

# History Nook

## It happened in Deer Harbor— Villagers saw action up close

by SUZANNE P. GOTT  
for the Orcas Island Historical Museum

Deer Harbor anchorage was ideal for commercial steamboats transporting mail, freight, produce, lime, brick, cordwood, livestock and passengers.

1891: James Tilit "J.T." & Molly (Cobble) Stroud now owned the store at today's Deer Harbor Marina.

1893: Stroud was appointed 1st postmaster.

They stocked sewing products, lye soap, lantern wicks, kerosene, matches, tobacco, ammunition, bacon, coffee, and makings for pickles, sourdough biscuits, and bean stew.

This location became an important networking-and-resource center.

Captains described stormy weather and misadventure. Women announced potlucks and babies. Men debated the issue du jour.

1893-1897: Depression boosted smuggling escapades through Pole Pass and into Deer Harbor Bay.

1909: Stroud got a job with the new telephone company in Eastsound, and moved.

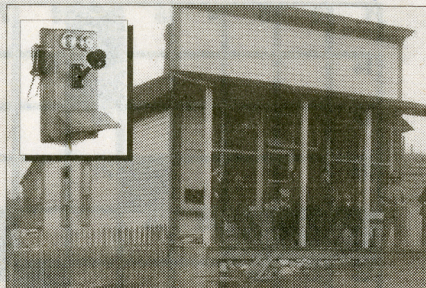
Deer Harbor's growth demanded more services and commodities.

1907-1915: At the slough, Felix & Mary (Weddle) Marrian operated a small store, next to the popular dance hall that doubled as a weekday gymnasium.

Meanwhile, at Deer Harbor Marina, it's unclear who was minding store and post office. Erastus C. & Margarete Rowley? William E. & Eloise (Barker) Armstrong? Or...?

1915: The new postmaster and owners — William "Bill" & Merle (Schlott) Norton promoted tourism.

Weekend boaters moored to Deer Har-



Deer Harbor Store, before tavern built on left side. (Courtesy; Salt Water People Historical Society). Inset, the first telephone.

bor Marina, hiked to chicken dinner at Patrick "Pat" & Mary (Marrian) Norton's Inn (founded 1910), and danced all night at Bill Norton's new dance hall (built 1915).

Washington State Prohibition (1916-1933) and Great Depression (1929-1939) called for rumrunners to enter stealth race against the weather, agents, coast guards, hijackers, and possibility of death.

Illegal booze ran to the mainland from British Columbia, or from amateur distillers and brewers in the islands.

Wine, near-beer and whiskey recipes used many ordinary items purchased at Deer Harbor store. Neighbors bought the bottled spirits.

1941: Ralph T. & Phyllis E. (Holmes) Lehmann erected a convenience store — at today's SE corner of Upper Deer Harbor and Gages Roads— kitty corner from Norton's dance hall. (Both are now private residences.)

1943: Lehmann added a new post office. Phyllis Lehmann was postmistress, until 1968.

Bill Norton kept his marina, convenience store and tavern, public outhouses, fuel/water dock, and telephone (sharing a 24-party line) for many years.

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