroom. The case had become a media sensation and attracted spectators, many of them women from Seattle.

The jury would deliberate whether it was murder in the first degree or manslaughter, as well as if Edward had full culpability, or some level of insanity: imbecility, idiocy, mania, monomania, or dementia. Ultimately, the question was whether Edward had the mental capacity to know right from wrong.

Morse established a picture of Charles Seybert as brutal and merciless, who showed "oft repeated and continued acts of extreme cruelty and great personal violence consisting of threats, blows, whipping, batteries" (*The Snohomish River Tragedy*). Caroline Seybert gave emotional testimony detailing cruelties she had endured during her pregnancy with Edward. She told of beatings that threatened her life and the life of her unborn child. From birth, Edward had never been quite right, she said. She believed that his mental deficits were almost certainly the result of prenatal abuse by his own father.

Seybert descendant Diane Janes wrote: "The theory of counsel was that the effect of this harsh treatment upon the mother's mind influenced the mind of the unborn child, causing an unconquerable aversion and fear of the father" (*The Snohomish River Tragedy*). To a Victorian jury, this argument carried great weight.

The idea of "mother's marks" – that a mother's emotional shocks could imprint deformities or weakness on the unborn child – was widely believed.

The verdict came swiftly the following Monday morning: not guilty by reason of "imbecility," a decision "generally concurred in by public sentiment" ("A Murder Trial"). Edward was released into the custody of his mother, and they returned to San Francisco.

After the Verdict

Edward's fate after the trial is uncertain. He vanished from the record.

In Snohomish County, though, the Seybert case lingered. The county was left with heavy bills from lawmen, jailers, and prosecutors. To cover the debt, taxes were raised, a burden for the sparsely populated county. Seybert's funeral cost \$27.37, including a grave dug by Walter Elwell. The exact site is unknown; he was most likely laid in the Snohomish Pioneer Cemetery, though he may have been buried on his own land.

Mary, Seybert's second wife, died in childbirth a few months after the murder. Their daughter Johanna was orphaned and sent to live at the Mission at **Tulalip**.

The **Seybert farm** eventually passed to Martin Getchell. Years later, Getchell's daughter Maud recalled a melancholy visit in the fall of 1932. Bernard, the elder Seybert son, walked beneath the apple trees his father had planted and reminisced of a spare, pioneer childhood.

This essay made possible by:
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Puget Sound Dispatch, February 11, 1875

Courtesy Washington Historic Newspapers



Headlines about Charles Seybert murder of Dumont Stookey, Pennsylvania, 1851-1852

Courtesy Chronicling America, Library of Congress



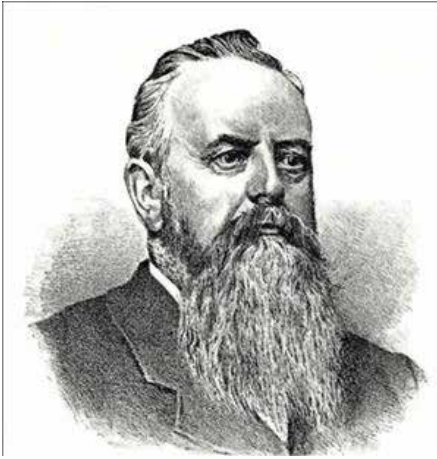
Charles Seybert's daughter, Johanna (second from left), ca. 1895-1900

Courtesy *The Daily Herald*, photo courtesy Diane Janes



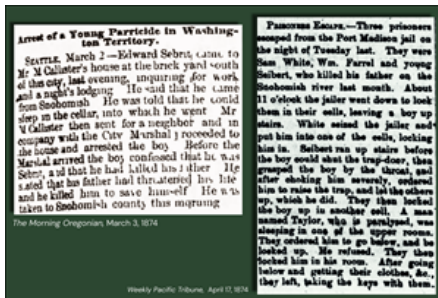
Sketch of early Fort Ebey, Whidbey Island, 1855

Courtesy Everett Public Library



Eugene D. Smith, Snohomish County, 1889

Courtesy Everett Public Library



Headlines about Edward Seybert, 1874

Courtesy Chronicling America, Library of Congress



Seattle mayor Orange Jacobs (1827-1914), 1879

Photo by W. L. Dahl, Courtesy Seattle Municipal Archives (12261)

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