

# History Nook

## Early days of Orcas school districts

By: LINDA PETH

Orcas Island Historical Museum

In the early days there were eleven schools on Orcas Island. By 1887 three school districts were formed with the Central School in District 7 serving the communities of Orcas, West Sound and Deer Harbor. The original school building was in what is now the kitchen area of the Orcas Island Grange. The Central school was closed in the 1920's when the districts were consolidated.

The Orcas Island Grange was meeting in the West Sound Hall and the members decided they wanted to own their own hall. Ethel Auld was at the meeting. She produced a bar of soap from her purse and this was immediately auctioned off for 65 cents. This was the start of the building fund. George Keys went to see a number of men who intended to bid on the property, among them Frank Kerchoff, Dave Nicol and Jack Anthony. Since he intended to bid on behalf of the Grange these men all agreed not to submit bids. The building was purchased by the Grange from School District No.137 June 7, 1938 for the sum of one hundred twenty-six dollars.

On July 27, 1940 the Grange Hall was dedicated with distinguished guests State Grange Master Ervin E. King, Senator Leroy L. Todd, Skagit County assisted by H.P. Walrath, first Master also past Masters Chester Martin,

Culver Willis, George Keys with Master Amos Coffelt giving a short history of Grange life, which was organized January 19, 1931 by Bro. O.C. Wisner.

In the early 1940's the Grange increased the size of the former school with a 40 x 60 annex under the direction of Ray Pinneo and many volunteers. The new maple floor was ready for the "Hard Time" costume party "on Saturday evening October 13, 1945 to celebrate the completion of the community project

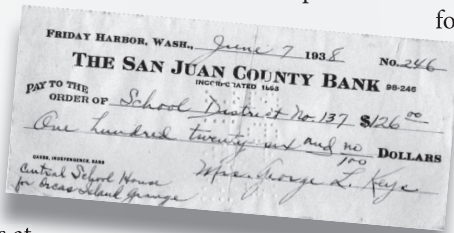
for the jolly crowd of fun loving friends who helped make this much needed community play-house".

In the mid 1980's musician Terry

Anderson and friends visualized a revitalization of the Grange for a Youth Center to play and record music, make videos and work on art, a home away from home. In mid 1990's Bob Waunch of the new Orcas Community Foundation awarded money for materials to upgrade the rundown old building with a new look and enthusiastic volunteers descended upon the Grange. With additional funds changes were made and the teen center opened on Saturdays for four years.

The Grange continues to be a community gathering place for plays, music and socials.

Thanks to Virginia Jensen for the research. Credits/ Quotes to: Jane Barfoot, Zoa H. Cowden, *The Orcas Islander*, *Island's Sounder*



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