

HISTORY CORNER

THE OLGA ENERGETICS CLUB

by Tom Welch

By 1912 the ladies of Olga, meeting frequently in their small, remote island hamlet to socialize over their sewing and mending, found that no one's home was large enough to accommodate them all. Twelve of them organized the Olga Energetics Club on April 9, 1912, for the purpose of constructing a community building. The twelve charter members, Mrs. Cecil S. Willis, Mrs. Charles Carlson, Mrs. T.D. Van Sant, Mrs. Effie Dana, Mrs. S.D. Anderson, Mrs. George Lewis, Mrs. Sy Davis, Hazel Cheever, Mrs. C.S. Rice, Mrs. Jack Snowden, and Mrs. Cline, incorporated the club on September 9, 1912.

Jack Snowden, local justice of the peace and husband of one of the founders, generously offered land for the clubhouse, and the ladies took on the task of raising funds. Ice cream socials, plays, and solicited contributions provided enough funds to begin construction in 1913. Some of the women, strong and muscular from their daily toil keeping house and family together, actually mixed the cement for the foundation. As the building took shape they hired Martin Reddig, a carpenter from Orcas village, to complete the work.

By 1915 the community began to hold Sunday School, school programs, funerals, social gatherings, and club meetings in the completed Energetics Club. A "lower room" on the first floor of the building, nicely appointed with a long leather-covered table with matching wooden leather-seated chairs, was used for 4-H Club meetings, card parties, and small gatherings. Upstairs, a six-inch high wooden platform was built across the west wall of the large main room to serve as a stage, with sheets strung on a wire for curtains. The school kids, recalls Jane Barfoot-Hodde, felt like they were in a concert hall when they gave their recitations to the community.

A wood stove and water faucet in the corner served as the kitchen, and a "two-holer" privy behind the building served satisfactorily in another manner. A kitchen addition was added in the 1940s, but the ladies of the community always found it a struggle to find enough money to pay the taxes, buy wood for the heater, and pay insurance and other expenses. Many quilts were made and raffled off, and a custom developed to ensure a "fire quilt" was always at hand to be given to any family on the island who had the misfortune to lose their home to fire. In those days of kerosene lamps, candles, and open fireplaces, home fires were an unfortunate part of island life.

Continuing the tradition of welcome and acceptance first expressed in those early meetings of Olga women, the "Energetics" welcomed the Doe Bay community members into the clubhouse on March 8, 1958, when the Olga Energetics Club became the Olga-Doe Bay Community Club. Still used for local gatherings, art lessons, "Olga Daze," and other functions, the Olga Energetics Club building continues to proudly serve our community in the new century.

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