All in the Same Boat
Anacortes in the Great Depression

From the early 1930s to the economy-shattering Depression beginning in 1929, Anacortes had scored steady growth in its industrial sector, which stimulated expansion of the job market and caused the business district to increase in outlets and offerings. Things were going swimmingly, as would seem appropriate to describe conditions in this seaside town site.

Then like the Titanic, Anacortes, along with the entire nation, hit the economic equivalent of a hull-crushing iceberg. Many went down with the ship, metabolically – industries, employees, businesses, etc. – never to resurface. They were wiped out. Those who clung to the flotsam and had the courage, initiative and willingness to extend helping hands, provided salvation for many as well as themselves.

— Wally Funk, 1991

For some, especially the boys of the Civilian Conservation Corps, programs that taught unemployment offered an escape from a cycle of poverty. They learned job and life skills, while creating a lasting legacy of public parks and infrastructure projects.

Such hard times left a lasting mark on all who came through them — and their children. Perhaps your parents saved string, reused towels, and steadfastly refused to waste anything. Or maybe they went the other way, regularly updating their clothes and furnishings — and refusing to tolerate anything old ever again.

It’s easy for those of us who followed to picture the era in black and white, like the iconic photos of dust bowl refugees. But the 1930s were not unanimously, well, depressing. Balls were tightened and lives were changed, yet life went on, especially in Anacortes. Children played and cycled锷 FIGURE 5: Children played and cycled. There were festivals and parades, dances and football games. Motion pictures — with sound — and all sorts of skills and gatherings as part of the everyday pattern of life.

And, with everyone in the same boat, people worked together. With ingenuity, hard work, and determination, Anacortes came out of the Depression stronger than ever before.
Things Were Going Swimmingly
The Roaring '20s to 1931 — The good times

It is pretty well understood that “national prosperity” is not seriously affected by individuals who grew over-enthusiastic and took a losing chance in the stock market.

— Anacortes American
May 7, 1929

The Depression was slow to hit Anacortes. After the first Wall Street panic in September 1929, C. B. Riggs ran an ad boasting of its security of investment with 6% of interest. In November 1929, the Anacortes American predicted that the crash would have little impact on national prosperity.

The optimism seemed well-founded. Fundraising for the new hospital was completed by the end of that year and the Anacortes Hospital opened on 10th and H in June of 1930.

In May 1930 voters approved $14,981 to $71,000 spending for a new $150,000 to build a new 24-inch water line to bring Skagit River water to Anacortes — only three years after completion of a new-water filtration plant above Grand View Cemetery (left). Dredging was completed at Cap Sante in 1930, allowing the first down shipping, and the purse-seine fleet moved here that fall atop right. Washington Natural Gas was laying a gas pipeline to Anacortes. Mils worked for the gas pipeline system. In 1930, the city bought for $1.077 million in 1930 to $2.5 million in 1935. $15,000 in building permits were issued in 1931.

Although things began to sour by late 1930, voters still felt optimistic enough in 1931 to approve a new high school, and asks continued to run in the papers for new gas and electric appliances and other luxuries.

Clothesline photo left. The crew at McIvor’s Service Station, Commercial and 13th, was ready to serve a 19th century model's every need. Three extroverts of women's fashions: A woman, shapely in a saucy black dress, paused the briefs with her unique costume. The spotted beach briefs taking a big step from Mary Barlow, Miss Avishaw, and Miss Hanover. Even strata such as the charming Mrs. E. J. Ritter, Jr., revealed a glimpse of their. An estimated 150,000 spectators came to see the plays, including the Queen of the Cuyamaca monarchs, at the opening of Cuyamaca Island's first art festival in July 1930. Chris Nielsen and his family, in front of their home at 103 10th St., seem to embellish 1930's prosperity and Herbert Hines' sartorial prowess of a chicken in every pot and a car in every backyard.

Looking at it from the point of view of history, you hear about the crash of 1929 and the Great Depression. I didn’t see a real big change right away. There weren’t big headlines.

— Member of the JAMS Class of 1928.
1969 and history project

In January 1931 voters proved that the Depression was slow to hit Anacortes with the approval by 80% to 20% of a $100,000 bond for a new high school. Featuring the latest technology, each student in the junior and senior high school will have a stall in the school for the coming year. The new school, located at Central memorial Field.

Anacortes' best pride in its high school and its strong teams of the 20s and 30s.

These premiums of a chicken in every pot and a car in every backyard.
The Storm Hits Home

Banks and mills close, no one has money

What Caused the Great Depression?

50 years after the start of the Great Depression, the question of how it began such a catastrophe remains a political hot potato. Many blame President Roosevelt’s loose farm business and bank regulation policies, combined with the Suze property. While the government also should not be involved in job creation and relief efforts. Others point to the cost of President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal programs heightened the Depression by years. While the rich too rich, and everyone else too poor. That particular debate rages down to which economists you choose to believe.

However, a number of factors are widely cited as contributing to the severity of the Depression:

- The stock market crash. Over-speculation, fueled by the practice of buying stocks on margin essentially created an economic bubble. When it burst in late 1929, fortunes were lost, speculators defaulted on loans, and share prices tumbled. The stock market did not hit its lowest point until July 1932. Businesses could not raise capital.

- Purchasing power dropped. People cut back on their spending. With demand down, production was cut, and with it, many jobs.

- In an attempt to boost sales of domestic products, a high tariff was placed on foreign goods. This hurt European countries that were already struggling to pay their way out of World War I debts. International sales plummeted.

- Severe drought in the Midwest followed a drop in farm prices after World War I. Many family farms began to fail. To avoid bankruptcy, farmers dumped their goods on the cheap. Banks in that era were not allowed to operate as charities.

- Lack of banking regulation. Banks gave no guarantees to depositors, while making loans to reckless stock market speculators. Farmers speculating themselves. Fearful depositors began pulling out their funds, and many more banks failed.

The storm that hit the banks hit the doors. People could not draw their money out or write a check. People began lining up in front of the bank demanding their money. The sheriff came and gobbled them away. Then the mills shut down. People were hungry. With worry, stores begin to close. No one had money to buy food.

— Gladys Van Horn Black, 1991

The mill just kind of fell apart. He went from a good, big salary to working about three days a week at about 25 cents an hour. He was also working under him were making ten cents an hour. It was terrible.

— Margaret Deane Moore, 2003

Stabilizing Banking

The money they had there, they just got a few cents on every dollar. I think banks all over the country were in the same position.

— Clara Bow, 2001

The government began to feel the impact of the Depression as a number of banks closed. In 1931, Anacortes Lumber & Box Co. cut production due to poor markets. The E.K. Wood Mill at Burton was closed in 1932. A bank in Anacortes failed and closed in 1932. Other mills opened and closed as orders ebbed and flowed throughout the Depression. The government responded.
Hitting the Bottom

‘Everyone was in the same boat.’

By the 1920s, the neighborhood at the foot of Cap Sante, known as “Little Chicago,” was inhabited by families in small homes as well as single mill workers and fishermen who squatted in humble dwellings and fishing shacks along the tidelands. Former residents say it was a neighborhood like any other in Anacortes. A little bootlegging may have gone on there. Bob Sagerovich admitted, and nice girls stayed away, John Tursi said, but the area was far more poor than dangerous.

Near the railroad tracks, Little Chicago was also the area that absorbed—at least for a brief time—the displaced job seekers who rode into town on the freight trains at the height of the Great Depression. These trains, with nowhere to go, built crude shelters with driftwood or pasteboard and squatted. “It was our Hooservile,” wrote Phyllis Sagerovich.

Like the neighborhood that became Anacortes’ Urban Renewal Area, Little Chicago was deemed a blight by the community. It was condemned and, in 1953, burned down to make way for improvements at the Cap Sante Boat Basin.

As the Depression got worse all across our state, the freight trains were transporting people in the empty freight cars. Some rode on top of the cars and underneath. We saw young boys clinging to the iron rods between the wheels. They were cold and hungry. They were all looking for a place to find work. In Anacortes I saw people get off the freight going into our depot.

I saw people on the waterfront living in large pasteboard boxes at the foot of Cap Sante. Winter it rained and was cold so they crawled under ponchos to keep dry. People looked in garbage cans for food.

Times were so bad, people were hungry in Anacortes. I think this is something that all of you ought to know. Rudi Frunodovich went out, and he got a crew together, which is very difficult because you could hardly pay for the fuel to run the boat, but he got some guys together to go out and work with him. Leo Dapervich, Dick Milat was another one, and there was Chet Bocchino that went along himself. Paul, Johnny, Dad and Harvey Allen.

And we went out and caught 1,500 fish and brought it in and advertised in the paper for the people to come down and get it to eat and that dock, it seemed like a mile long with people coming down to get food. Now, just to show you how that affected people, years later I was in a bar and a man asked me my name and I told him what my name was, and he says, “Did your dad give fish away?” And I said, “Yes, he did.” He says, “Let me buy you a drink.” I was one of them. That gave me something to eat.

— Rudy Frunodovich

During the Depression, people in Anacortes pulled together from the start. Before the state and federal government began relief programs, the Chamber of Commerce and American Legion started an employment service to make sure local jobs went to local men. Projects such as landscaping the hospital became unemployment relief efforts. Fishermen distributed some of their catches to needy families, and the PTA on Guemes Island had its own soup kitchen. Even the Mickey Mouse Club had a food drive.

In Anacortes, teachers held fundraisers, community members held benefit minstrel shows and individuals dipped into their own wallets to make sure school lunch programs kept feeding needy children. There were shoe and clothing drives as well. But one of the most significant aspects of those terrible times was the self-sufficiency of the people, and their willingness to work together. When cash was scarce, people traded, bartered or just plain shared resources. They grew big gardens and raised livestock, and canned as much meat and produce as they could. Those with eggs might trade for vegetables, a hair stylist, like Dorie Tursi, might do a salon perm and get paid with a turkey.

As a rule, most of us helped each other out. That was coming out of the Depression. Everybody was in the same boat. Nobody had any money.

— Charles Tursi

People worked together. If you had a buzz saw, I might buy the gasoline to run the buzz saw. So people pooled everything they could to make things possible.

— John Tursi

After awhile people in Anacortes grew close like good neighbors. City Hall here opened up. Everyone donated underwear, old shoes, coats, just anything. We all donated, all we did was help ourselves. We could pick up what we needed.

— Gladys Van Horn Black

At top: “Depression is in the Box. Where are you?” asks a sign above a collage at an Anacortes Church gathering. Above: The Anacortes Salvation Army, circa 1936. The Salvation Army and the Red Cross were extremely active in poverty relief in Anacortes throughout the Depression.
Smugglers and Moonshiners

Prohibition and the end of the ‘dry’ years

They were respectable citizens basically. It just happened to be the way they could make a living. So that went all the way through what we call now the Roaring ’20s. But that island was a hotbed of moonshiners.

— Bud Strom, 2001

The Dry Years

As the saloons closed their doors in 1916 when Initiative Measure No. 3 took effect, prohibiting manufacture and sale of alcohol in Washington, a host of bootleggers, bootleg greeting card salesmen, and others began to thrive. Some people began to find ways to make a living during this time. Many groups campaigned and lobbied for Prohibition, including the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League, both of which were active in Anacortes.

Prohibition resulted in a surge of illegal activity, as people brewed liquor at home, and “runners” smuggled alcohol from Canada via the San Juan Islands. In 1920, an effort to deter smuggling, Coast Guard Section Base 12 (pictured at top) was established in Anacortes in December 1929.

New Beer’s Eve

As the repeal of Prohibition worked its way through the ratification process, Congress legalized beer containing 3.2 percent alcohol on April 7, 1933 — many celebrated with “New Beer’s Eve” parties on April 6. However, in Anacortes, the new beer ordinance didn’t kick in until April 11.

With the Depression at its worst, many believed the repeal of Prohibition would raise the economy and raise tax revenue, and others just thought it would raise spirits. But by this time the majority agreed that Prohibition had failed. The 21st Amendment was ratified Dec. 1, 1933, and Prohibition was officially over.

Above, the Brown Lantern at 412 Commercial (left) and the Log Cabin at 1717 Seventh St. were among the first beer parlors to open in Anacortes after beer became legal in 1933.

Newspapers breathlessly reported on the Coast Guard’s exploits, as they pursued yet another bootlegging run. The San Juan Islander reported on Nov. 19, 1925: “Two years later, run runners ‘escaped in a shower of bullets’ leaving the Coast Guard with ‘76 cases of assorted liquor.’ In January, authorities blasted at smugglers with a one-pound cannon, and pinprickers were thrilled to witness a gun battle.

Ferd Breyt captured “flashlight pictures” of the Coast Guard’s nighttime capture of the rum runner Alice in 1926, pictured above.

Anacortes police and the county sheriff contended with endless liquor raids operating in the woods of Fidalgo Island. Significant resources were expended on the effort. As the Depression dragged on, enthusiasm for Prohibition waned as it became clear that it failed to stop drinking and it encouraged organized crime.

Gloria Paul Lueras did not traffic in bootlegged liquor, but she did make the occasional midnight delivery of large orders of sugar, cracked corn and yeast to Happy Valley, adhering to specific delivery instructions.

As soon as I see your headlights, I’ll flash my light three times. You answer by shutting off your headlights once so I’ll know it’s you and not the sheriff. And, naturally, I would depend on you for keeping it confidential.

— Moonshiner, to Paul Lueras

Women’s Christian Temperance Union

The WCTU was an organization that worked to address the social ills caused by alcohol abuse. It grew into a politically powerful organization that influenced elections from the local to the national level. The group was pivotal in the adoption of the 18th Amendment, banning alcohol nationwide.

An Anacortes WCTU branch was organized in 1884, led by Carrie White, who was elected the second Washington Territory president in 1895. Perhaps the most lasting legacy of the group in Anacortes is the WCTU fountain, purchased by the group in 1900 in honor of White, which now graces the front of the Anacortes Museum. Below, the group gathered in 1937 for a summer picnic at Bowman Bay.
On the Home Front

‘We were probably happier’

“Nobody had any money. We were probably better off. We were probably happier. There was no television or anything. We made do with what we had.”

— Charles Trafton, 2001

The fishing was good out there at Lake Erie, and the Traftons had a lake, it was full of rainbow and brook trout. The fishing was always great. The folks always encouraged the children to go hunting and fishing because it would put some food on the table. I can remember an old rabbit I shot. I brought home, my mother immediately skinned it and dressed it out and we’d have it for a meal...

— Bill Menfield, 2001

I wondered how in the world I was going to send her to school, I couldn’t think what I was going to do for clothes. She only had one or two little dresses, and they were faded. I thought, ‘Well, I can’t afford to buy any material.’ My sister had sent me some of her clothes and she had bought real nice clothes. So, I cut them up and made my daughter clothes for school.

— Clara Bowlin, 2001

We didn’t have many boys to play with. I remember my first football that my brother and I played with. My mother saved some cloth material in the shape of a football. We played a lot with cans. We’d put them on our feet and run around and pretend we were horses, galloping around the yard. We played that game of the ball over the horses, called Andy I Over. A lot of hide and seek. My parents would play hide and seek with us a lot of times.

— Roy Manich, 2003

Nothing to Fear?

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself,” Roosevelt famously declared in his inspirational 1933 inaugural speech. While this was a rhetorical masterpiece, Depression-era families actually had quite a lot to fear. There were no vaccines or cures for diseases like polio, tuberculosis and syphilis, and even childhood diseases such as measles and whooping cough claimed a significant number of lives. In fact, in this era before sulfa or antibiotics, even an ordinary infection could turn deadly.

The doctor made house calls, but he may have been paid in eggs or produce. And while the $2.50 John Tumi spent for two dental fillings seems cheap, it was a substantial portion of the $5 a month he took home from the CCC.

The posters at left, from the National Archives, were produced by the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Art Project as part of public health programs.

“I called the doctor and he came out — they came out in those days — to the house, and he said my appendix had ruptured and he said, ‘It’s too late for him to go to the hospital’ and he said, ‘You’re pretty capable of taking care of him, so you’ll have to take care of him.’”

— Clara Bowlin, 2001

They sterilized clothes... because they had no other way of vaccination at that time for several bugs. It’s the only way that you can take a germ out of clothes. We had to heat them, too... but it boiled and steamed and that sterilizes all the clothes. Some hospitals and hotels — they had to be sterilized.

— Faye Erholm, 1995

During that time my dad lost all his money in the bank failure and the next year my brother died, 1932. So, it was devastating for us and for many other people. There were not many medicines. There wasn’t even a sulfa pill. That’s one thing that World War II did to advance medicine. They got sulfa and penicillin, which were considered miracle drugs. Either one of them would have saved my brother’s life.

There were three or four boys who died during that time — my brother of strep throat, which is curable today, and the other boys of something similar to that. There was no way, if you got an infection, to stop it.

— Margaret Deane Moore, 2003

I lost my first husband. We were married in 1926. And seven and a half years after that we had one little boy and I was pregnant with the other, when he suddenly took pneumonia. In those days they didn’t have all the antibiotics that they have now. He lived 10 days and then he died.

— Marge Hutchinson, 2001

I asked him if he could clean my teeth and fix the cavities. He took a look. I said, ‘I have $2, so do what you can for $2.” He filled two teeth and cleaned the rest for those two dollars. That probably was the only cash he’d gotten all day.

— John Tursi, 1994
The CCC & Deception Pass
A New Deal program with a lasting legacy

The Civilian Conservation Corps was one of the first New Deal programs established after Roosevelt took office. 250,000 men, eager to earn room, board and $30 a month, signed up in 1933 — more than 3 million served by the end of the Depression.

Working on forests, farmland, prairies, flood plains and other land in desperate need of conservation, they built roads, parks, flood barriers, wind breaks, and much more.

Men at Deception Pass’ two CCC camps, one on Fidalgo Island and one on Whidbey, built the highway approaches to the Deception Pass Bridge and, largely by hand, built the infrastructure of the state’s most beautiful park — trails, shelters, barbecue pits, restrooms, picnic tables, swimming areas, docks, and cabins.

CCC men escaped grinding poverty, got their families off relief, learned job skills that served them for a lifetime, and left a priceless legacy to future generations.

Most of the photos above show the projects undertaken by the men of the Civilian Conservation Corps’ Camp Rosario Beach, with a large scenic photo of Rosario Beach in the background. These men blasted through sheer cliffs to create the north highway approach to the Deception Pass Bridge, including a scenic road around Pass Lake that is still easily recognizable, and they built infrastructure for the Fidalgo Island areas of the state park. Men at camp learned to quarry stone, clear trees, prepare logs, cut shingles, and forge metal fixtures, and used these resources to build beautiful shelters, signs, tables, cabins, and guardrails. Above left is John Turst and a companion (Turst is at right) with two camp vehicles at Cornet Bay. Below are 1934 shots of Camp Rosario and those who were stationed there. The bottom photos show progress of bridge construction and, later, the bridge from the Fidalgo side in 1940.

In 1933, after years of lobbying by pro-bridge boosters, the State Emergency Relief Commission approved spending $450,000 for construction of a bridge connecting Fidalgo and Whidbey islands. Funds became available to start in July 1933, and work began in January 1934.

Bridge engineering and construction was done by professionals, but the hard labor of blasting out roads and preparing bridge approaches was done by the newly-organized Civilian Conservation Corps.

The bridge opened with a celebration in July 1935. It is still a vital economic connection, with an estimated 20,000 vehicles crossing it each day.
Pageants & Promotions
Raising spirits and pumping up business

"They needed a time to celebrate"

After the Wall Street crash of 1929, our big last Fourth of July celebration arrived. For three days we were not certain whether we would survive that last Depression. It was the time of the Automobile Manufacturers Association. Confidence that was so close to nothing to entertain people was now one of the chief things to do. A committee was appointed. They were 7 of us, and the discussion started: "What can we promote as a celebration?" Naturally, the Fourth of July was proper. He had to have something new and exciting. Many ideas were thrown in for discussion, but none of them worked. Finally Chairman Ole Olson bad an idea. He said, "Why not have a picnic here near the harbor? People would think Cap Sante a paradise. To be held by Cap Santa. There is a natural right side, and with more labor maybe we can have a real. To please some one falling into the sea, we could have ice cream past and ice cream. And we can have the same ice cream on an oil. Street leading to Cap Santa, and charge 20 cents admission to watch the scene. Not all the people who live near the harbor would have hands, feet, and a lot of hobbies. Hopefully, all the people would have hands, feet, and a lot of hobbies..." Naturally, sales. "The cream past is free. The ice cream past is free. And fix their eyes on me, two saying simultaneously, "Yes, Mr. Olson. Everything is just as you desired. Nobody really worried that busy job of much labor."

Chesnman Dahlman said, "Okay, we have the theme of our celebration, something new to be held at Cap Santa with a little parade and some dancing. We'll have 20 cents admission at the door that Parama. We can have a man who sings a cliche and when he's done, a man with a horn, a piano, or a violin."

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Excerpt from the soon-to-be-published memoirs

"The city hit on a real pleaser when in 1936 civil rights demonstrators decided to throw at their physical and financial resources into one gigantic three-day festival. This was born the Mariner’s Pageant, which in a very few stagings became one of the prime community celebrations on Puget Sound.

Its waterports, including world-champion waterfowlers, smaller class hydroplane races, canoe competitions piloted entries from the Pacific Northwest and Canada, and battleships at anchor off Cap Sante installed it as a major maritime gate.

There were coronation ceremonies that would do justice to a royal British crowning, along with celebratory balls that played to packed houses, street dances, barbecues. And the Grand Parade, which attracted spectators by the tens of thousands to view the spectacles along Commercial Avenue. Italy was grand.

— Wally Funk, Pictures From the Past

Anacortes American, July 31, 1936

The Call poster under control, a Mariner’s Pageant event sponsored by grocer Dora Collett, attracts hundreds of eager partiers. People thought it was a chance to see a cockfight, so they got up and out, chaperones made sure no mischief went on. When all else failed to draw the crowds and then get back into bed. Alive, left to right holding cards are: Paul Draper, Paul Loester, and Jack Eben.
The Times of Their Lives

Enjoying life during hard times

Time to Play Outside

One thing that has never changed is the love that Friday and Guemes Island residents have for outdoor activities. In the 1950s, people liked to walk the woods, pickle on the beaches and enjoy all manner of water-related sports.

Clockwise, from right: Youngsters enjoy a Christian Endeavor picnic at Guemes Island in 1931; Don Hume, who practiced rowing as a student at Anacortes High School (Class of 1933), went on to become part of the University of Washington’s Olympic gold medal-winning crew in 1936; the golf course at Smilsh Beach opened in 1929 as part of a destination resort; complete with cabins for weekend getaways, Henry Dodg and a friend enjoy fishing in 1932.

Time to Celebrate

People didn’t stop celebrating holidays and social occasions just because they were going through the Great Depression.

Clockwise, from below: A Labor Day event in Causland Memorial Park, 1936; Leonard and Margaret (Deanie) Moore’s wedding, 1934; Christmas festivities at 6th & Commercial, c. 1950; a Halloween party at Betty Kimsey’s house, c. 1955; and the 50th wedding anniversary celebration of Henry Hedden Abrams and Mary Alta Dewey Abrams, Oct. 11, 1952.

It’s Showtime!

Like the rest of the country, Anacortes found a respite from the Depression in Shirley Temple, Mickey Mouse and other silver screen favorites. Although the bad economy wiped out the new Paramount Theater almost immediately, the Empire Theatre, above, remained in operation. Coached or uniformed ushertettes, at right, made the experience especially glamorous in the 1930s.

Fraternal organizations and other groups also held many dances, including the popular high school’s dances, and events such as revirvel shows. Meanwhile, those who preferred to stay home could listen to concerts, news, lectures, soap operas and other regularly scheduled programs on their radios.

Time to Cheer

In the 1930s, when radio was still young and television was only a futuristic dream, the whole community avidly enjoyed attending high school drama and music performances and cheering for Seahawks athletic teams. In particular, boys’ football and basketball teams enjoyed strong support from stands filled with cheering crowds. The Seahawks won state football championships in 1928 and 1930, and competed in state basketball championships three times during the 1930s.

Pictured at upper left is a football game reportedly played at the school’s athletic field on Armistice Day, 1935. At lower left is a basketball game in the old gym, c. 1942. At right, Anacortes High School students performed the musical “Show Me Down” in the old gym during the 1935-36 school year.

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Taking a new Tack

Worker-owned cooperatives come to Anacortes

Fishermen’s Packing Corporation

Frank Bartlett was among the first Anacortes based owners to join the Fishermen’s Packing Corporation — a worker-owned cooperative canery venture formed in 1948 by salmon packers.

As the Great Depression bit, the politics around fish traps intensified until canning-owned traps were cut out in 1934 ending the bit of war between independent fishermen and the virtual “Salmon Trust” of huge corporate canneries. Members of the guild were already looking beyond direct conflict against each other by starting to organize a guaranteed market for the salmon they worked so hard to catch.

By 1937, as Fishermen’s Packing Corporation considered relocating its canneries, Chamber of Commerce President Paul Luvera heard from fishermen that the co-op was distorting far too much to be in business. He grasped the opportunity and contacted the manager.

I recall, Mr. Hallock, at Everett and told him he also should look at sites in Anacortes. We had a Booth Fisheries Company owned by Fred Johnson, and we saw our site cheap. They should look at it,” Luvera wrote.

Luvera and the Chamber of Commerce worked with the co-op for a year, until, unlike by the good site, a positive community climate for fishermen and infrastructure such as the Port’s new Cap Santa Boat Haven, they bit.

“Fishermen’s Packing Corporation Bringing Anacortes Title Back to Glorious of the Pacific,” without the Anacortes 290 (Washington) on April 4, 1938, were perfectly set to work transforming the old Booth plant into a model salmon canning with modern canning, the way to the Northwest that would employ 300.

Fishermen’s Packing Corporation pictured above left, brought badly needed jobs to Anacortes near the end of the Depression, and operated for four decades, until 1983 when the plant, at M and 3rd, was sold to Whittier Fishpack Seattle Inc. The site is now occupied by Tofed Seafoods Corporation.

Anacortes Veneer Incorporated

As the same time Fishermen’s Pack was cutting around for a new role, another worker’s cooperative was also seeking a home — a company that became Anacortes Veneer Inc. The company for the fiber industry manufacturing co-op began in Olympia in 1934 as J.J. Luvera and disorderly workers placed Washington Veneer. This company was merged, poor and unpredictable for mill workers during the Depression, and they decided that a worker owned plant would provide them both reliability and economic stability.

The company came to the Port Angeles co-op site in July 1946 when Paul Luvera read about it in a Seattle paper. He called the chairman, and a week later Mary Luvera was shown handsome property in the local board members and a Chamber of Commerce welcoming committee.

They were impressed, especially when they remembered that some members of the Port Angeles Chamber of Commerce had called her a bunch of socialists,” Luvera wrote in his memoirs.

It worked. AVI bought the abandoned remnants of the prestigious Lumber & Box and at $50,000. By 1948 the company had expanded to $15,000 and began the enterprise of standing up a plywood mill. Production began in 1959.

250 stockholders took a substantial risk to launch AVI — investing $2,500 each for a total of $625,000 in 1934. The company was taking on a specialized market in small, high-end homes to buy in. For their investment, they were entitled to earn 6% on the first five years, with 50 cents of interest in the second year until the mill showed a profit.

By the early 1950s, AVI workers were earning twice what other Anacortes woodworkers and mill workers were paid. And the company was expanding its mill site across the street, built a company housing complex, and passed down within families. At its peak, AVI employed more than 300.

The co-op lasted until 1974, when a majority of older shareholders retired, sold the company to Publishers Paper Products. They were bought out $45,000 a share. Fluctuating interest rates for builders, lack of capital to replace old machinery and the advent of chipping tempted the end for the mill, which operated intermittently after 1980 and burned down in 1982.

Clockwise from left, thin oak sheets of pencil wood veneer plates onto the dying or slowing mill during the Anacortes Veneer plant closing period in fall 1974. A legion of old-fashioned numbered sawmills and Paul Luvera cut on right, celebrate the veneer plant opening in 1934. The Anacortes veneer mill at the foot of First Street in Pilchuck Bay is worn in a hard-worn wooden photo. This photo has been printed from a 1954 AVI open house event.

“Working for Co-ops: 100 Years of Community Cooperation” — Wash. Co-op Federation.

Paul Luvera, Sr.
A New Hope — A New Deal
Federal programs put many to work

They had that WPA work going on in Guemes. They built that whole West Beach road on Guemes Island... Well, they built it with notions that worked from town here and everything that was in town. People paid that tax that had their money frozen in the banks and they couldn’t get it. That was the only way they had to get money enough to live on.

— Bill Forrester, 2014

I can remember visiting dad and his crew working on WPA gang. He was a laborer and mom’s future husband Bob Himes was the time keeper because he had a university degree. They were digging ditches through the swamp area alongside the reservation road that was past the railroad tracks going towards La Conner.

— Claire Bowles, 2001

We were very, very poor and we had a lot of children. The fishing was not that good some seasons. My father worked in the WPA when he could find the work and then he would fish in the summertime.

— Roy Mancuso, 2003

Works Progress Administration

As soon as Roosevelt took office in 1933, he began to implement massive relief programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, which immediately put 300,000 men to work. After a false start with the National Reservist Agency, which may have actually hindered economic recovery, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was created. The WPA employed a broad spectrum of emergency public works projects, with an unprecedented scale.

The WPA was a vast network of projects, with matching federal funds, and because of the local money, the WPA employed many more people participating in some projects. Despite this, before the program ended in 1939, WPA workers cut 8,000 miles of roads and 2,000 miles of railroad track; built 5,000 schools; and built 51,000 other buildings.

In Anacortes, the WPA provided work for men on the construction of the harbor for sailors to maintain. The WPA also sponsored art classes for the enjoyment and education of the Anacortes residents about the program’s painting classes 60 years later.

The WPA also generated work for Anacortes mills, which provided materials for its24.3 million dollars projects across the country.

Before, a Depression-era work crew is pictured taking a break at Washington Park near Sunny Beach. The men have been employed through WPA through a local relief program.

What kept quite a few of the sansmills going, a part of the job, was that during Roosevelt’s time there were a lot of work agencies. At that time they were building up the levees on the Mississippi. Now this is where we were located with the national thing. The demand for 74 vs. 70 – they used 1 vs. 74 and wove them into a mat and laid them on the bottom of the river and up into the levees to protect the backwaters from eroding the levees.

Well I know that Morrison did and I’m sure several others did, too — they worked several years just cutting 1 by 4s.

— John Turek, 1994

People’s United
The Townsend Club

While not a federal program itself, the Townsend movement, which was also in Anacortes during the Depression, directly benefited dozens of old folks in the area.

The Townsend Club sprung up across the country to promote a plan proposed by Dr. Francis E. Townsend in 1933. He was the editor of the national voice of which few new few people would be able to save health and 800.000 people, should be supported by a monthly federal pension of 200. At the time, the movement had 2.1 million members and was able to present Congress with petitions signed by 10 million Americans.

Club members in Anacortes, pictured below, met in an old building near 1st and D. They all had their chairs of comfort, and were mobile in a paradise, such as the 1937 Millar-Pagean Penderick parked down.

While the amount of the pension recommended by the movement was never implemented by the government, it is believed that Roosevelt introduced Social Security in 1935 largely to neutralize the influence of Townsend’s plan.

The average monthly old-age benefit in the first program was only about $125. Townsend’s “Old Age Pension” took effect in the 1930s when the economy improved, and Social Security benefits became somewhat more generous.
**“Fishing”**

For nearly 25 years, the Mural Painting Decorates Lobby Of Postoffice. The inscription on a sizzling summer day is timed, simply, a fishing. Itcription comes from the National Archives, which provided details and names of correspondents to conform with "Fishing".

**Mural: True or False?**

**The name of the mural is “Fishing.”**

**TRIVIAL: Calvinstein is taking some artistic license, and in the same way, a theatrical license during production, but his ultimate intention was to show a salmon some fashion. Calvinstein placed a salmon in the mural.**

**The mural depicts salmon fishing on a purified scene.**

**TRIVIAL: Calvinstein is taking some artistic license, and in the same way, a theatrical license during production, but his ultimate intention was to show a salmon some fashion. Calvinstein placed a salmon in the mural.**

**The mural was a WPA project.**

**FALSE: The mural’s design was by muralist Calvinstein, who was commissioned by the Treasury Department’s Section of Fine Arts and not the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Art Project.**

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**Morriss Graves and early sightings of Northwest Mystics on Fidalgo**

Fidalgo Island attracted luminaries of the regional art world during the Depression years. A few of these were Morris Graves, Guy Anderson and Kenneth Calvinstein, who gained fame in later years as Northwest Mystics Artists, and who worked for a little over a year.

Graves moved to La Conner in 1937, taking up residence in a burly nut, earthy four floors house which he shared with Guy Anderson to share. While Anderson spent the rest of his life in La Conner, Morris Graves moved on.

Although his spirit most of the time traveling and painting, Graves also began his search for a passage and soul looking for his home. Although he found a new studio home. Pating on the door of a little shed, the roof of which was the canvas, and the wall of which was the easel, he painted his final works, including the upper and lower levels of the "Mystic" series.

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The painter and the postmaster

**Calvinstein's Fourth Postmaster and Postmaster, was protective of the image of the post office and worked an artistic design for the mural. The idea that getting a view would be an enhancement, and customers would take it out on him. Because of this, he was frequent contact with Mount Vernon Calvinstein — The National Archives holds more than 70,000 images related to this topic.**

Calvinstein's Fourth Postmaster and Postmaster, was protective of the image of the post office and worked an artistic design for the mural. The idea that getting a view would be an enhancement, and customers would take it out on him. Because of this, he was frequent contact with Mount Vernon Calvinstein — The National Archives holds more than 70,000 images related to this topic.

In an April 1929 Calvinstein commented on dissatisfaction with the theme and proportion of the most loved paintings, and wanted them to be seen by everyone. Nevertheless, the mural was installed on Sunday, May 12, 1929. Calvinstein apparently voiced his concern to local papers — one written-in "Mystic Value" — but Calvinstein said the concerns he heard from locksmiths were almost all positive.

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**I investigated further, and believe that the salmon and purse seiner would be a very appropriate subject. I need not go into the details of this, but as I am industrious with which you are familiar, fully appreciating the color and interest it offers to a mural decoration.**

— Kenneth Calvinstein

**Letter to Postmaster Gustav Dahlstedt**

**I COULD NOT PERMIT YOU TO INSTALL IT AS IS WITHOUT YOUR GUARANTEE THAT IF IT CAUSES TOO MUCH CRITICISM THAT YOU WOULD TAKE IT DOWN AND RE-DO IT**

— Gustav Dahlstedt, Associate Postmaster

April 12, 1929. Telegraph to Kenneth Calvinstein.
Recovery & the Tide of War
Prosperity, patriotism rebound as war spreads in Europe

The depression ended for up when the government decided to build a base at Craney Island that they named NAS Whibey Island. They had worked on both WPA and CCC before that.

— Bill Fantroy, 1944

NAS Whibey Island

For the Anacortes Chamber of Commerce, it was a major achievement to host a warship in the area. About 10,000 people came aboard the USS McCawley, a 13,500 ton U.S. Navy seaplane base that was built on Whibey Island in 1943.

The Navy had started looking for a site to roam and built Craney Island in the spring of that year, and by Oct. 5, the Anacortes American reported of a late night visit when the Navy selected Crescent Harbor near Oak Harbor for the base. Craney Island to the north of Oak Harbor was later selected by the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, and the country took ownership of the island.

While the base was not actually on Fidalgo Island, Oak Harbor was a key community and many Fidalgo men worked on the project. Since that time, NAS Whibey Island has remained one of the most significant economic drivers in the region.

In the late 1930s, business began to pick up for lumber mills and processing plants such as Anacortes Flume & Power. The country began gearing up for war, first to supply its allies in Europe, and then for our own effort.

The military was also a large consumer of lumber. By 1942, the entire salmon pack was requisitioned for waterfront use.

The prosperity continued during the building and testing boom that followed. AVT was pictured at right in 1947.

— John Tarsi

It was in the late '30s and then into the early '40s. Not realizing that there was a war coming up and everyone was getting ready, the demand for spruce in particular went way up. Not only another thing there was a big demand for wire refrigerators. People were buying refrigerators so there was a big demand to build them. That was also spruce and hemlocks that was used in refrigeration. A lot of good packs of spruce from here also went into making piano, many companies were buying our stuff. So what was happening in other part of the country got a demand on us and put us to work. Most everything that was made here went a long way from here.

— John Tarsi