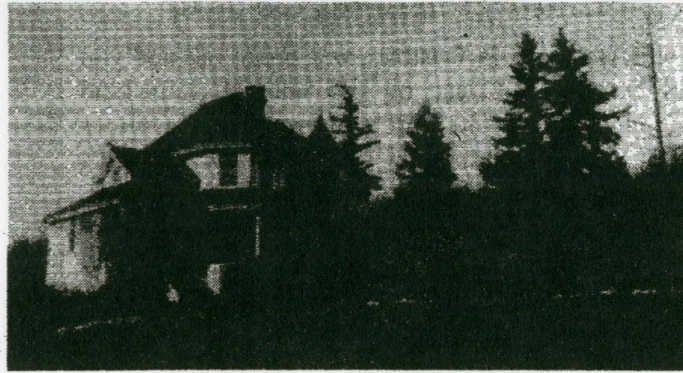


HISTORY CORNER

THE HEAD HOUSE

by Jen Vollmer

The Dr. George Head family arrived on Orcas Island sometime around 1890, at which time they had a new residence constructed above Crescent Beach, just outside of Eastsound. There is some thought that the home was designed by Elmer Fisher, a prominent Pacific Northwest architect. The lumber was barged over from Bellingham and a team of oxen was needed to haul the materials from the beach up to the building site.



The resulting structure was a two-story Queen Anne Style building featuring shiplap siding and a wood-shingled hip roof with a turret dormer. A porch with a whimsically decorated railing was added along the south elevation. The first floor consisted of three main rooms (dining, living, study), an entry hall, bathroom, modified kitchen and pantry. Four bedrooms were constructed upstairs. A central chimney heated the house through an elaborate system of stovepipes.

Sidney Head, born in 1891, remembered Native Americans camped on Crescent Beach below his family's house. They traded smoked clams, fresh seafood and baskets in exchange for bread and pies his mother baked.

The Heads eventually sold the house to Mr. Gauntlet, an engineer who worked on the Grand Coulee Dam, around 1940. The McKay family bought the place in January 1964 and have been its owner ever since.

For its 2003 special exhibition, the Orcas Island Historical Museum is hosting an art show featuring depictions of structures, landscapes and individuals from Orcas Island's history as seen through the eyes of 26 local artists. A painting of the Head House created by watercolorist Caroline Buchanan is currently on display as part of the show.

Orcas Historical Museum

181 N. Beach Rd. • Eastsound • www.orcasisland.org • 360/376-4849

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