

History Nook

History of the Blue Heron B&B

By: ERIC EPPIG

for the Orcas Island Historical Museum

Located across from West Sound Bay, the Blue Heron Bed and Breakfast boasts spectacular views of the sound and the adjacent islands. Just a short ride from the Orcas ferry landing and bustling Eastsound Village, the Blue Heron offers its guests the best that the island has to offer from a convenient location. In 1890, Catherine and Joseph Verrier, French Canadian homesteaders, constructed the first private residence on the site where the Blue Heron Bed and Breakfast stands today. Since the property's settlement, it has changed ownership 18 times, incurring a series of dramatic transformations in the process. The Flaherty family purchased the property for \$800 in 1941 from TJ and Katherine Williams, the longest-tenured owners at the time, and would manage the property until 1980. During that time, Max Flaherty built a small cabin separate from the residency that would serve as a playhouse for his daughters. By 1983, the property was in a state of disarray: overgrown thistles, cobwebs, and sea spray took its toll on the main residential home. However, Christina Orchid and Robert Hermanson bought and restored the home, saving it from imminent demolition. From there, they transformed the home into a three room bed-and-breakfast, utilizing the small cabin as a fourth accommodation, thus the Blue Heron was born. In 2000, the property changed ownership again, and its owners turned the private cabin into a private space for family and friends. Additionally, UC Davis leased the prop-



Contributed photo

The Blue Heron Bed and Breakfast located in West Sound

erty to provide housing to its staff and to serve as a new office for the up-and-coming SeaDoc Society. Today, the Blue Heron has resumed its role as one of Orcas Island's finest bed-and-breakfasts under owners Bogdan and Carol Kulminski. Offering guests a complete continental breakfast, private decks, and easy access to the attractions that the island has to offer, the Blue Heron has become destination lodging for visitors to the island. The home is furnished with antique furniture and décor from the early 1900s to reflect its fascinating and lengthy history. Each room is named after local wildlife (Pelican, Egret, Walrus, and Otter) and has a truly unique atmosphere. In fact, a surprising number of Orcas Island's locals have spent some part of their lives living, renting, remodeling, repairing or just visiting this wonderful historic home.

Note: Eric is a junior at Boston College studying History and International Politics. His family has a home on the island and he is volunteering at the museum this summer as a research historian.

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