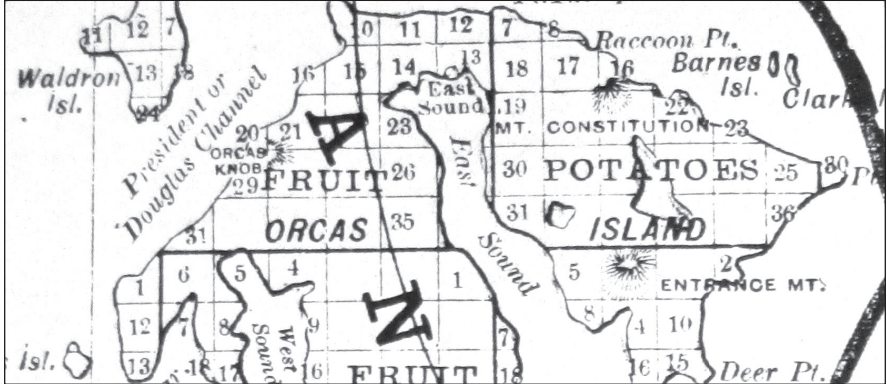


History Nook

Mail Schemes and Dreams Part 1

By: TOM WELCH



Map of Puget Sound Country 1891

Early pioneer days on Orcas Island were hard in many ways, not least in the near-total absence of coin and currency. There simply was NO money available — many mainland banks had failed, and there were few, if any, thriving businesses in the area. One of our early settlers, “Colonel” Enoch May, was, as indicated by his (self-bestowed) title, more creative than most.

Getting wind of prices paid by white men seeking “Klutchmen”, or native wives, May began acting as Middleman and Arranger with the native headmen, and made a fair amount of money. A pretty young indigenous maiden matched with a much older white settler netted the good “Colonel” several hundred dollars. May appeared to excel at this occupation, and spent much of his time with his native ‘brethren’. Enoch May also got a Marriage License dated February 2nd, 1874 to marry Elizabeth Kahane (or Kaham). It was signed by Edward Warbass, Auditor of San Juan County. Elizabeth was either his first or second wife as Enoch appears in the NW in Cariboo, British Columbia in 1860. He married again in the 1880s. May was also reputed to operate, or work on, one of the ‘liquor boats’ that operated a mile from the northern shore of Orcas. The more white-oriented pioneer settlers,

including James Tulloch, were opposed to miscegenation and mingling of the races, and railed against May for his involvement in selling liquor to the Natives, and in brokering native women to white men.

Discovering new opportunities available from the federal government, “Colonel” May somehow convinced twelve men in Port Townsend to attest to the postal authorities that they lived on Waldron Island, were U.S. citizens, and deserved mail service. The Postal Service did a cursory inspection, and soon mail began arriving on Waldron Island. Interestingly, the mail was taken from Orcas to Waldron in a rowboat operated by none other than “Colonel” Enoch May, Mail Contractor. He soon hired another man to make the often-dangerous row through windy President’s Channel between Orcas and Waldron Island.

End of Part 1.



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