

PORT TOWNSEND

1910 - 1924



Memories of a Native Daughter



by

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Streets, for fresh eggs. They were always ready for me. Mrs. Intermela was a woman of few words so the exchange of silver for eggs was made and I was on my way back home. The best times were when Mr. Intermela was home to hand me the eggs for he liked to visit and made the errand fun. He had been the sheriff at one time and his two children were friends of the older Siebenbaums which may be why he was so nice to me.

The months where there was an 'R' in the spelling meant digging clams. During the night, if the tide was out, the beach at Scow Bay was dotted with Indian bonfires. The following morning the Indians would row to town to deliver door to door. Mrs. Hicks, short, squatty and almost lost inside the many layers of gathered calico, would head for our house for Mama was a faithful customer. She invariably sat on our back stoop to rest. It seemed like hours before she was ready to leave. Indians and cows shared equally in my timidity so I didn't approve when Papa, who could speak a little of the jargon, stopped to visit with her. The "kla-how-yah" (how do you do), "wik" (no), "klootchman" (woman), "klat-a-wah" (go away) didn't make sense to me and I eagerly waited for her to head for the gate.

A summer chore was getting fruit for canning, jelly and preserves. This led us from one end of town to the other. Mrs. Long, near the park, grew the best raspberries so if our crop wasn't large enough we counted on hers. Mrs. Long had the added attraction of a parrot that could talk and dance. John Shade, a fine gentleman, brought the himalayan berries to the neighborhood and they soon found their way to our kitchen and became such a favorite that we planted our own bush. In the good years when we had extra pears we sold them for 25 cents a bucket. Mama had two sources for her favorite pie cherries. Both were a considerable distance from our house. Mr. Grable

had a good-sized orchard and garden out across the valley almost to Discovery Road. It was tucked behind some second growth timber at the end of a path. There to one side was his bright yellow house. He didn't have a phone so we would have to walk out to his place and arrange for a delivery when the harvest was right. Thank goodness he made deliveries. The time came when he gave up gardening and, luckily, Mama learned that Mr. Lambert grew the same variety of pie cherry. His place was out beyond the fair grounds on 49th Street. Again we had to walk out to place our order and when the fruit was ripe he would make the delivery. Eventually Mama harvested her own supply for she had a tree planted in the backyard.

In the fall thoughts turned to Grandpa Messner's sauerkraut. He lived with his son Jacob and family on Pierce Street. His garden of cabbage was behind the house. This was an errand that had lots of volunteers. The chance to nibble on the tart stuff while walking home was irresistible. The whole neighborhood waited for Grandpa's fall batch to ripen. Unfortunately, he never seemed to make enough. The Messners moved away and Mama decided to try her luck. She had the proper earthen crock, the cabbage and salt. The cabbage was shredded into the crock. Needing something to bruise it, she chose one of John's baseball bats. Stomping it to bring out the juice ended after one stroke for the bottom of the crock fell out and the contents covered her clean floor. That was the last time she tried making sauerkraut.

The Chinese story in Port Townsend was covered by Margaret Forword and printed in The Leader in 1969. I contributed a few items concerning those who had truck gardens and delivered house to house.

Home made dresses were the norm for my growing up years. A sewing machine was

being a graduate of the Coast Guard Academy at New London, Connecticut.

Outfitting ships for sea was a prosperous business and Port Townsend had its share of ship chandlers. They were the link between land and sea for many sailors. It was no wonder that the town had a definite seaport flavor. Captains and crew, returning from long voyages, brought back gifts for friends and family. These could be as large as a piece of furniture or as small as a sea shell. Lacquer ware, silks, screens, fine woods and china all found their way into the homes. It wasn't unusual to see a huge sea shell or large chunks of coral decorating someone's front porch. The Museum's Bash collection is a good example.

Domestic animals were taken on board for long sea trips. At least the first few months the crew would have fresh milk and eggs. Chickens and ducks weren't the only feathered species to travel. Many a Captain had a parrot to keep him company and a number of those parrots ended up living in Townsend. These brilliantly colored birds were great attractions especially if they could talk and most could. I don't think they were considered trustworthy for we were always cautioned to keep our distance. Mrs. Long, who lived near the park, had a pearl gray with pink and white touches. The encyclopedia classifies it as a native of Africa. We saw a good deal of this bird for Mr. Long worked for Papa and we often visited with Mrs. Long. Polly could dance either on the swinging bar inside of her cage or on Mrs. Long's finger. She only performed to one special tune that Mrs. Long would whistle. Polly mastered the standard "Polly wants a cracker" and swore at soldiers walking by. This happened a lot, for the Longs lived on the street used by the soldiers to get to the Crow's Nest path to the Fort. The Longs had picture perfect vegetable and berry gardens and undoubtedly attracted uninvited guests (hungry soldiers) at least they got the blame so Polly was taught to swear at them.