

The C/DPHS meets at 9 a.m. every second Saturday of the month. Join us at the Clayton Drive-In, Clayton, Washington.  
Visit our website at <http://www.cdphs.org>

*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.*

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

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**FOUR PLANTS OPERATED BY SPOKANE CO.**

**Electric Power for Two Plants Furnished by One Generator—Modern Methods of Manufacture Used Throughout**

It is such enterprising progressive companies as that of the Washington Brick, Lime and Sewer Pipe Co., at Spokane, Wash., which brought the state of Washington up to the twelfth place in rank in the clay-working industry, for the year 1909. Notwithstanding the fact that there are only 122 operating firms reported by the government, the value of the clay products for that year amounted to \$2,066,735. These thriving clay plants go far towards making the Pacific Northwest a "land of golden promise" to the Eastern man seeking a location in the West.

The Washington Brick, Lime & Sewer Pipe Co., while maintaining offices and headquarters in Spokane, operates four large plants, one situated at Spears, two at Clayton

and one at Freeman, Wash., which make a large variety of products, including face and common brick, sewer pipe and terra cotta.

**The Face Brick Department.**

The face brick plant is situated at Clayton, Wash., on a spur of the Great Northern Railway, and adjacent to it is the large terra cotta works. The buildings of the face brick plant are extensive and include power and machine buildings, an immense dryer and a clay storage shed. This plant was burned down eleven years ago, was rebuilt, and was again burned down in August 1908, since which time it has been rebuilt and equipped with the most modern machinery.

The clay storage sheds at this plant are used only for storing such clays as will be needed when weather conditions prohibit the mining of clay. As the clays are very fat and plastic, it is necessary for the moisture to be drawn out before the dry pans can handle them. For this purpose a large dryer or hot floor has been constructed, consisting of several laterals of units, so that the various sections of the floor can be heated at different times as required. Wood is used for firing this dryer and draft is furnished by a 50-foot stack.

Overhead of this dryer are a series of trestles on which the cars from the clay pit run and from which the clay is dumped on to the hot floor. From the hot floor it is shoveled on to wheelbarrows and carried to the two 9-ft. dry pans. The discharge from the dry pan is handled by two bucket and belt elevators fifty-four feet high. The material is screened on sectional piano wire screens, the tailings from the screen running down on to a set of smooth rollers which also discharge on to a bucket and belt elevator, and the clay both from the rollers and screens is elevated either to a bin above the pug mill or on to a Jeffreys conveyor, which discharges into a bin over a Boyd press.

The pug mill is arranged so that it can be used to prepare clay for the Freeze "J" machine or for the American No. 2 Giant machine. The "J" machine is used exclusively for making brick and the "Giant" for making hollow ware, such as fireproofing, etc. The plant is equipped with a Richardson repress but the company states that the quality of the brick turned out by the Freeze machine and cutting table is of such a superior grade that they have not as yet made use of the repress.

In the engine room is a 320-h.p. Allis-Chalmers Corliss engine, which drives onto the main line shaft with a 30-in. leather belt. This main shaft is five inches in diameter, carried on iron trusses, and where pulleys are fitted to the various machines they are equipped with a lock and clutch so that one machine or a series of machines can be cut out at any time desired. This engine also drives a 125 kW generator, which furnishes light for

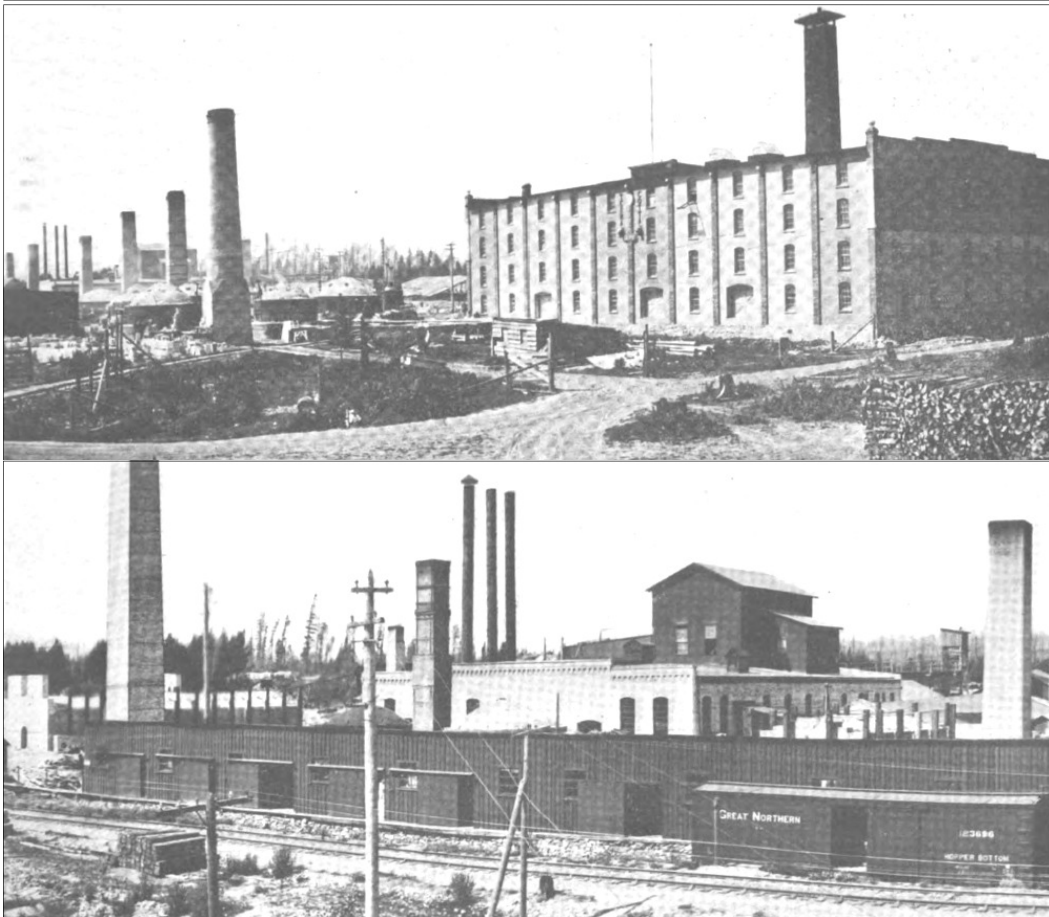
all of the plants, as well as the outbuildings, such as the company's store, boarding house, rooming houses, offices, superintendent's residence and workmen's cottages. It also furnishes power for the freight elevator which handles the clay from the pit to the different elevators and power for the pumping plants situated one-half mile from the factory. The terra cotta plant which is adjacent to the brick plant also receives its power from this generator.

A small Atlas slide valve engine in the same engine room is connected by a belt through a 30-kW generator of the direct current type and same voltage as the larger machine. This is used exclusively for lighting purposes but it is arranged to connect on the same power line with the pumping plant and to an auxiliary plant in the same building so in case anything happens to either generator or pumping plant, this auxiliary plant will take care of the water supply.

#### **The Terra Cotta Plant.**

Architectural terra cotta in an almost endless variety of shapes and colors is made in the immense building adjacent to the face brick plant, the machinery, as before mentioned, being driven by electric power furnished by the generator located at the first named plant. The clay used at this plant is mined at the brick plant and delivered on steel cars. The first process of preparation being similar to that at the face brick plant, after passing through the pug mill the clay is taken on trucks by means of a freight elevator to the sweating room in the basement, where it is allowed to soak until required for use, when it is delivered to the pressers as required.

The first floor of this four-story terra cotta plant is given up entirely to slipping and glazing and the preparation of the clay; a small space being reserved for storing the stock of casing plaster used in the manufacture of molds and models. The second floor is used for pressing and chemical laboratories and here are found the glaze grinding machines



*The Clayton Terra Cotta Plant (top) and Brick Plant (bottom) — circa 1912.*

*Copied from the September 1, 1912 issue of the "Brick and Clay Record."*

which are of the ball and jar type, in which porcelain balls and porcelain innings are used. The third floor is given up to pressing exclusively and on the fourth floor are found the drafting department, pattern making room, mold making and modeling departments.

The machinery in the terra cotta department is run by a 50-h.p. motor, receiving its power from the brick department. At the side of the motor is a two-cylinder air compressor, the air being used for spraying purposes and operating air hammers in the fitting sheds. Here also

is located a 10-kW generator which furnishes power for the operation of the freight elevator, the elevator being of the direct current type while the balance of the power is of the alternating current type.

#### **The Sewer Pipe Plant.**

Two years ago the Washington Brick, Lime & Sewer Pipe Co. placed in operation its new sewer pipe plant at Spears, Wash., four miles from Spokane. This plant is considered

one of the most up-to-date of its kind in the West, it having been laid out with the idea of economy in handling the goods and rapidity of operation in every department. In this connection, excerpts from a letter written by J. W. Strack, a structural engineer of Spokane, who made an inspection of the plant shortly after its completion, will be of interest:

*“Recently, in company with Mr. J. S. Shedden, machine expert, I spent the afternoon at the new factory of the Washington Brick, Lime & Sewer Pipe Co., east of Spokane, and was impressed with the layout, the battery of high pressure boilers, with their shaking grates, and the provision made for the economical handling of the fuel from the cars to the boiler room. In the engine room, the massive Allis-Chalmers Corliss engine with condensers, pumps and feed water heaters and the 75-h.p. automatic engine and generator for the lighting of the building were all examples of the latest and most efficient types of machines.*

*“The one main shaft from which all the machines are belted cuts down the heavy friction losses so common in factories of this character, leaving nothing but the bearing to receive attention, and in fact all the machinery is built of massive proportions, this obviating any liability of springing and its subsequent action of forcing the shaft out of alignment.*

*“The machines in the factory, especially the Stevenson wet and dry pans are massive and of the latest pattern, being substantially set on concrete foundations, the elevators for the clay being closed in to assist in overcoming any liability of excess dust in this department. The sewer pipe press is of ample proportions and the structure is such that it will not be subject to excessive strains and stresses while performing its work in turning out the sections of 30-in. pipe.*

*“The buildings, being of brick, are of large dimensions and the drying rooms are of ample capacity to handle the output of the factory. The dry hearth flue from the kilns passes through the entire basement with its several flues for the distribution of the heat*

*and the 24,000 feet of 1¼ inch pipe connecting to large headers will furnish heat to dry the product. The heat passing through the several floors by means of vents is given a very even distribution. These floors are served by a large elevator with a platform 9x10 feet which, with the two gravity elevators, is capable of handling all of the products and gives ample service for the economical moving of the entire product, cutting down the cost to a minimum.*

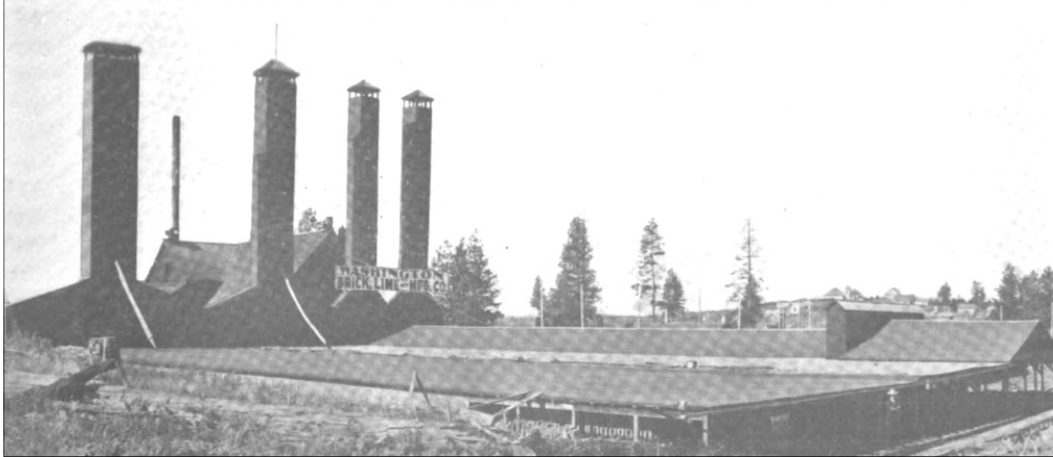
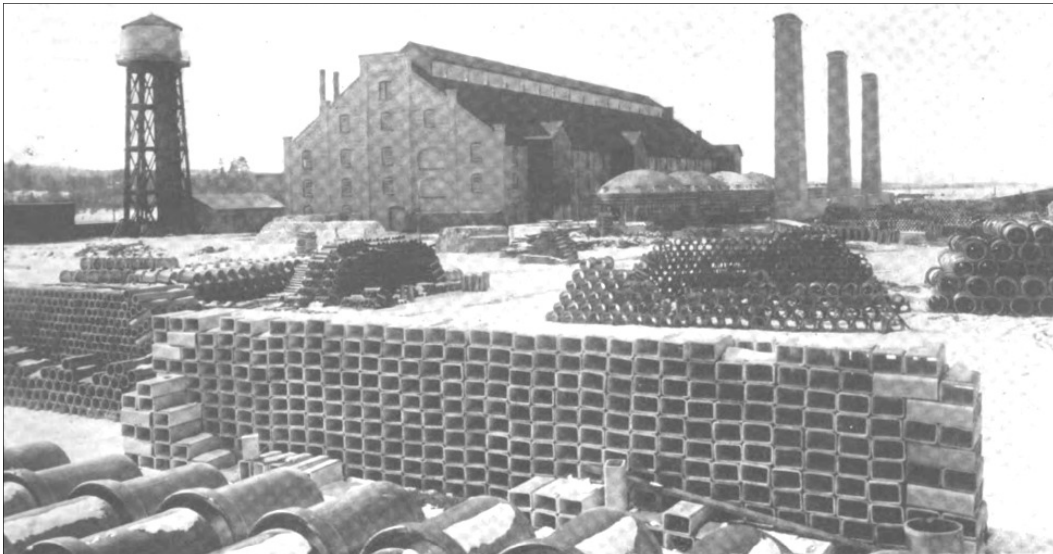
*“We were particularly impressed with the large kilns which are twenty-eight feet in diameter on the inside and thirty-five feet diameter outside. All these round kilns are provided with a separate chimney or flue sixty-two feet in height, so arranged that the excess heat can be drawn off and used in the drying rooms.*

*“The entire layout of the plant is ideal from the standpoint of maximum output with minimum cost of handling, the materials coming in on one side of the buildings and being transported during manufacture to the other side without any retracing or extra handling, the mechanical elevators doing away with manual labor throughout.*

*“The fire risk is reduced to a minimum in the construction of the buildings, the water supply coming from the private well only 100 feet deep. In the large storage tank is kept a supply of water always on hand for emergency uses. The large hot well, located near the boiler room, also tends to reduce the fuel costs as the hot water and exhaust steam from the engines and the coils are returned to the hot well and used again in the boilers, this giving a boiler feed of hot water instead of water fresh from the well.”*

In addition to the plants above described, the company operates a large common brick plant at Freeman, Wash. This is also a model factory of its type.

The clay is dumped on to a sloping steel floor immediately over a Raymond cyclone disintegrator, which in turn discharges on to a set of large smooth rollers, made in such a manner that the rolls divide in the mid-



*The Spear Sewer Pipe Plant (top) and Freeman Brick Plant (bottom) — circa 1912.  
Copied from the September 1, 1912 issue of the "Brick and Clay Record."*

dle, so that when the center wears, the ends may be turned, making the roller practically new again. From the rollers the clay is discharged on to a 9-foot Freeze pug mill and from there in to a Freeze auger machine. From the automatic cutter, the brick are delivered to an off-bearing belt, which is arranged so that off-bearings can work on both sides at the same time. The output from this machine

averages 120,000 brick per day.

By means of a transfer truck, the loaded brick are pushed into a 20-tunnel steam dryer, part of which is a Standard dryer and part a National. The kilns are of the scove type and the yards have a capacity sufficient for storing five million brick, the company having at this time on hand approximately four and one-half million brick burned and burning.

The extensive business which this company has built up throughout the Northwest is an indication of the activity and general progressive spirit of the company, the officers of which are: Joseph H. Spear, presi-

dent; David B. Tothingham, vice-president; Alfred Ruff, secretary-treasurer and Lawrence A. Spear, general manager.

— end —

*Minutes of the  
Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society  
— December 14, 2013 —*

Meeting called to order at 9:02 AM

In attendance: Pat Parker, Wally Parker, Betty Burdette, Lonnie Jenkins, Ella Jenkins, Sue Rehms, Bill Sebright, Sharon Clark, Don Reiter, Mary Jo Reiter, Penny Hutten, Roxanne Camp, Mark Wagner, Lorraine Nord, Warren Nord, Mike Reiter, Roberta Reiter, Grace Hubal, Marilyn Reilly, and Jeff Lilly.

Society President, Bill Sebright called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. He reported: 1) We had a picture request from Diana Hughes, a DPHS graduate. She is related to the Warrens, whose pictures are in one of the Big Foot Valley albums on our Website. 2) We also had a request from Elaine Clements in Andover, Massachusetts. She had seen George Dixon's name in one of the King albums. Her inquiry was sent to Eddie Kingrey. He showed her that Dixon died too early to be the one Walt King would have known.

Treasurer, Mark Wagner reported: Regular checking account balance \$3,700.08. Deposits \$80.00. The web hosting account had \$95.95 withdrawal for monthly web hosting activity. Society dues are due in January. Please give them to Mark or mail them to CDPHS, Box 293, Clayton, WA, 99110.

Grace Hubal, Secretary, reported: 1) She delivered flowers and a thank you card to Taffy and Randy Long on behalf of the Society to thank them for meeting there every month. 2) She also took Christmas gifts and cards to Odynski's and Jennifer at the Garden-spot Market to thank them for supporting the CDPHS. 3) She sent a thank you card to Ron

Heroux in Webster, Massachusetts. Ron sent an old picture of J. H. Louder who lived in the south Wild Rose area.

Pete Coffin, Vice President reported: 1) Since he's unable to attend this month's meeting, Pete Coffin forwarded this report by email: "I've been diagnosed with cancer. I'm currently undergoing extensive testing to determine the stage of the cancer. Although at present I don't feel any different than I have for the last several years, when or if treatment is needed it may compromise my ability to do much of anything. 2) "I've just completed a rough draft of a paper titled 'An Airport for Deer Park.' It begins as a description of how the first airport was decided upon, financed and constructed. The last part continues the process and describes how today's airport was constructed with the paper ending in the late 1940s-early 1950's with the beginning of drag racing."

Print editor, Sharon Clark reported: The December 2013 Mortarboard #68 was distributed. Articles included: 1) Pioneer Days Revisited by Grace Milner 2) The Krick Barn by Patsy Krick Kenyon 3) The Lillie Gibson Story by Bob Gibson 4) *Collected Newsletters* Volume Seventeen is ready for sale. Several were sold at \$4.

Webmaster, Penny Hutten reported: 1) She updated the website, adding the November Mortarboard. 2) Penny will begin training Marie Morrill the first week of January and then we will have a new Webmaster. 3) The website was down for a while be-

cause iPage was making some updates to the software we use to host the website. The JavaScript wasn't working and that caused the drop down menus to not work. All of it is fixed. Please let Penny know if there are any new problems in the future.

Wally Parker talked about an editorial group, which will consist of a group of people willing to proof-read, share ideas, and be part of discussions. Contact Wally or Bill if you are interested.

The future of the Civic Center was discussed. Winterfest will not be using the facility in January because of the better conditions and larger space at the new high school.

Mike Reiter is researching his grandfather's farm on Montgomery Road. He has been in contact with Alexander Pope whose relative once owned the farm. Alexander is planning a trip over here next summer. He

will bring many pictures for us to scan. Mike wants to have a potluck at his farm while Alexander is here.

Betty Burdette and Warren Nord led a discussion about the buildings and history of downtown Deer Park. If anyone has "Cozy Nook" stories or knows where the "Opera House" was let Bill know.

Clayton Brickyard Day was discussed. We are still looking for ideas and volunteers. We don't want Clayton Brickyard Day to end!

Next meeting: Saturday, January 11, 2014, 9 AM at the Clayton Drive-In.

Meeting adjourned at 10:01 AM.

The meeting minutes submitted by Grace Hubal, Secretary

———— end ————

## ***Letters, Emails, Bouquets & Brickbats*** — or — ***Bits of Chatter, Trivia & Notices All Strung Together***

### **... Sharon Clark stepping down as editor ...**

After 51 monthly issues of the *Mortarboard*, Sharon Clark has decided to step down as society editor. That's an impressive amount of time at a job that requires such constant attention to detail and can, on occasion, be such a massive headache. Since the *Mortarboard* is in large part the glue that binds the C/DPHS together, the continued success of the organization over the last 4 and a quarter years is to no small extent hers. While I'm sure she leaves with mixed feelings, I suspect she'll find the lack of an always impending deadline refreshing — to say the least.

So now let me tell you a few things about your new editor. First off, I'm not that new. This will be my second stint at the *Mortarboard's* helm — the first covering issues 1

through 17. I was also editor for the society's first series of publications, volumes 1 through 4 of the *Reports to the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society*. So when it comes to headaches, I know of whence I speak.

The art of editing is very much like the art of wordsmithing — of writing. You learn by doing. And just like with wordsmithing, you're always on a learning curve. Which means your editorial approach changes as time goes by and various lessons are absorbed. And all this should forewarn the readers of this newsletter that what they'll see going forward — while still most certainly recognizable as *Mortarboards* — will in some ways change.

That being said, it's time to get on with the business of this "letters" column; said business being to catch everything of at least

some interest that won't fit anywhere else.

**... in Search of Spear, Washington ...**

The lead article in this issue of the *Mortarboard* mentions a small community called Spear. Other than "east of Spokane," that community's location is not clear. Since "Spear" is mentioned fairly frequently in materials related to Washington Brick & Lime, I decided to try to pin its geographic position down. Since the area "east of Spokane" is their concern, I sent the following emailing to the Spokane Valley Heritage Museum.

November 17, 2013 ...

*At the last of the 19th Century or beginning of the 20th, Joseph Spear, of the Washington, Brick, Lime and Sewer Pipe Company, set up a sewer pipe factory in the Spokane Valley. In conjunction with this factory, I keep seeing the place-name "Spear, Washington" referenced. In other research materials I see the place-name "Opportunity, Washington" associated with what I assume to be the above noted factory's location. I've seen other notations such as "along the Apple Way," and "4 miles east of Spokane," but I've yet to see the exact location of the original factory or a clear definition of the location of the former "Spear, Washington."*

*I've been assuming that Spear was a "worker's" community platted in conjunction with the company's factory. As such, the community of Spear would have been similar in its founding to Clayton, Washington. I've further assumed that while Clayton continued on as a distinct community, Spear was absorbed into the surrounding community, thereby losing its distinct identity.*

*Anyway, could you shed some light on all this?*

The Director of the Spokane Valley Heritage Museum, Jayne Singleton, replied that they had assumed the same — "that Spear was a worker's community." She reported that "the name appears on a 1913 Electric Rail-

*road map in our archives" and that "one of the (company's) buildings is still standing."*

Director Singleton noted that her group has created a digital record of the *Spokane Valley Herald* — published from March of 1920 through the present — and that they will "search it for any mention of Spear." She also requested copies of any materials the C/DPHS uncovers.

I sent the following in reply.

December 1, 2013 ...

*Over the years I've occasionally found articles mentioning the community of Spear. Those were in the Review and Chronicle for the most part, so you might already have them. If not, I'll forward copies of those and whatever else I find regarding Spear as they turn up.*

*I can readily forward one set of clippings taken from the September 1, 1912 issue of Brick and Clay Record which contains some material on the sewer pipe factory. It's perhaps the best description I've found so far of the inner workings of that particular facility.*

*I've also found an address for Washington Brick & Lime at 7621 East Sprague. Does that coincide with your data?*

*Joseph Spear sold his remaining interest in W. B. & L. in 1919. At least I seem to recall it as being 1919, though I'd have to look that up to make certain it wasn't a year earlier. I also seem to recall the date of his passing as being only a year or so later — October of 1920 as I recall. If so, it's probable that the place-name Spear didn't survive him by long.*

*One of the things I find intriguing about all this is how little we know of Joseph H. Spear — Joseph Hornsby Spear — on a personal level. It does appear he was a major economic force in the larger community. It appears his family was distinguished — one son (Raymond Spear) rising to the rank of Admiral in the United States Navy; a grandson (Joseph Hornsby Spear III) in some way associated with the State Department, a son-in-law lost in WWII while commanding a submarine*



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*in the Pacific. But other than newspaper clippings giving scattered hints of his social and business life, nothing biographically seems readily available.*

*And yes, I will keep you and your organization in my research loop going forward.*

My suspicion is that Spear will prove to be the location of what was later known as Washington Brick & Lime's "Dishman factory." But we need to make certain.

As for why the community of Spear should interest the C/DPHS; you might think of it as the lost younger sibling of Clayton — a company town founded specifically to meet the needs of Washington Brick & Lime. To get a good grasp of the early history of Clayton, we'll need to understand the early history of W. B. & L. And Spear, Washington, is part of that early history.

**... "Eddie Norby & Lynn Holcomb" ...**

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of November I sent the following note to Eddie Norby — a note regarding his recent Mortarboard article, "*Eddie Norby and Lynn (Red) Holcomb: Growing Up in Clayton During the 1950s.*"

*It seems I've once again volunteered to take on the position of editor of the historical society's newsletter. Trying to catch up, I've been looking through back issues of the Mortarboard. Seeing your recent article about Lynn Holcomb, I commented to Bill, the society's president, that I was quite impressed by the quality of the writing and the tone of the story — quite impressed with your ability to open up your recollections and let them fall out on the page with such unselfconscious clarity ... not only as a portrait of Lynn, but also as an unapologetic sketch of the town and its people.*

*If you develop any more stories, I hope you'll consider submitting them to the Mortarboard.*

Just as a personal aside, Lynn Holcomb and I began school together in 1951. I remember that on our first day at Clayton, Lynn and one of the other 1<sup>st</sup> graders — I'm thinking either Bill Sebright or Neal Tobeck — got into an "*I can reach higher than you can*" contest at the blackboard. At first it was just stretching up on tiptoes and scratching some chalk on the board. Next it was jumping and snapping the chalk against the board. Finally Lynn pulled a chair over, stood on that, jumped, and managed to leave a streak of chalk on the wall a good six inches above the blackboard.

Even using the chair, that was an impressive jump for a 1<sup>st</sup> grader.

Bill says it wasn't him jumping against Lynn. Though Bill might be right in that, it's good to keep in mind that Bill denies most everything I recall him doing in grade school — likely because the things I recall him doing were occasionally more wayward than his current image would suggest.

Anyway — Lynn's chalk-mark remained on the wall through the rest of our time at Clayton.

**... Eickmeyer Wheat ...**

This is the text of several email exchanges between Bill Sebright, Florene (Eickmeyer) Moore, and me.

On October 29<sup>th</sup> I wrote Bill ...

*Were you aware that a strain of wheat was developed by A. K. Eickmeyer from a variant he discovered growing in his field around 1918? The gentleman is described as living on a farm near Deer Park. Maybe everybody else knows about this and I just missed it because I was looking somewhere else. Anyway, it's just one of those little oddities one runs across when surfing the web at four in the morning.*

Bill forwarded the message to Florene, and the next day Florene replied to us both ...

*This is an interesting area. The Eickmeyer Farm was established on Wild Rose Prairie in 1884 by my great-grandfather, Andrew Eickmeyer. ... He was retired before 1918. In his later years he lived in an Old Soldiers Home in Los Angeles and in Orting, Washington. He died in 1920. His grandson used the name A. K. Eickmeyer, but he was only 5 or 6 in 1918.*

On October 31, 2013, I wrote to Florene to say ...

*Several days back I was searching Google's online book collection, my search line reading "Deer Park, Wash.," when a segment from "Technical Bulletin No. 795 — Classification of Wheat Varieties Grown in the United States in 1939" (published in June of 1942) popped up. The snippet contained both the words "Deer Park, Wash.," and "Eickmeyer." Anyway, that's how the item was discovered.*

*After a classifying description of the wheat in question, the pertinent data reads as follows ...*

*"History: Eickmeyer (C. I. 12035) resulted from a plant selected from a field of Goldcoin by A. K. Eickmeyer, a farmer living near Deer Park, Wash., about 1918. The plant was saved because it appeared to be less susceptible to shattering than most plants in the field. This strain, which had pubescent chaff, was distributed to neighbors but was not popular because of the pubescent chaff. About 1924 Mr. Eickmeyer selected a plant with glabrous chaff from his field and increased it. This is the type grown at present. Its characteristics indicate that the variety resulted from a natural cross between Goldcoin and Jones Fife.*

*"Distribution: Estimated area in 1939, 5,244 acres, grown in Washington.*

*"Synonyms: Improved Fortyfold, Shatterproof Fortyfold."*

*A footnote on the first page of Technical Bulletin No. 795 states, "Received for*

*publication August 1, 1941. This bulletin is a revision of and supersedes Department Bulletin 1074, Classification of American Wheat Varieties, and Technical Bulletin 459, Classification of Wheat Varieties Grown in the United States." I was able to retrieve PDFs of both of these bulletins.*

*Bulletin 1074, published in 1922, didn't list "Eickmeyer" in its index — nor did Bulletin 459, published in 1935. A "Find" search of Bulletin 459 had no hits. Whatever data resulted in the above "Eickmeyer" inclusion in "Wheat Varieties Grown in the United States in 1939" appears to not be present in either of the earlier publications. This seems consistent with the notation on the "Distribution" segment of the clipped 1942 material where it states "Estimated area in 1939, 5,244 acres," — said data postdating the years of publication for the prior bulletins.*

*All the above suggests that the data regarding the Eickmeyer strain of wheat was derived from a report gathered in the year indicated — in the year 1939.*

*There may be a couple of search possibilities for the source of the original data, but those are remote at best. More than likely the original source of the Eickmeyer data included in "Bulletin 795" has been lost.*

*According to your email of yesterday, it appears the above noted clipping is in error — at least as far as dates are concerned. Without the original source or something from your family history regarding the above, the exact nature of that error is likely to remain unresolved — though my expectation would be that the original source of the history segment of the recorded data was a verbal recollection collected some years after the events described in the clipping. Regardless of all this, it's still an interesting clipping since it clearly indicates that a variety of wheat (doubtless now lost) was indeed named after your family.*

Florene replied ...

*The 1939 date makes a lot more*

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sense. *A. K. Eickmeyer was probably actively farming on his dad's land then.*

It's possible the history tracing the story back to 1918 was originally collected by the Agricultural Research Department at Pullman College. Since we only have muddled fragments of the story right now, the rest will have to wait for more complete documentation.

... *what, exactly, is a brickbat* ...

Just to make sure your newly recycled editor was using one of the words found in this segment's main title in proper context, I did a quick search for "*brickbat*" and indeed, in classic usage it can — though not exclusively — be referencing an actual brick. Or more properly just one end — meaning one half more or less of a broken brick when said end is being used as a hurled weapon. Which would appear to make the site of Washington Brick & Lime's long demolished Clayton factory something of an ammo dump.

The first known use of the word was in a hefty volume published in England in 1563 under the title "*Acts and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous (old spelling) Days, Touching Matters of the Church.*" The book is still in print, though under the somewhat less weighty title "*Foxe's Book of Martyrs.*" The word "*brickbat*" appears in a portion of the book devoted to the 1555 arrest and subsequent public incineration of one George Tankerfield.

The book states that when confronted in the Tankerfield home by "*Mr. Beard, yeoman of the guard,*" whose intent was to arrest George Tankerfield for heresy, Tankerfield's wife "*seized a spit and would have run him through*" (the "*him*" assumedly being the above noted Mr. Beard, and the spit assumedly being that pointy rod from the hearth normally used for roasting things over the fire) "*had not the constable which Mr. Beard had sent for ... come in and rescued him.*" However, Mr. Beard's jeopardy had not yet passed. As "*Acts and Monuments*" went on to explain, "*yet she (Mrs. Tankerfield) sent a brickbat after*

*him*" (again the "*him*" assumedly being the above noted Mr. Beard) "*and hit him on the back.*"

Looking for the etymological root of the word — etymological, according to my Random House, meaning "*an account of the history of a particular word*" — it seems generally agreed among a certain group of "*experts*" that the "*bat*" part of "*brickbat*" comes from the Old English (or, according to some, the French) word "*batte*" — meaning a cudgel, with cudgel in turn meaning a club or truncheon. By Middle English the word "*bat*" had evolved to also mean most any lump, chunk, or mass of a given substance — which eventually traces forward so that bat not only means the bat we use in baseball, but also the cotton batting we sandwich between patchwork and ticking to make a quilt.

Now, the origin of the word "*brick*" seems even more elusive. Supposedly it appears in England sometime between 1400 and 1450 — purportedly originating from a Middle Dutch word connoting something along the lines of a broken piece of tile. Underneath all this lies a Germanic root meaning "*to break.*" Thusly suggesting that our contemporary word "*brick*" also started out meaning something other than what it means nowadays.

Whenever entering the marsh of etymology as it relates to antique languages, it must be remembered that the further away one moves from an abundance of written examples, the softer the certainty becomes. If you'd prefer a different explanation for the origin of a certain word from a rarely written language — Old English apparently being one such language — all you need to do is find a different "*expert.*" But etymology will usually admit to the tentativeness of its arguments, whereas the ecclesiastic inflexibility of George Tankerfield's day sent tens of thousands of the Queen's subjects — the Queen in Tankerfield's case being the notorious Bloody Mary — to horribly painful deaths over what we nowadays would consider minor points of religious doctrine. This was the irrefutable fact of history that suggested to the Founding Fathers of the

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United States — most of whom could trace their lineage back to the British Isles and the vicious war between Protestants and Catholics — that the absolutism of religious doctrine and the police powers of the political state should remain forever separate. Or, as it was stated in the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, “*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.*”

One interesting fact in all this is that the earliest version of brickbat — the one Mrs. Tankerfield whacked the “*yeoman of the guard*” on the back with — wasn’t necessarily describing an actual piece of broken brick. Any chunk of fired clay rubble — brick, terra cotta, a suitable mass of fractured stoneware — would have seemingly done as well. And later on, most anything of weighty measure lofted into militant flight could be described as a brickbat.

Which draws us around to a more modern usage — in that brickbat can also refer to caustic criticisms hurled verbally or by letter, email, fax or texting. Though still poten-

tially litigious, this form of brickbat is normally less felonious — unless said missile includes a terrorist threat or is tied to a brick with string and thrown through the recipient’s window. And while history appears silent as to the fate befallen of George Tankerfield’s wife for her well justified thumping of Mr. Beard’s back with a brickbat, the throwing was probably something her late husband would have preferred she — for her own safety and wellbeing — had not done.

All of this is just to say that caution when lofting brickbats is a bit of wisdom everyone should observe.

And that brings me to the point — although by now you are doubtless wondering if there is one. Though the forwarding of letters and email to this newsletter continues to be encouraged, a little judicial editing when lobbing scripted ordinance would be much appreciated by all concerned — and doubly appreciated when said incoming is specifically aimed at your new editor.

Of course, that’s just a suggestion.

———— Wally Lee Parker ————

### **Society Contacts**

**We encourage anyone with observations, concerns, corrections, or divergent opinions regarding the contents of these newsletters to write the society or contact one or more of the individuals listed below. Resultant conversations can remain confidential if so desired.**

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———— C/DPHS ————