

THE  
CLAYTON/DEER PARK  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
**Mortarboard**

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*The C/DPHS is an association of individuals dedicated to the preservation of the history of our community. To the preservation of the region's oral history, literary history, social history, graphic and pictorial history, and our history as represented by the region's artifacts and structures. To the preservation of this history for future generations. To the art of making this common heritage accessible to the public. And to the act of collaborating with other individuals and organizations sharing similar goals.*

**Growing Up in Williams Valley**  
— An Interview with Mike & Betty Burdette —

by  
Wally Lee Parker

— a C/DPHS reprint —

*This story first appeared in the January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005 issue of the Deer Park Tribune, and then, later that year, in the Reports to the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society, Volume I. Mike Burdette passed away in 2008, but Betty is still with us, and active in community projects such as the Tri-County Settlers Association and the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society.*

Mike began by saying, "I was born in Onago, Kansas, in 1919, the youngest of four. I was about three when my folks separated, and my mother took us kids and moved to Las Vegas. We went to live with a couple of mom's bachelor brothers who'd offered to open their home to us. We arrived there by train in March of 1924 and stayed until the fall of 1929.

"I remember us going to the movies when we were in Vegas. We'd get into a matinee for a nickel. We saw Hoot Gibson and Tom Mix and all of them. But when we moved up here, we were too far from town for that.

"I never found out why mom moved.

Maybe it was just to get us out of Las Vegas — it was a wild town even then. Anyway, I was ten years old when the five of us settled on a thirty-five-acre patch on the south side of Casberg-Burroughs road — on that stretch between the Williams Valley Grange Hall and the little Williams Valley School.

"October of 1929 was when the Great Depression set in. Course I didn't know anything about the market back then, but over time we could see the effects. I mean, every little shack out in the county, anything that even looked like it could keep the rain out, had somebody squatting in it — somebody who couldn't pay rent. And those people would

*Please Don't Make Us Beg!*



Illustration from the December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1911 edition of Life Magazine.

*Join the  
Clayton / Deer Park Historical Society.*

**Free — Take One**  
**NOTICE: CHANGE OF LOCATION FOR THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S MEETINGS.**  
*Second Saturday of each month, basement of the Clayton Grange Hall, 4478 Railroad Avenue, Clayton, Washington.*



**Betty Lu Burdette**

work for next to nothing just to eat.

“Us kids would work for the neighbors. We’d milk cows, build fences, clean chicken houses. Whatever there was to do to bring some money home.

“Our mother could stretch a dollar further than anybody — still, we only had the basics. Lots of potatoes and very little meat. Once in a while she’d cook a chicken. It was mostly just hand to mouth.

“I went to the Williams Valley School. The Milner family lived about a mile and a half north of there. They knew we were hungry, so they told us they’d give us a gallon of skimmed milk if we’d come up after school and get it. Since I was the youngest, I’d always get the job. Many a supper all we had was the Milner’s milk and some bread.

“Sometimes, when we had some mon-

ey, us kids would walk five miles to Clayton for groceries, then carry them home. We didn’t have a car, buggy, or horse — so that was just what we had to do to get to town. But it didn’t bother us, since we didn’t know any different anyway.

“Our cabin was heated by the cook stove. The first winter or two we gathered fallen sticks out in the woods. After that it wasn’t long before we all got pretty adept with an ax.

“None of us kids ever had to see a doctor. I don’t think any of us ever missed a day of school for being sick. But it seems like we were always just one step ahead of starvation.”

“Things were different for us”, Betty said. “We ate good cause our dad, Earl Wright, worked at the sawmill all through the depression. So, we had some money. We also had cows and chickens and a big garden.

“My folks bought our farm in 1927. Mike’s family settled on the land just to the east of us about two years later.”

Mike chuckled, “Remembering how us two first got acquainted — after my family had been living there a couple of years, Betty got old enough to be out by the gate as we’d go walking by on our way to school.”

Betty continued, “When I was little, one of the big events in the spring was when hundreds of sheep would be herded down the road — headed west, toward pastures in the mountains. We’d all stand by the gate when the flock came by. The story was that one little girl got a lamb that way — that one of the lambs went lame, so the sheep-men gave it to her rather than pack it along. We all had hopes, but that never happened to us.

“In the fall the flock would be driven back into the valley — and, I guess, to the south someplace.”

Mike said, “I remember 1932 as being pretty exciting. That’s the summer they built the Williams Valley road. I was twelve years old, so it was a big thing for me.

“Before then the road from Clayton was just a horse and buggy path. If there was

Photo by Wally Lee Parker — circa 2004.

a big tree or rock, the road curved around it. In the spring, with the snowmelt, there were places you couldn’t get through, so people would cut across country as best they could.

“Every day I went out there to watch. Lots of people, and lots of mules. Everything was done by muscle power. Some teams working plows and some working Fresnos. It was quite an undertaking for the time.

“A Fresno,” Mike explained, “was a land leveling implement. Dirt would be plowed up alongside the road in what would become the ditches. That loose dirt would then be scraped up by the Fresnos, pulled onto the roadbed, and leveled out.

“Of course, they had to get all the rocks and stumps out of the way first.

“It was graveled that fall. They set up a rock crusher on the west side of McDougal road, near where it crosses Gibson-Dahl, and blasted granite out of the side of the hill. But it still took years of grading to get the washboards out. And now it’s all paved.”

“My sister, Laura, and I were just little then,” Betty said. “But my mother, Jovetta, told us about cooking three meals a day for the road crew.”

“Thinking about groceries,” Mike added, “back then it was hard to get into town. Even for people with cars, going to Deer Park or Clayton was something you only did if you really needed to. But the families out in Williams Valley had Fred Reynolds’ milk truck.

“The milk truck went into Deer Park every day. Just being good to people, Fred had his driver gather grocery lists from people along the milk truck route and they’d fill them while in town. Many a morning my mother would stand by the road with her list and some money, waiting. Coming back, the truck would stop with our groceries and mom’s change.

“And you know it was costing Fred time to do that. If one of his hired men was doing the driving, that was costing Fred money. But it was the depression, and Fred was doing better than most folks. I think this was just one of the ways he had of sharing with his

Photo by Wally Lee Parker — circa 2004.



**Mike Burdette**

neighbors.”

Mike went on, “My mother died of a stroke when I was 16. I was the youngest, and the four of us were left to get on the best we could. So, we sort of scattered in different directions.

“My sister, Frances, went to work in a hardware store in Moscow, Idaho. Of my two brothers — Bob, being kind of a mechanic, went to work someplace — the Bemis place maybe, while Jess went to work on the Pruffer farm, then, later on, bought a place of his own.

“Me? I went to work on Dale and Grace Milner’s farm. Their two girls, Lorraine (Ball) and Luella (Dow), were small then. They’re in their seventies now.

“I got room, board and a wage. And I went to school. And I saved my money.

“And that’s how I bought my first

piece of property. Forty acres on the north side of Bittrich-Antler road, on the section just west of Williams Valley road. It was 1940, and I bought that land at public auction, on the Colville courthouse steps, for one hundred and fifty dollars.

“Back then various little tracts all over Stevens County were being sold because people couldn’t pay the taxes. The taxes weren’t much, but so many people just didn’t have those few dollars.

“The only thing was, when you bid on those parcels, you had to pay in cash. That stopped most people. But I’d saved my money.

“I worked for the Milners right on through high school. As soon as I graduated out of Deer Park, I was drafted. I spent the next four and a half years, till the war ended, in the army.

“I married Betty in 1946. We bought

more land, started a family, and built up a dairy operation. That kept me busy for the next thirty years.

“Then, till I retired, I worked for the post office. After that we started buying and renting houses.

“There’s not much left of the old farming life around here. Most of the real farms have been broken up and sold off as home sites or hobby farms. Most of the dairy industry has moved down into the Columbia basin.

“And even if someone wanted to become a real farmer, it would just cost too much to get started — too much for the land, too much for the equipment.

“But Betty and I have done okay. It’s been a good life, and we’ve no complaints.”

— end —

## “The Big Blizzard” In the Winter of 1923 — ‘24

by

H. L. Dutcher

— a C/DPHS reprint —

*This story first appeared in*

*the Reports to the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society, Volume I, 2005.*

*Bob Gibson supplied a handwritten transcript of this H. L. Dutcher story, believed to have been composed sometime after 1983, to the C/DPHS for inclusion in the society’s archives. As far as known, prior to its appearance in the Reports, this story had never before appeared in print. The late Mr. Gibson, a relative of H. L. Dutcher, gave the society permission to print this edited version.*

I believe it was in January. The weather was clear and cold. Nights from 15 to 25 below. And there was no wind. The snow was about eighteen to twenty inches deep, and the days were beautiful.

I was working in the brickyard in Clayton, Washington, about 25 miles north of Spokane. But due to the cold weather, the

brickyard had shut down, so I was hauling cord wood for the company, which they stacked to burn in the open kilns of common brick.

I remember it was on Saturday evening. Charley Huffman was the mail carrier for the rural route. He had one boy about ten years younger than me, and a little girl about



Photo believed to be from the Mae (Huffman) Fischbach collection — date unknown.

**Harold Larue Dutcher**  
August 25, 1899 — June 9, 1991



five years old. The boy's name was Bob, and the girl's was Mae.

Charley and I were pals, always fishing or hunting together.

On this Saturday evening, Bob and an Italian boy decided to go to Deer Park to a show. Deer Park was a larger city about six miles to the south. There was no theater in Clayton. In fact, we had no telephone or electricity. The only communication with the outside was by telegraph from the train depot.

Oh yes, we did have a railroad.

So, these two boys hitch-hiked to Deer Park for the show.

About 8 p.m. the wind started to

blow. And by 9 o'clock it was screaming. And that was when the boys should be coming home.

Charley was worried that the boys had started home and got caught in the blizzard.

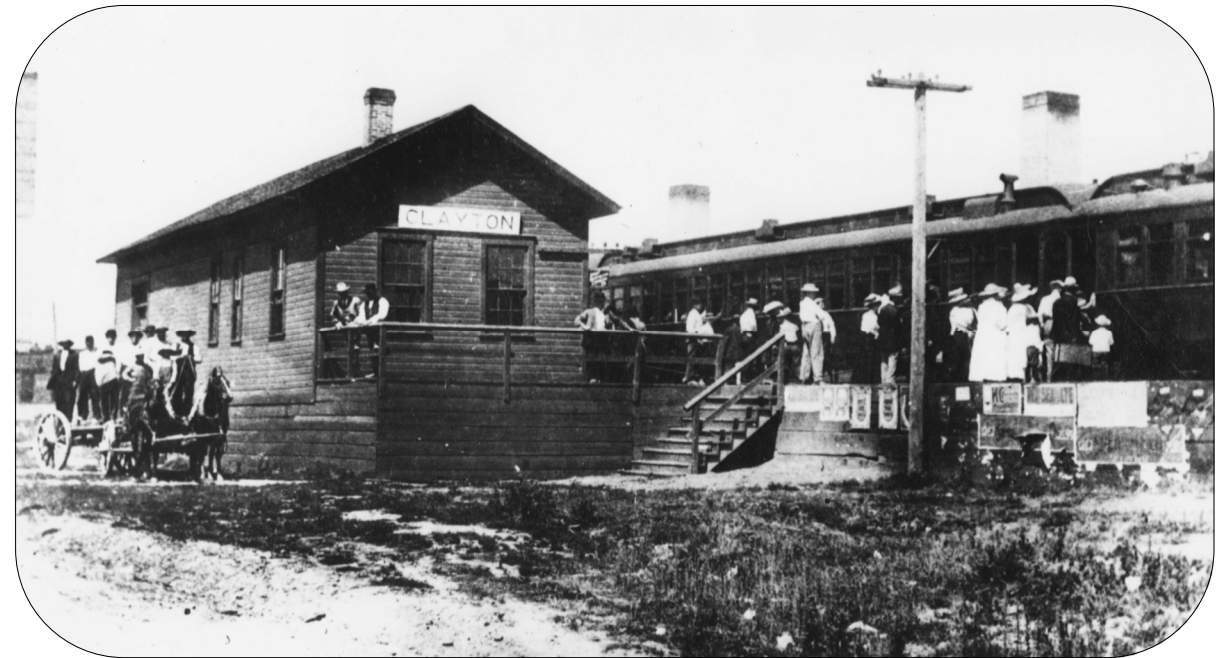
Finally, about 10:30, he could stand it no longer. He came over to my house and asked me if I thought he could make it through to Deer Park with a saddle horse.

Now, being younger and more (*adventurist?*) than Charley, I said I would go. Charley said to take his horse, as he was more used to snow — as he was driven in front of a sled when carrying the mail.

*Interior, Telegraph Office / Railroad Depot, Clayton, Washington.  
Left to Right: Ole Wind, Olga Westby, Emma Cowan, Bert Melander.*



*Photo from the Lawrence Zimmerer collection.*



*The Clayton Train Depot — circa 1908.*

*It's currently believed that Clayton's telegraph office was located in the depot.*

*(Photo from the Lawrence Zimmerer collection.)*

The highway ran alongside the railroad, and most of the way was open and clear of trees — meaning the snow could blow across and not stack when drifting.

The horse's name was Bob — named after Charlie's son.

I saddled old Bob and started for Deer Park about 11 o'clock. The wind was blowing at about seventy miles an hour I figure. The snow was like frozen sand. Fence post sticking out of the snow was the only way you could tell where the road was.

We went along pretty good — as the wind was out of the northeast, which put it pretty well to our backs. Sometimes we had three feet of snow, and sometimes it was nearly bare. But no clothes could keep that freezing wind from coming through.

My hands and feet and face were

nearly stiff from cold.

About a mile from Deer Park the road ran through a grove of pines, firs, and a little hill — and the snow drifted heavy in there. There was a distance of two or three hundred feet that was piled deep with drifted snow. I imagine it was from four to six feet deep.

Old Bob was a good snow horse, as he would not lunge like most horses do in deep snow. He would move just one leg at a time.

I would try to break trail in that fluffy stuff, and Bob would follow.

We were about two hours in that drift, and both of us were nearly given out — as that wind would nearly take your breath. We could not turn back because the wind would be in our faces, and it was so cold it would freeze your eyes.



**“The Rural Mail Carrier”**  
Oil on canvas — by Leno Prestini, 1947.

*The painting depicts Clayton mailman Charles Huffman making his winter rounds. According to Mr. Huffman’s daughter, Sadie Mae (Fischbach), the horses were named Mink and Bob — Bob believed to be the snow horse featured in Harold Dutcher’s story.*

*Permission to reproduce Leno’s painting courtesy of the Floyd and Shirley Tew family, and Cathy Johnson of the Prestini Estate.*

After an eternity we got through that drift. It was either get through or freeze right there. The road was fairly clear on to town, but we both were so tired and cold all we could do was plod.

We got into town and I found the livery stable. No attendant, but the door was unlocked. I put old Bob in a stall and gave him some hay. Then I started for the hotel.

There were two hotels in town. I

went to the nearest one and finally got the night clerk to go over the register — but no Bob or Prestini.

I stayed in the lobby for a time to warm up. About five a.m. I got to the other hotel and found the boys registered there. Thank God, that made the trip worthwhile.

There was no way I could tell Charley as we had no phones in Clayton, only telegraph. And Bert Melander would not open the station till nine o’clock.

The wind stopped blowing when daylight came, and boy was it a sad looking world.

About 9 a.m. Sunday, two men from Clayton came on horseback looking for me. They had rode all the way down the railroad

track, as it was graded higher than the highway.

We finally got the telegraph office open about 10 or 10:30 and got a message through to Clayton.

All was okay, but what a night that had been.

I saw Bob Huffman about 1983, and we had a nice chat. He asked me if I remembered that blizzard — the only one Clayton ever had. I told him I would never forget it. Nor would I ever forget old Bob, because it was due to his ability to travel through snow that we made it.

So ends another chapter of my life.

— end —

## ***Letters, Email, Bouquets & Brickbats***

— or —

### ***Bits of Chatter, Trivia, & Notices — all strung together.***

*... changing the society’s meeting place ...*

Since the society’s very beginning, late in 2002, our monthly meetings have been held at the Clayton Drive-In, just off Highway 395 at the east entrance to Clayton’s historic main drag — Railroad Avenue. The owners of the café at that time, Don and Lorraine Ball, were instrumental in founding the Clayton Historical Society, then continued in their participation and support as we evolved into the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society. Part of that support included offering use of their ca-

fé, free of charge, as the new group’s meeting place.

When the Balls sold the business to Randy and Taffy Long, the Longs continued the tradition. This wasn’t a small matter, since Randy would have to come in an hour before the café’s normal opening on meeting days, unlock the doors, then turn on the lights and heat; all this just for us. That was a burden (and expense) the Longs never complained about.

But times do change, and the society has found it advisable to move to a larger ven-

### ***Comments Policy***

*We encourage anyone with observations, concerns, corrections, divergent opinions or additional materials relating to the contents of these newsletters to write the society or contact one or more of the individuals listed in the “Society Contacts” box found in each issue. Resultant conversations can remain confidential if so desired.*



ue — the basement of Clayton's Grange Hall, located at 4478 Railroad Avenue, just west of Clayton's Brickyard Tavern and Post Office.

Among the considerations suggesting this change is an enlargement of the society's agenda — making it increasingly difficult to compress everything into an hour-long meeting. At the Drive-In, if we ran over, we'd be impinging into the café's normal operating hours. There's also an issue of space and convenience. The size and layout of the Grange's basement meeting area allows a good degree of flexibility when arranging the premise for group meetings. Not so much for the café.

So, after fifteen and a half years we're changing our meeting place. In leaving, we'd like to express to the Longs our deep appreciation for their continued hosting of our meetings over these many years, and to thank them for their past and ongoing support of the society and its goals.

We'd also like to thank Clayton Grange #456 for taking us in.

... a video of Loon Lake's sunken boat ...

Last spring, the C/DPHS launched a serious probe into the history of Loon Lake's most mysterious artifact, the drowned boat long assumed to be the remains of Evan Morgan's steam powered excursion launch, the Gwen. It quickly became apparent that at least a few of the more important questions this

research was raising could only be answered by a hands-on inspection of the artifact itself — meaning the society would have to send a dive team down. Later that summer, society members Mike Reiter and Rick Broadrick volunteered to be that team, and on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, with air supply attached and video camera in hand, they dove on the vintage artifact.

Thanks to these gentleman, and their willingness to take on the task of not only exploring the sunken boat, but also editing and posting to YouTube the resultant video, the historical society now has an exceptionally informative audiovisual presence on the internet; one that links back to the several articles on the subject — those appearing in the November (#115) and December (#116) issues of last year's *Mortarboard*. Between all, the society has begun a line of research likely to engage the public's interest for years to come. I say "*begun a line of research*" quite simply because there's so much more to explore before the mystery of the drowned boat can be put to rest.

... the boat's fate ...

Eventually Loon Lake's drowned boat will disappear, as most such lingering artifacts of the years gone by do. Its structure will collapse, and the remains dissolve into the waters it once plied. Hopefully before that happens a more detailed mapping of the boat's

### ***In Search of the Gwen.***

—— ***Link to online YouTube Video*** ——

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoTKeeqdBhQ&t=44s>

***Or simply type In Search of the Gwen into YouTube's search box.***

#### ***Further Reading.***

***"In Search of Evan Morgan's Steam Powered Motor Launch, the Legendary Gwen!"  
(In Two Parts) by Wally Lee Parker***

***Mortarboard #115, November, 2017 — page 1565 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 33.***

[http://www.cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter\\_115\\_web\\_.pdf](http://www.cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter_115_web_.pdf)

***Mortarboard #116, December, 2017 — page 1581 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 33.***

[http://www.cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter\\_116\\_web\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter_116_web_1_.pdf)

hull will be undertaken. Even though the research on hand suggests the boat isn't the Gwen, but rather another of Evan Morgan's creations, the artifact still represents an im-

portant piece of Loon Lake's history that needs to be in some way preserved.

—— ***Wally Lee Parker*** ——

## ***Minutes of the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society February 10, 2018***

In attendance: Bill Sebright, Pat Parker, Wally Parker, Mark Wagner, Mike Reiter, Roberta Reiter, Pete Coffin, Judy Coffin, Christina Burris, Mary Jo Reiter, Marilyn Reilly, Rick Brodrick, Lorraine Nord, Denny Deahl, Marie Morrill, and Ken Roselle.

Society President Bill Sebright called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. He reported that: 1) Pete Coffin gave Ron Endlich information and a picture of the Loon Lake Copper Mine. Ron has a WaCo tile possibly with the Loon Lake Copper Mine on it. 2) No one stepped forward to replace Pete Coffin as Vice President. If you're willing, let Bill know. 3) He passed around pictures of 2 examples of Clayton Terracotta from the home of Doug and Gee Sutherlin. One is from the Empress Theater in Portland, Oregon. The other from the Arlington School in Spokane, Washington.

Society Treasurer Mark Wagner reported the main checking account ended the month at \$6,497.74. There were deposits of \$300.00. One check was written for \$10.00 for incorporation filing, one for \$250.00 for insurance, one for \$126.20 for supplies and one for \$20.00 to the Clayton Grange. The web hosting account ended the month at \$602.22 with a withdrawal of \$10.95 for web hosting. The Brickyard Day account is at \$1177.48. I have renewed our incorporation papers with the State of Washington for 2018.

Print editor Wally Parker reported: 1) One hundred and ten copies of the February *Mortarboard* (#118) have been printed for distribution, and the online version has been

submitted for posting. This 12-page issue features an article detailing author Pete Coffin's research into the "*First State Bank of Deer Park.*" Also included within the *Letters/Brickbats* column are a surprising set of early twentieth century newspaper columns recounting the questionable discovery of a large mass of underground ice in the Waikiki area of the Little Spokane River. 2) A fair number of articles for the *Mortarboard* are reportedly pending submission or are under development. Hopefully some of these will begin appearing in print later this year. In the meantime, we expect to reprint at least several articles from earlier C/DPHS publications - articles that readers unfamiliar with the Society's early publishing efforts are likely to find surprising. 3) As always, your editor is looking for names to add to my list of Editorial Group associates. This is a very informal online advisory group dedicated to the task of making each issue of the *Mortarboard* as professional looking and sounding as possible. As a member, you'll receive emails regarding ongoing and upcoming projects. You'll also receive advanced proofing copies of each issue of the *Mortarboard*, allowing you to check for spelling, punctuation, word usage, continuity or perceptibility problems prior to publication. Membership in the Society is not required. That said, the Editorial Group is the primary reason the *Mortarboard* continues to improve, and the addition of your voice would be appreciated.

Webmaster Marie Morrill reported

that she has uploaded the February Mortarboard and replaced the December Mortarboard. We received 2 different requests to use pictures — one for a museum project in Boston, and then the latest from someone in Norway putting together a television program. So, it looks like people are actually looking at our site, not just “hitting” on it!

Rick Brodrick and Mike Reiter showed a 13-minute video of their dive to the submerged boat in Loon Lake last summer. The video was well received by all. Rick and Mike did a great job of filming and editing the movie. Mike said that he will put the video on YouTube.

We need to find a permanent meeting place. The meeting room at First Street Bar and Grill cost \$110. Food orders are subtracted from the \$110. The meeting room at the Pizza Factory is free, but you are strongly encouraged to order food. Both would require a change in meeting time. The Clayton Grange would probably require a donation. The table

configuration at the Grange makes it possible for all to be at the same table. No change in meeting time would be necessary at the Grange. After much discussion a motion was made by Mike Reiter to continue meeting at the Grange with a \$20.00 monthly donation. Lorraine Nord seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Marilyn announced the Sweetheart Pie event at Yokes to benefit Miss Deer Park today.

Marilyn also said the St. Mary’s Church is having a mortgage burning party this weekend.

February 7 was the first planning meeting for the 35<sup>th</sup> Brickyard Day.

Next meeting: Saturday, March 10, 2017, at 9 AM at the Clayton Grange Hall.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 AM.

The Society meeting minutes submitted by Mark Wagner, acting Secretary.

———— end ————

### Society Contacts

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Wally Lee Parker, Editor of Print Publications — [bogwen100@msn.com](mailto:bogwen100@msn.com) — (509) 467-9433

Website — <http://www.cdphs.org>

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### Permission to Reprint Policy

When requests to reprint C/DPHS materials are received, such will be granted in almost all instances — assuming of course that we have the right to extend such permission. In instances where we don’t have that right, we will attempt to place the requester in contact with the owner of the intellectual property in question. But, as a matter of both prudence and common courtesy, in all instances a request to reprint must be made, and must be made in writing (letter or email), before any C/DPHS materials are reprinted.

Volunteer proofreaders for this issue: Rick Hodges, Bill Sebright, Lina Swain, and Ken Westby.

From “The Coast” magazine,  
April, 1907



### See Yourself in Print.

*The Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society’s department of Print Publications is always looking for original writings, classic photos, properly aged documents and the like that may be of interest to our readers. These materials should be rooted within, though not limited to, northern Spokane County, southeastern Stevens County, and southern Pend Oreille County. As for types of materials, family or personal remembrances are always considered. Articles of general historical interest — including pieces on natural history, archeology, geology and such — are likely to prove useful. In other words, we are always searching for things that will increase our readers’ understanding and appreciation of this region’s past. As for historical perspective; to us history begins whenever the past is dusty enough to have become noteworthy — which is always open to interpretation. From there it extends back as deep as we can see, can research, or even speculate upon.*

*Copyright considerations for any materials submitted are stated in the “Editorial and Copyright Policy” dialog box found on page 1,628 of this issue. For any clarifications regarding said policy, or any discussions of possible story ideas or the appropriateness of certain types of material and so on, please contact the editor via the email address supplied on the same page.*

———— the editor ————

### **New Venue for Society Meetings:**

*On the Second Saturday of each month, at 9 a.m., the Clayton / Deer Park Historical Society will be meeting in the basement of the Clayton Grange Hall, the south side of Railroad Avenue, Clayton, Washington. Our meetings are open to any who wish to attend.*