

Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

## *In This Issue:*

- **Preview ..... P2**
- **President's Report ..... P4**
- **Thirty Years of Orchard Legacy ..... P7**
- **History Revisited at the Farm:  
18 th Century Reenactment ..... P9**
- **Growing an Island Treasure: The Garden Market ..... P11**
- **A Brief History of Coop II ..... P12**
- **The Heritage Apple Orchard Project ..... P14**
- **A Short, Bright Spotlight on Coop 1,  
the Gift Shop and museum ..... P16**

Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

PREVIEW

## Spring Newsletter 2025 Anderson Island Historical Society

*Edited by Sally Buchanan*

*Format and graphics by Jen Guo*

**Welcome** to Spring at the Farm! As islanders emerge from our cozy places or return from our sunspot, we smile at our island's remarkable beauty and community again. This exciting year commemorates our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as an organization committed to preserving, protecting and engaging visitors with island history. The Spring Newsletter highlights some of the legacy that enriches our farm.

**Throughout winters**, share and care, lectures and other activities keep us together. From skill and effort by President Bob Bedoll and Docent Chair Lee Ann Whitaker, the award- winning film, *The Tahoma*, entertained us. Check it out on YouTube or our web page, <https://www.anderson-island.org>. Rain or shine, volunteers have worked hard to maintain the property and improve many exhibits. Allow yourself time to enjoy the new history exhibits in this edition and in person.

**Coming Events:** On Farm Day, May 24, we enjoy the formal kick-off to the summer season, and events Chair Serena Frank has increased activities beyond the expansive plant sale for which we are known. For the second year, a **historic reenactment** event will land on our lawns June 7 and 8. This very special interactive event is presented by the Spirit of '76 Living History Association. July 5 brings our biggest fundraiser, the **annual Salmon and Rib Bake**, and a huge silent Auction. Jill Aschendorf and her team welcome your donations and your shopping.

**More to read and learn:** Chicken Coops 1 and 2 provide an example of transformation from old to new while preserving history. Our chicken

Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

## PREVIEW

coops, already futuristic in their time, have become important museum buildings of today, with up-to-date heating and cooling systems. The Spring Spotlight shines on Coop1 and the dedicated gift shop co-managers, Leslie Lamb and Virginia Cummings. Meanwhile, Rick and Melissa Anderson wrote the fascinating story of how Coop 2 started and has recently been changed and upgraded.

Gus Camacho reports the apple orchard history and Rick Anderson reveals the vision of a new heritage orchard. Cider appears at the **Apple Squeeze** in the fall (date depends on ripening). Gardeners share produce and flowers for **Saturday Garden Markets**. See the exciting new reveal in Susie Cunningham's article. Our orchards and gardens exemplify the contributions of Anderson Island Historical Society: a group of caring, willing islanders who will continue to grow our story. Come along with us for the ride and share your energy. 🍏

Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

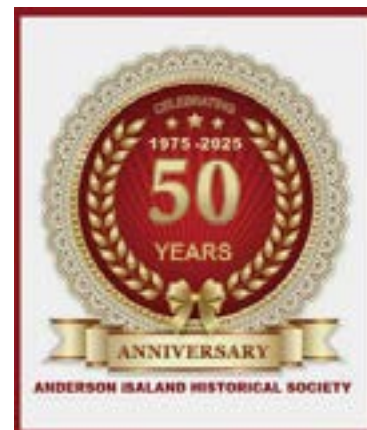
## President's Report

*by Bob Bedoll*

Welcome to our Spring 2025 Newsletter. This is our 50th Anniversary, and we are excited to share the excitement with you.

### HOW IT ALL BEGAN

The history of the Historical Society begins in 1975. Batchelor brothers Rudolf and Oscar Johnson, sons of the original farm owners John and Alma Marie Johnson, passed away in 1969 and 1975. There was no direct heir to the farm, so it passed to Alma Ruth Laing, John



Johnson's granddaughter. The residents of Anderson Island, who grew up eating Johnson Farm eggs and drinking Johnson Farm milk, felt that the farm should be preserved, rather than becoming just another subdivision. A small group, including Lois Scholl, Hazel Heckman,

Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

REPORT

Rick Anderson, Betty Mae Anderson, Russ Camon, Vivian Gordon, and Sandy Shepard, hatched a plan to create the “Anderson Island Historical Society”, in the hope that Alma Ruth would donate the farm to the new organization.

Lois Scholl, with the help of her nephew John Van Buskirk, drew up the “Articles of Incorporation”. They were signed on August 8, 1975, making the organization official. Rick Anderson, our current “Archives” Chairman, became the organization’s first president. Sure enough, in October of 1975, Alma Ruth donated 7 acres to AIHS, and the Johnson Farm became a permanently preserved part of Anderson Island history.

In honor of this event, AIHS will be having a small celebration for our members in early August. We are still putting plans together, so any ideas that you have would be greatly appreciated. Of course, we will have the appropriate birthday cake (with fifty candles), and other goodies, along with a presentation on “How it All Began”. Stay tuned for more details.

Here is the link to the original articles of incorporation:

[https://www.anderson-island.org/hs/doc/Articles\\_of\\_Incorporation.pdf](https://www.anderson-island.org/hs/doc/Articles_of_Incorporation.pdf)

## **FARM IMPROVEMENTS**

Our team of volunteers has been working throughout 2024 and 2025 to bring improvements to the farm. One of the most significant of these is the installation of a heat pump in Coop 2, which will heat the entire exhibit area, as well as the Lois Scholl room.

We are also adding signage to the historical farm implements and vehicles that are hiding in plain sight in the vehicle shed. Hopefully, the signs will draw visitors to this area, where some interesting and

Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

## REPORT

significant vehicles are on display, including a restored 1923 Model T, a Model TT truck, and some older but impressive farm implements. Ever wondered how a hay baler or grain binder worked? These are the great mechanical masterpieces of the Twentieth Century. Have a look at the new signage in these displays.

You may also have noticed the gravel we added to the north parking lot – you can now safely park your car there without getting stuck in the mud or sliding into the fence!

### THANK YOU

This column is my opportunity to thank everyone for the continued success of AIHS. First, our hard-working board of directors: Archives Chairman Rick Anderson, Education Chairman Lee Ann Whitaker, Events Chairman Serena Frank, Operations Chairman Jim Battishill, Past President Ed Stevenson, Publicity Chairman Jon Field, Secretary Sally Buchanan, Treasurer Todd Billett, and Vice President Carol Paschal. These folks work tirelessly (and for free) to manage our money, create our displays, maintain and improve our physical plant, and create and oversee our events. We couldn't succeed without their dedication and leadership.

Next are our volunteers. Every Wednesday morning, a work party of several dozen dedicated volunteers turn up to help with maintenance and improvements of the farm. Throughout the year, every event is staffed by dozens of volunteers. In all, over 100 volunteers help at the farm every year, and AIHS exists because of them. Thank you.

Finally, a 'thank you' to all our members, for showing up, for being involved, for making AIHS such a great organization, and for making Anderson Island such a wonderful place to live. ●

### Thirty Years of Orchard Legacy

*By Gus Camacho*

When I bought my first home, it was already 60 years old. My curiosity about the history was triggered as I cared for and updated the house. I discovered old grape vines and a pomegranate tree. I wondered who planted them and why they chose those varieties. My family and I left our prints on that home over our 14 years, but time marched on, and another family is imprinting their lives and vision.

At our Historic Johnson Farm, an apple orchard provides such a legacy. Fortunately, we know something about the Orchard's origins.

It all started in 1991 when a Korean War Veteran and Chemist for the Food and Drug Administration moved to Anderson Island to begin his retirement.

Growing up on a farm in Montana, Dick Throm had a bug for gardening, and he began volunteering at the Johnson Farm. As history tells it, Jim Singer, the President of the Historical Society around that time proposed starting an Apple Orchard on the farm and Dick took on the challenge.

The Orchard has over 120 apple trees of different varieties. Dick and his crew of volunteers dug the holes and planted most of them. He started with three varieties: the Gravenstein, Liberty, and Spartan apples. In



Fall, 2024

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

## ORCHARD

the beginning, Dick had neither fencing nor a lot of orchard experience. Over the next 25 years Dick learned about diseases, pruning, and pests. The volunteer team constantly improved the orchard, adding fencing to protect from deer, as well as irrigation, organic spraying, pollinators, and additional varieties.

The Orchard was a great success and the main star of the annual Anderson Island Apple Squeeze, producing hundreds of gallons of delicious apple cider each year. For those who don't know, it takes about 20-25 pounds of apples to make 1 gallon of cider.

Eventually, Dick retired and relocated away from the island, but he continues to contribute to our community. Jerry Simonsen had been working with Dick for several years before he left and Jerry received the mantle of leadership. A small business owner before moving to the island, Jerry came to horticulture through his experience with flowers. In addition to maintaining the Orchard, Jerry's contributions included adding and subtracting trees to improve the apple yield. Jerry and his group of volunteers achieved the highest recorded yield two years ago when the apple squeeze produced over 400 gallons of cider.

Jerry spent 5 years taking care of the Orchard, and now the succession of caring for the Orchard has passed on to me. As I look at the orchard, I appreciate how each tree was individually selected, planted, and cared for. I value the knowledge and experience that have been handed down, and realize that I, too, am only a temporary caretaker in this relentless march of time. Feel free to come and enjoy the orchard and contribute your effort and love of horticulture each Wednesday from 9 AM to noon.



Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

## History Revisited at the Farm: 18th Century Reenactment

*By Arild Barrett*

A living history event will occupy the Johnson Farm on the weekend of 7-8 June. This late-18th - century themed event is put on by the Spirit of '76 Living History Association. Our group is dedicated to presenting a live reenactment experience and educating islanders about 18th - century soldier, sailor, and civilian lives. Interactive events, camps, and demonstrations bring visitors into life during the American Revolutionary War up to the Peter Puget visit to Anderson Island in 1792. Come visit our period encampment on the lawn in front of the Johnson Farmhouse to experience 18th -century skills such as nautical ropework, sewing, food preparation, navigation, and military drill, including cannon and musket demonstrations by costumed reenactors. Last year, this event proved very popular; we hope you will join us! ●



Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS. A LITTLE NEW NEWS

EVENT



# GARDEN

## Growing an Island Treasure: The Garden Market

by *Susie Cunningham*

The 2025 Garden Market will kick off on Saturday, June 21, when the first harvests of our island produce and flowers are ripe and ready to pick! Susie Cunningham and Jane Evans will continue as market managers and are delighted to welcome Karen Frank to the team. We have a fabulous group of volunteers, but we can always use more. Contact us at [aihsgardenmarket@gmail.com](mailto:aihsgardenmarket@gmail.com) if you'd like to join the fun. It's a great way to meet people!



We have been busy during the off-season. Volunteers have been working with gardener extraordinaire, Anna Davidoff, to choose, start, and plant premium vegetables and flowers in the Community Garden and greenhouse for the market and plant sale. Additional growing beds have been added, so we'll have lots and lots of flowers and spectacular bouquets for purchase. New plants and produce will appear weekly as they develop.

Be sure to add this to your shopping list! A special canvas tote bag with an original "Garden Market" design by island artist Dacia Reavis-Fugere will be sold at the market and in the Gift Shop, perfect for transporting your Garden Market purchases or as a gift.

It's going to be a great summer at the Garden Market. We can't wait to see you in June! 🌱

Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

## HISTORY

### **A Brief History of Coop II**

*by Melissa and Richard Anderson*

This Chicken Coop once housed as many as 2000 chickens, raised primarily for their eggs. The unique design was developed by Professor George Shoup of the Washington State University Extension Service in the early 1920s. As an army veteran wounded in WWI, Oscar Johnson was entitled to some vocational training, which he took at WSU (then WSC) in 1920-21. There, he was certainly exposed to the new methods of poultry management developed by Professor Shoup. These coops were soon available in kit form, complete to the last board, which were assembled on site, presumably by brothers Oscar and Rudy Johnson in the late 1920s. From the 1930s through the 1960s, the Johnsons were the primary suppliers of eggs to the island community and served some steady customers in Steilacoom and Tacoma as well. In later years, teenage boys put in long hours all summer long caring for the chickens, putting up hay, and more (watch The Johnson Farm Story on YouTube to learn more about this).

Around 1970, as the brothers aged and their mainland market dwindled due to competition from more mechanized farms on the mainland, egg production dropped off until there were only a few dozen chickens in the two big coops. Following this, around 1980, Donna and Leonard Palmer established Cackleberry House in Coop II, showcasing a small flock of chickens of a variety of breeds. Some of her hand-painted signs are still on display in the coop. When the Palmers left the island in 1982, the coop was cleaned out and was used for storage and display of items in the museum's collection. The Lois Scholl Room was dedicated in 1990 and used for various member and board meetings until the completion of the Archival Building in 2017. That kitchen was upgraded to a commercial kitchen around 2015 and is now used mainly for warm

Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

## HISTORY

fellowship of the volunteer work parties in coffee and lunches, as well as a Monday Share and Care group.

In 2018, a portion of the east wing of Coop II was made available to American Legion Post 265 to establish a museum and displays honoring Anderson Island residents who have served in the nation's armed forces. The need for better climate control of the entire Coop space has led to a cooperative effort between the American Legion and AIHS, insulating the building and installing ductless heat pumps. This major effort has transformed the building into a comfortable home for island history.

Between the military display and the Lois Scholl Room are displays documenting different aspects of island history, including poultry management, domestic life, the postal service, and maritime activities. Where else could one find displays featuring Moonshining and antique typewriters under the same roof? Curator Melissa Anderson is delighted for the improved conditions for these exhibits. Coop II remains a work in progress. Be sure to visit it when it is open, and consider volunteering to participate in its on-going upgrading. ●

Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

## HERITAGE

### **The Heritage Apple Orchard Project**

*by Richard Anderson*

As you explore the island, you may have noticed old fruit trees by the side of the road, or perhaps back in the woods or blackberry patches. In the spring, their blooms are prominent, and in the fall, they may be ripe with fruit. Apples, plums, pears – many of these old trees are hollow, gnarled, fallen even, yet they somehow survive, despite their obvious neglect, year after year. Some are “seedlings,” spread by the deer, birds, raccoons and coyotes. Still others are survivors of old orchards, planted by the early pioneers or their children, in some cases dating back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are at least 26 of these orchards on the island where the old trees cling precariously to life and give forth a crop to this day.

In recent years, there has been renewed interest in these old varieties, many of which are nearly extinct. David Benscoter, who presented a Historical Society lecture on this subject a few years ago, has directed a project in eastern Washington to identify and propagate these heirloom fruit trees, particularly apples (available for viewing on the AIHS website). Over the years, these old varieties have been abandoned and neglected, as commercial interests have shifted focus to more marketable varieties. However, many apple lovers are less than enthusiastic about the available supermarket fruit. The old varieties were often grown for a specific purpose, such as baking, sauce making, and cider production. By today’s standards, they may be less attractive, less uniform in their size, less amenable to shipping, and liable to ripen less consistently. It’s the old “Something lost, something gained.”

Inspired by David Benscoter’s article in the Ruralite and his AIHS presentation, the Historical Society has initiated a project to create a

Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

## HERITAGE

heritage orchard at Johnson Farm. Approximately one acre has been set aside down in the meadow near the old barn for this purpose. Current thinking is to have 100 trees representing 25 old varieties, grafted from shoots taken from trees from various island orchards. Scion wood from 17 such trees was delivered to Burnt Ridge Nursery in early March for grafting. The new trees should be available early next spring. The wood was selected from trees that are known to produce excellent fruit, suitable for one use or another. Several of these varieties have already been identified by DNA testing at the WSU department of Agriculture, including Baldwin, Rhode Island Greening, and Belmont. In time, it is hoped that all varieties will be identified in this manner and identified in the orchard, as well as the pioneer orchard where they were discovered.

This year, the orchard area will be prepared for planting and a 7-foot fence installed to protect them. Also, volunteers will be closely monitoring old trees around the island, recording when they bloom, when their fruit ripens, and noting the size, shape, color and taste of their fruit. The plan is to include at least eight more varieties in next winter's grafting program. If you are aware of old apple trees that could be included in this project, please notify Rick Anderson or Gus Comacho. Note: please do not trespass on private property, as it is important to secure the owners' support before considering their trees for this project.

Naturally, volunteers are needed for the success of this venture, and anyone interested is urged to contact Gus or Rick. Also, fundraising is essential if we are to meet our goals. Anyone who donates \$100 or more will have a tree dedicated in their honor in the orchard and will have special rights to some of the fruit each year. There is also the possibility of grafting more trees for anyone who would like to grow them on their own property. That would logically happen sometime in the future after the new trees start to bear and the qualities of their fruit become known. Please contact AIHS on the website, if interested! ●

Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

## **A Short, Bright Spotlight on Coop 1, the Gift Shop and museum**

*by Sally Buchanan*

A fairly inconspicuous sign at the corner of Otso Point Road and Camus/Lake Josephine directs drivers to a gift shop. But wow! A highly professional A+ gift shop belies the sign. Visitors to the Gift Shop in Coop 1 are amazed at the quality of the items, many hand-crafted, at a lower price.



A recent conversation with Co-managers Leslie Lamb and Virginia Cummings validated my appreciation for their unique contribution to the farm. To my compliment, these friends replied, “You should hear the responses when, on shopping trips, we explain that we work in a chicken coup at a historic farm! It helps them to understand our non-profit status and they allow us to purchase discounted samples instead of the large quantity usually sold to commercial gift shops.”

This cost benefit is passed onto customers, starting with low overhead from a complete volunteer package, which includes weekend work from local consignors and a further discount for card-carrying AIHS members.

A little personal history: Leslie literally walked into the shop 15 years

SPOTLIGHT

Spring, 2025

# Anderson Island HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A LITTLE OLD NEWS . A LITTLE NEW NEWS

## SPOTTING

ago and offered to help Kathy Bailey, who managed the shop for 14 years. Virginia is a consignor who agreed to help Leslie about 12 years ago. These dedicated volunteers



work nearly full time to develop the shop and displays, work with local consignors, and shop at buyers' shows to keep things fresh with fair trade products. Recently, a part time bookkeeper was added to the team. During the three-month hiatus from open hours, Virginia and Leslie work to clean, rearrange, learn new technology and shop for new items. The Gift Shop pours about \$10,000 into the farm each year.

Leslie and Virginia are artists. We all smile to see the charming chicken with glasses on the *Little Library* outside Coop 1, painted by Virginia. Many consignors are island artists and crafters, who fill the shop with incredible knits, embroidery, wood products, pine needle baskets, ceramics and other art. Starting in May, a "Featured Artist of the Month" will showcase one or two artists at the Gift Shop to meet visitors. Chris Murphy, a potter, will manage the program. The plan is to highlight a different consignor artist or two every month. The artist will be available to explain and sell their artwork.

Finally, to the question: What would you like members to know, both Virginia and Leslie answered, "That we are here." Do come and bring family and friends to this jewel of the farm. ●