

History Nook

Graduation ceremonies on Orcas

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ORCAS ISLAND HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Graduation, that special time every year, when young men and women don gowns and throw caps into the air, signaling an end to their 12 years of education. But how did it all begin? A Populist Party political agenda, providing free public education, had schools springing up in every nook and cranny all over the nation. Orcas Island had school house erected everywhere there were congregations of families with school age children: Eastsound, Newhall, Olga, Doe Bay, Crow Valley, West Sound, Deer Harbor and Orcas. For the 12th year island students who began school in the fall of 1910,

in little one room schoolhouses, their caps came off in the Odd Fellows Hall on Haven Road, May 31, 1922: There on the stage were nine young men and women, five males and four females, Orcas Island Agricultural High School's first graduates. The graduates came from six island families: Guy Edwin Burt and Reed Earl Burt, Ethel Hazel Moore, Chester Irving Kimple and Merrill David Kimple, Gladys Tanner, Elma Margaret Lind and Helen Charlotte Lind, and Clarence Weld. That final celebration day, the first of many to come, actually started weeks earlier, even as it does now.

The finale of the school year started with a May Day celebration. There were May- Poles of long colored ribbons for children to weave themselves up and down, around and around, and then

unweave themselves again. There were field days with sports, such as the pole vault, races, and, of course, baseball, and pageants with costumes and garlands of greenery. All of these events not only celebrated the culmination of a dozen year of education, but also, a rebirth, a season's changes and physical valor.



Contributed photos.

Top; First graduation, 1922. Below; Jack Templin pole vaulting.

Here's to all island students whose caps will be flying off this year! Congratulations, and may the future be all you dream it will. Here at the Museum, we've got your back...history, that is! Drop in and see us!

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