



The History of a Settler in Birch Bay

By Richard Freeman

This part of America is still young enough that it seems something short of a miracle that a piece of property has been in the family for 149 years. The Vogt Family of Birch Bay meets such a qualification.

In the late 1860's Charles Vogt, a young boy from Germany arrived on the east coast. He stayed a short time, then started west, stopping in Illinois, then on to San Francisco. He took a boat to Olympia, where he learned that property for homesteading was available at Birch Bay. He went to Semiahmoo where a cannery and a mill were operating. From there he walked through the woods to stake his claim of 160 acres of waterfront property in the center of Birch Bay. There he built his log cabin on a flat just north of where the Birch Bay roller rink was (eventually) located. This was in 1871.

Charles Vogt became part of a small group of settlers who formed the first permanent settlement on Birch Bay. He was lonely, there were no roads and scarcely a trail, no neighbors nearer than Semiahmoo. Charles began to dream of a wife and a home life. On his trips to Semiahmoo, he became acquainted with Mr. Richards who had married and lived along the trail to Birch Bay. Mr. Richards had a widowed sister, Amy White, residing in England. Through Richard's encouragement, Charles began a correspondence with her. In due time, Amy White arrived in Semiahmoo and before long she and Charles were married. In the following years three children were born to this marriage, Otto, Grover, and Amy. Although they are no longer living, their children still live on the original homestead and own much of the waterfront property in the center of Birch Bay.

Grover had one son, Robert. Otto had two sons, Earl and William and Amy had two daughters and a son, Helen Snow, Betty Gaudette and Ernest Jacobs.

Some members of this third generation have purchased additional Birch Bay properties over the years and have sold some of their properties for development. But by and large, they still own much of the original 160 acres. In 1883, Charles Vogt contributed property for a school house which was built on the bluff above the bay. In 1884 the records show that there were 17 pupils attending. Charles and his wife are buried in the Hillsdale Cemetery on Blaine Road, along with her sister, Mrs. Richards.

Now some 149 years after Charles Vogt homesteaded at Birch Bay, a fifth generation of Vogts, many of whom still live on or near the original property, take an active part in the Birch Bay community. Over the years, they have operated resorts, the golf course, recreational facilities, and mobile home parks and generally have made Birch Bay into an area that is enjoyed by all the people of Whatcom County.