

The Lopez Island Historical Society & Museum

P.O. Box 163 • Lopez Island, WA 98261 • lopezmuseum@rockisland.com • www.lopezmuseum.org

Newsletter

Spring 2009

A few families made a good living farming on Lopez. Most early islanders raised enough to feed the family, plus a little extra to sell. People planted small orchards and large gardens, and most had a few cattle or sheep.

Of the 41 occupation listings in the 1889 census, 35 are recorded as farmers. By 1900, more occupations appeared, including actor, teamster, marine engineer, and laborer in fertilizer. Families including Graham, Buchanan, Bell, Anderson, Brown, Blake, Hodgson, McCauley, Wilson, Jensen, Burt, Fagerholm, Davies, Cousins, Eaton, Gallanger, Kilpatrick, Wood, and many others, left evidence that they gardened or raised animals.

Many leading Lopez farm families of the 1880s were sons and daughters of 1830s Irish farmers. They were accustomed to farming in wet northern latitudes.

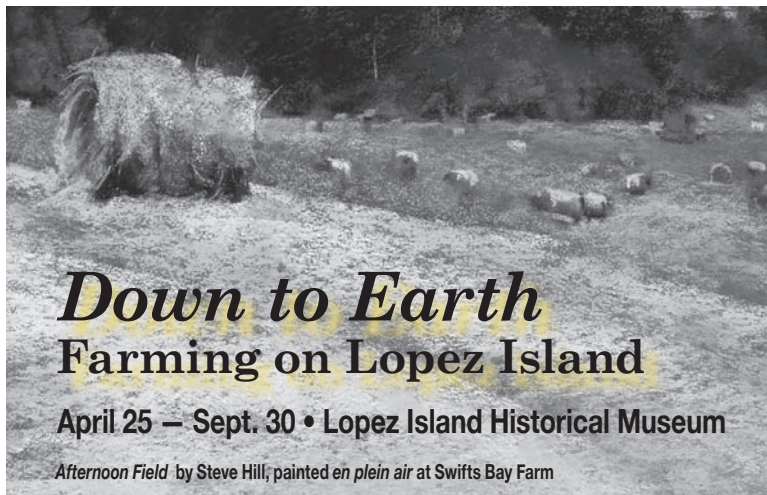
Some of the Irish-born farmers to reach Lopez include Ellen Clancy and her nephew Bat Clancy, James Cousins and his older brothers, John and Robert.

Not all Lopezians came from Ireland or Iowa. William Humphrey, after whom Humphrey Head was named, immigrated from Ontario with his wife

in 1876 and became a farmer here.

In 1869, a Canadian-born couple, James and Amelia Davis, arrived on Lopez with a cow, a pig, some chickens, and 40 cents, their only remaining capital. James worked the ranch—raising cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens, and horses, along with fruit crops, berries, potatoes, vegetables, hay, and grains. Amelia spun, knitted and dyed wool, made the family's clothes, and produced butter of such high quality that it routinely brought 10 cents more than any other brand on the market. She often sold her 100-pound lots in Port Townsend.

We hope to see you this summer. We are open noon to 4:00, Wednesday through Sunday, through September.



Down to Earth Farming on Lopez Island

April 25 – Sept. 30 • Lopez Island Historical Museum

Afternoon Field by Steve Hill, painted en plein air at Swifts Bay Farm



Christen Jensen with his team.

Sponsors: Raiti Waerness, Mike Halperin & Jodi Green, Lopez Village Market, Spud & Karen Grimes, Island Paper, Islanders Bank, Dave & Barbara Thomas, Todd Goldsmith & Diane Dear, Singing Owl Flower Farm, Islanders Insurance, Dianne Pressenda, Ken & Linda Rose, Islands Marine Center, Jamie & Lauren Stephens, Steve & Michele Heller, Lopez Island Pharmacy, Dick & Mary Schoenman, Duane & Audrey Bordvick, Windsock Farm, Phil & Jean Weinheimer, Spencer's Landing Marina, Lopez Sand & Gravel, Richardson Fuel, Karen Rousseau.

Additional support from Humanities Washington. *Afternoon Field*, *plein air* painting by Steve Hill.

Message from the Board

by Holly Kent, President

Lopez, the Friendly Island, is also the Farming Island. We are extremely fortunate to have an evocative photo collection that documents our farming history. You can see some of these vintage photos and more at this year's exhibit, *Down to Earth, Farming on Lopez Island*.

Most Lopez farms were small and self-sufficient—a condition imposed by geographic isolation. I think the hard-working men and women of those farms would be flummoxed to learn that organic farming practices are now considered trend-setting by some, when it was business-as-usual for them.

As always, exhibits at the Museum whet the appetite to know more. Are you of an age to remember stories about the old farms that are no more? Who grew what? Did your ancestor pass down anecdotes about buying local farm goods? Did any farmer become wealthy, and what was his secret to success? You can help preserve some of this rich history by passing those stories on to the museum.

We learned from the Willie Cousins diary that Old Abe was the meanest bull on the island and he was, in today's terms, "free range." Parents would warn the kids to be on the lookout for Lopez's own monster bull, lurking in the woods. You will soon be able to read Willie Cousins' account of his terrifying encounter with Old Abe, and the rest of his diaries on line, at the Washington State Rural History Project.

Unique, small, community-based farming on Lopez laid the foundation for us to take full advantage of current "Slow Food," "Farm to School," "Organic," "Sustainable," "Grass Fed," "Buy Local," "CSA" safe and nutritious food campaigns. Lopez farmers are continuing the great traditions of their forbears by providing a wealth of locally grown delectables.

Looking back at the history of our island, the kelp processing plant and the canneries are gone; farming remains. A good way to keep this vibrant piece of Lopez history alive would be to buy a local Lopez farm product today. And, call me personally with those secrets of getting rich through farming.

LIHS News

by Mark Thompson-Klein, Museum Director

This year's exhibit focuses on Lopez Island's early farms. We have lots of photos, some recently discovered in the archives, a few yet to be identified—we hope you will help us put names to the mystery images.

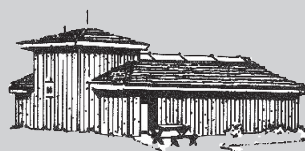


Maria (Eaton) Hackwell splitting wood—see more farming and homestead photos in this year's exhibit.

It's clear from diaries and old letters in our collection that nearly every home had a garden. Everyone grew vegetables, most had a cow or two. There were lots of fruit trees—many apple varieties were grown to make cider. Several old orchards still stand, with unusual apple varieties including Blue Permain, 20-ounce Pippin, and Winter Banana.

We have begun work on *Images of America: Lopez Island*, our new book with Arcadia Publishing. Susan Ferguson has been gathering photos and will begin interviewing old family members soon. Please call or send a note if you have stories or photos to share.

The book won't be out until next year, but you can learn more about Lopez history at our website: www.lopezmuseum.org; the Washington Rural Heritage site: washingtonruralheritage.org/lopez/; and a new quilter's blog: enchantedquiltersoflopezisland.blogspot.com/.



Lopez Island
Historical
Society
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The Fagerholms

by Donald Fagerholm & Mary Fagerholm-Reece

Philip Fagerholm, an early Lopez Island settler, was born in Gölby, Jomala, Åland (Finland) in 1867. He traveled to the United States at age 20, first stopping in Ironwood, Michigan where he worked in the mines, then heading west to Washington State in late 1888 or early 1889. He found work at a Port Townsend lumber mill, and was listed as a lumberman in the April, 1889 census.

Philip sent for his future bride, Maria Bergman, who also lived in the Åland Islands, in the village of Geta. They were married in Port Townsend in 1891.

A former neighbor from Gölby, Charles (Carl) August Anderson, had a homestead on Lopez by 1875 and encouraged Philip to come. Others from Åland, including the Mattsons, had also come to Lopez.

The Fagerholms homesteaded and cleared 160 acres on the south end of Lopez. There they raised their children, Julius, Amoe, Edwin, Jennie and Albert, in the small house that still stands on the Buffum property on Cole Road. Philip had a blacksmith shop near the corner where you turn in towards the house—Philip's father had been a well respected blacksmith in his homeland. One day, Maria, around 70 years old, fell and broke her hip while at the barn. Her sons Albert and Edwin carried her back to the house in a chair. She used crutches for several years, then a wheelchair after breaking her hip again.

Their farm was self-sustaining. They raised sheep for food

and wool, chickens and some turkeys. They also had a couple of strong horses and several milk cows. They produced hay, both alfalfa and grass, and planted cherry trees along with several berry plants from the old country. Philip raised beautiful strawberries he would take by rowboat to Richardson from Huggins Bay. He worried that the sockeye would jump into the boat and ruin his strawberries!

Philip learned the English language by reading the newspaper and practicing writing the words. He did not want the children to use Swedish, but Jennie learned to read letters that came from the old country, and a few Swedish terms were passed on to their descendants

Family remembers how Maria prepared her sumptuous holiday dinners of home-canned meat and vegetables, and homemade breads and desserts. She was a petite little lady who was always

pleased when she was able to offer her guests cookies and chocolates.

Philip and Maria spent the rest of their many years on their farm, raising livestock, hay, and produce.

Their son, Edwin, and his wife Nora (McCauley), built the larger house adjacent to theirs in 1930, sharing the work. The property belonged to the family until 1960.

The Lopez Union Cemetery is the final resting place for the Fagerholms, their sons, and many other family members.



Philip and Maria Fagerholm with their children, Julius, Edwin, Amoe & Jennie. Photo taken around 1899.



Philip, Edwin & Amoe Fagerholm, c. 1914.

Recent Finds

We often discover wonderful and unexpected treasures hidden in the archives. The portraits below are pasted to a board, and we have no idea why. The folks are dressed in their Sunday best, and it appears many of the pictures were taken on the same day. But why are the women in the bottom row, second from left dressed

in men's clothes? Who is holding the umbrella in the photo with Miss Wiggins? How can Etta Wilson look so somber while wearing that enormous hat? And who is that baby? Someday, someone will drop by and fill in all the blanks.

We also found a series of aerial photos on positive transparencies. We scanned the transparencies and would like your help identifying the locations and date the photos were taken. A couple shots are of the Fisherman Bay/Village area, and they may give a clue about the date. There's not enough room to print them here, but please stop by the museum to have a look.



Our Collection Managers, Christi Carter and Connie Kyser, added hundreds of photos and artifacts to our searchable catalog over the winter. Please come in or call if you have any research questions we can help answer.

Top, left to right: Cora Standley, Joe West, Ed Blowers, Robert Cousins, Laura Cousins.

Center: Laura Cousins & Cora Standley, Miss Julia Wiggins (Port Stanley School teacher), Joe Cousins & Ed Blowers, Robert Cousins, Laura Cousins.

Bottom: Cora Standley, Laura Cousins, Robert Cousins & Joe West, Mary West, Annie West & Isobel Upston, Robert Cousins, Maud Graham (later Mrs. Robert Burt), Robert Burt & Laura Cousins, Etta Wilson, unidentified child.

Please support the Lopez Island Historical Society to help collect, preserve, interpret, and share local history.

Donations are fully tax deductible. Thank you for your support.

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The Lopez Island Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

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