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Courtesy of Elizabeth Buckner Gans and Herb Sargo

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## Fields and Buckners of Stehekin

## Wenatchee Valley M•U•S•E•U•M & Cultural Center

*"Inspiring dynamic connections to the unique heritage of the Wenatchee Valley"*

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## From the Editor

Chris Rader

The new executive director of the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center, Keni Sturgeon, begins work on November 19 – after this issue of *The Confluence* goes to print. Museum staff, members and supporters are excited about her arrival and look forward to exploring new ideas, goals, programs and partnerships under her leadership. In the meantime, this little corner of this edition of *The Confluence* is written by the person who has edited the magazine since 2006.

I've really enjoyed these 12 years of digging into our local history and sharing it with you readers. For some time, I've been fascinated by photos of the Field Hotel in Stehekin and wondered about its owner, Merritt E. "M.E." Field. In 2017 I expressed my curiosity to friends Herb and Chris Sargo, who spend parts of every summer in Manson and Stehekin. Imagine my surprise when Herb said, "M.E. was my great-grandfather!" Even more intriguingly, he told me that his mother was also descended from another Stehekin pioneer family, the Buckners.

This past July the Sargos invited me to spend a few days in Stehekin with them and with Herb's great-aunt Elizabeth "Bucky" Buckner. They showed me all around this lovely town at the far end of Lake Chelan, especially the historic Buckner Orchard. Bucky shared anecdotes about her childhood, including memories of her grandparents, and let me copy clippings and notes gathered by her late sister Irene (Herb's mother). Bucky also gave me a copy of the book she and her sisters wrote about growing up in Stehekin. I really appreciate this family's cooperation in bringing this insight into Stehekin history to readers of the Wenatchee Valley Museum's quarterly publication, and hope you enjoy it.



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*Cover: The Field Hotel in Stehekin was one of the grandest destination resorts in the Pacific Northwest. Bottom, from left: Van Buckner (in wagon), M.E. Field, Hal Field, Thula Ohlhausen, George Ohlhausen, May Buckner, Olive Field, Mattie Field, Martha Joy Field, Irene Buckner, Frank Buckner in 1916.*

## Merritt Field Built a Grand Hotel

by Chris Rader

The tiny town of Stehekin, at the far western end of Lake Chelan in eastern Washington state, has been a destination resort for well over a century. Today its permanent residents number fewer than 100, but it draws tens of thousands of visitors in spring, summer and fall. There are no roads from Chelan to Stehekin, but the Lake Chelan Boat Company offers passenger service year-round on the 55-mile-long lake. The Stehekin area offers tourist businesses, spectacular mountain scenery with a combination of eastern and western Cascades vegetation (cedar, fir, maple, ferns), and recreation such as fishing, hunting, hiking, and bicycling on approximately 14 miles of mostly dirt roads.

The first surveyors, trappers and prospectors to reach Stehekin in the 19th century arrived via Cascade Pass from the upper Skagit Valley. Indigenous Chelan and Skagit people used this pass as a trade route through the mountains. They called it Stehekin, "the way through." The Upper Skagit people reportedly cached canoes at the head of Lake Chelan to use in their southeasterly trips down the lake.<sup>1</sup> For a time, Cascade Pass was under consideration for a road linking western and eastern Washington; that plan never materialized.

In the Stehekin Valley, prospectors found silver, gold, copper and zinc around Horseshoe Pass and Bridge Creek. Small-scale mining continued there into the 1910s, though copper mining continued on a grander scale at nearby Holden through 1957.

Col. John W. Horton was the first Caucasian to establish permanent residence in Stehekin, in 1887. He

built a cabin near the mouth of the Stehekin River. Enchanted with the surroundings and optimistic about the mining possibilities, he talked his daughter and son-in-law, the George Halls, into leaving Minneapolis and settling in Stehekin. In 1889, when the wood-powered steamboat *Belle of Chelan* began carrying prospectors and sightseers from Chelan to Stehekin, George Hall saw the need for visitor lodging and began building the Argonaut Hotel.

Between 1889 and 1893, several homesteaders arrived who would become the founding fathers of the vibrant Stehekin community. Dan Devore bought a string of horses and started a packing service to help prospectors set up their mining claims. Prospector Bill Buzzard claimed 160 acres about two miles from the lake and built a log cabin that still stands today. Frank Keller focused on growing crops. John Merritt brought his wife and five children, developed his homestead claim (as required by law) and operated a small sawmill. And in 1892, a chance meeting on Colockum Pass brought Merritt Eugene Field to Stehekin.

Field (who was usually called M.E.) and his family were on their way to the mineral-rich town of Conconully when his covered wagon broke down on the rough, steep pass between Ellensburg and Wenatchee. Devore happened to come by. While helping Field repair the wagon's reach (the shaft connecting the front and rear axles), Devore sang the praises of Stehekin. Field was captivated by the description and decided to try his luck in the Stehekin mining country.

### Merritt Eugene "M.E." Field

Field was born in Washington County, Iowa on June 15, 1862. He was the youngest of four children. At 17 he and his brother Wayne accompanied their father to the silver mines of Colorado where they intended to strike it rich. Failing that, Merritt got a job in a hotel in Rico where he met the Ohlhausens. This family had come to Rico from St. Louis with their nine children, also intending to make their fortune in mining.

By the late 1880s Wayne and Merritt Field, Mrs. Ohlhausen, and her younger children had moved to Ellensburg, Wash. Merritt and Olive Ohlhausen married there on July 21, 1888. Their



Merritt E. Field

Wenatchee Valley Museum #012-51-3470



*At the head of 55-mile-long Lake Chelan, Stehekin is a quiet and scenic jewel that has drawn visitors for 130 years. The grand Field Hotel was its largest and most famous building.*



daughter was born there in January 1892 but died of scarlet fever at three weeks old. Olive also succumbed to the disease. The grief-stricken Mr. Field sold his house and headed north with his mother-in-law and Olive's younger siblings for the Conconully mining district. The chance meeting with Dan Devore sent them to the shores of Lake Chelan instead.

The Field entourage, whose possessions included a piano, arrived in Stehekin in June 1892. M.E. took over management of the Argonaut Hotel. He then purchased the hotel from George Hall. According to Belle Laroux, Hall's daughter, the negotiations went something like this:

Field said Hall's price was too high and Hall replied "That or nothing." Field said, "All right, then, nothing!" Hall answered with "I know plenty who will give me my price!" and Field retorted, "All right then, get them!"

Then, Belle says, her father went home, dressed in his best clothes and, taking an empty suitcase, got into his boat and began to row away as though to find a buyer downlake. Mr. Field watched him until he was nearly out of hearing, then called "George, hoo hoo, George, come back – I'll give you your price!" So Papa whipped around, landed and settled the deal.<sup>2</sup>



Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center #99-3-116

*The Field Hotel in Stehekin was a destination resort from the 1890s until 1926, when it had to be dismantled prior to the raising of Lake Chelan's water level. Photo by Lawrence Lindsley.*

M.E. spent the next several years making improvements to the hotel, which he renamed the Field Hotel (sometimes called Hotel Field). He would cut timber up the Stehekin River, float the logs down to the lake, gather them into large rafts of logs, and have them towed to Chelan for milling. The finished lumber would return to Stehekin by steamboat.

M.E. Field married Martha "Mattie" Ohlhausen, the sister of his deceased wife, in October 1893, a few weeks after her 18th birthday. He was 31. They had a long and happy marriage.

#### *Field Hotel becomes posh destination resort*

A steady stream of miners and tourists arrived in Stehekin in the 1890s and early 1900s. These included railroad excursion guests seeking unusual experiences; some came from as far away as New York. They would ride the Great Northern Railway to Wenatchee and then take a steamboat up the Columbia River to Chelan Falls, where a stagecoach would carry them to the dock on Lake Chelan. Here they would board another steamboat for Stehekin.

Great Northern publicity literature raised the profile of Stehekin as a destination resort all across the United



Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center #83-84-123

*The steamer Stehekin operated on Lake Chelan from 1894 to 1904. Among other passengers, it carried Dan Devore's 30 horses from Stehekin to Chelan each winter.*

States. Field capitalized on the visitors' lodging needs. His hotel was right on the lake, directly in front of the boat dock. At that time a steamboat trip from Chelan took a full day, so visitors were practically forced to stay at the Field Hotel for at least one night.

The Argonaut had been a simple two-story lumber structure with a wide wrap-around porch. Field transformed it into an elegant hotel with handsome furniture, soft carpets and fine works of art. He enlarged the facility to 25 rooms by building a two-and-a-half-story unattached structure nearby. A series of additions in the next few years resulted in a T-shaped hotel marked by a six-story tower.

Despite these alterations that increased the size of the original building threefold, the Field Hotel remained an unassuming edifice architecturally. A series of cross gables punctuated the roof of the otherwise simple building. Verandas on the two main floors enwrapped the building, creating light and airy passageways between sections of the hotel and rooms, all of which had electric (sic) lights and most of which had plumbing....

An annex was built in a similar style and sited adjacent to the main hotel, providing additional rooms for tourists. The hotel facility was self-sufficient in every manner. A barn, woodshed, chicken house, ice house, and laundry building were all sited on the property. Land was cleared to grow hay for Field's pack horses, and fruit trees and vegetables were raised to supply hotel guests with the freshest produce available.<sup>3</sup>

By 1905 the hotel could accommodate 100 people. Each room had acetylene gas lights (the Field Hotel's gas plant was the largest in Chelan County)<sup>4</sup>, and most had lavatories. Candelabras in the lobby, a large

parlor with a piano, a ballroom with a huge stone fireplace, two spacious porches around the main building, a steam laundry, a large kitchen and fine menu made the Field Hotel a worthy destination resort indeed. It offered good food, boating on the lake, backcountry guide service and horse pack trains.

An Aug. 25, 1905 article in *The Chelan Leader* gushed, "The building has 60 guest chambers, besides a capacious parlor and ballroom, offices and a dining room.... The Kitchen is perfect in its appointments and the tables afford among the best spreads and appetite provokers to be found in the Northwest.... One

can be lazy as they like, in cozy armchairs or hammocks, with all the latest papers and literature."

#### *Fields were gracious hosts*

M.E. and Mattie Field made their guests feel at home. (It is likely that Mrs. Ohlhausen oversaw the day-to-day operations of the hotel in its early years.) They were friendly, likeable people who often attended social gatherings downlake. An avid hunter, M.E. enjoyed taking his guests into the mountains after deer, elk, cougar or bear. He also liked to fish.

"He was a marvelous host!" his granddaughter Elizabeth "Bucky" Buckner Gans recalled. "Every Thanksgiving he would arrange for a special boat to bring his Chelan friends, and some folks from back east, to the hotel. They'd have a big shindig and dance all night."<sup>5</sup> Of course these downlake friends reciprocated this hospitality when the Fields were in town.

*The Leader* reported in 1908 that the Fields had invited some 100 of their Lake Chelan friends, young and old, to spend the Thanksgiving holiday with them at the Hotel Field. "This yearly informal house party at the head of the lake is one of the big events of the winter season here...."<sup>6</sup> In 1910 the paper noted that 60 people rode the Lady of the Lake to Stehekin to stay for four days as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Field.

Summer business was brisk at the Field Hotel for three decades, often filling the place to capacity. Imagine cooking for 100 people! Field granddaughter Irene Buckner Sargo described what Mattie had to oversee:

All cooking would be done on wood stoves, all lighting by kerosene lamp. There was a large garden, and canning to be done to preserve the excess produce, also by wood stove. Heating would have been with wood. Chickens





Merritt  
"M.E." and  
Mattie Field

provided both eggs and meat, and there would have been beef and hogs to butcher. Here too the excess was canned to preserve it. Their own cows provided milk, butter, and cottage cheese. An abundance of trout in the lake and river, along with probably an occasional deer, augmented other food sources.<sup>7</sup>

At Christmastime Mattie would make many boxes of candy to give to friends. She created a fondant from a mashed potato base, coloring some of it green and some pink and flavoring some of it with peppermint. Some of the fondant would be used to stuff dates. She also made divinity and penuche (peanut butter) fudge to give away.<sup>8</sup>

M.E. Field was always interested in mining and worked several small but unproductive claims above Stehekin. He welcomed prospectors to the hotel and befriended virtually everyone involved in Stehekin area mining.

When Nels Roos, of Seattle, went up to his cabin on Bridge Creek and didn't return when expected, Field became concerned. He, Dan Devore and another man went to look for him and found he had apparently become exhausted getting to the cabin and had laid down on his bed and died before he could build a fire. The men had to bury him in the snow until his family could be notified and his body brought out.<sup>9</sup>

In late 1905 Field sold some of his Stehekin homestead (retaining the hotel) and purchased a ranch at Deer Point, on the north shore of the lake about 20 miles west of Chelan and accessible by road. Here he grew apples, with the help of a summer foreman and crew. He, Mattie, their children and their horses would move to the Deer Point home in December and spend the winter there, returning to Stehekin in late April to open the hotel for the summer season.

### Field enters politics

M.E. Field was so well regarded by the voters of Chelan and Wenatchee that he was elected to the state

legislature in 1898, representing Okanogan County. At that time the Wenatchee River was the boundary between Okanogan and Kittitas counties. Rep. Field introduced a bill in the legislature to create a new county, to be called Wenatchee County. It passed the House and went to the Senate, where it also passed on March 13, 1899 – but not before a senator from Okanogan changed the name to Chelan County. This bill earned Field the nickname "Father of Chelan County."

A Republican, Field was re-elected to the House in 1902. He served on four committees: education, mines and mining, water rights and irrigation, and game and fish (which he chaired). He introduced several successful bills to benefit North Central Washington, including one to establish a trout hatchery on Lake Chelan and one to appropriate \$50,000 toward construction of a bridge across the Columbia River at Wenatchee.<sup>10</sup> In 1903 he was a member of the Washington State Game and Fish Protective Association, which cooperated with game wardens in enforcing laws.

*The Chelan Leader*, *Wenatchee Daily World* and other NCW newspapers praised Field on numerous occasions for his representation of the region and for acting consistently with the platform on which he had run. *The Leader* ran a feature article on the Field Hotel in November 1903 that highlighted the nearby fishing, moonlight canoe rides, mining, hunting, Rainbow Falls and other activities. "Its genial proprietor is Hon. M.E. Field, Chelan County's popular and efficient representative

### Field Hotel Described in 1903

DeWitt Britt, editor of *The Chelan Leader*, took his family to stay at the Field Hotel in July 1903. He described the trip in glowing terms in the July 19 edition of the newspaper.

"Honorable M.E. Field and his estimable wife have a wide and well deserved fame as entertainers of the people, and their new and elegant hostelry is always well filled with tourists, health and pleasure seekers as well as capitalists in search of profitable mining investment. The building is three stories high and is elegantly finished and furnished throughout, and is an ideal place in which to spend the summer months.

"It is destined to be, if it is not already, the most popular resort in the state. It is surrounded by towering mountains, some of them over 9,000 feet high, and it is but three miles from Rainbow Falls, a 300 feet perpendicular fall where hundreds of tons of water come down with a mighty roar like thunder, a sight worth going many miles to see. Field's is also the outfitting point to the far-famed Horseshoe Basin and a number of important mining camps."

Courtesy of Elizabeth Buckner Gans and Herb Sargo



Standing in front of the first one-room Stehekin School around 1907 are, from left: Dewey Merritt, Bessie Purple, teacher Daisy Wright, Olive Field, Gretchen Purple and Bonnie Merritt.

in the state legislature. During the summer months the hotel is crowded with tourists, health and pleasure seekers, and all speak in the highest praise of it and its surroundings."<sup>11</sup>

In 1904 Field ran for state lieutenant governor on the McBride ticket, but the two were defeated. He entered the race for U.S. Congress in May 1908, again with the support of virtually all NCW newspapers. *The Loomis Prospector* declared that Okanogan County appreciated his views on forest reserves, irrigation, the "Indian lands question" and improvement of inland waterways – all matters of vital interest to the region. "As a member of Congress it is safe to say that Mr. Field could accomplish more good for the people of eastern Washington than any (other) man aspiring to the position."<sup>12</sup>

The loyal *Chelan Leader* was even more effusive.

Mr. Field is qualified in every respect, is a good public speaker, and has served this county with signal ability and credit twice in the legislature. He is a substantial property holder and the proprietor of the leading scenic resort in the northwest. He is clean, capable and popular, a loyal republican,

thoroughly in line with the (Roosevelt) administration.... He is a gentleman of large brain and reserve force.<sup>13</sup>

Field liked Roosevelt but disagreed with him on one subject: the forest reserves (later called national forests). Like other Stehekin residents, he felt that these federal lands should be managed by a commission and that some should remain open for settlement. He lost the election to Miles Poindexter, 867 to 808.

Governor M.E. Hay appointed Merritt Field to the state game commission in 1910. Field also represented Chelan County on the state Good Roads committee and served as an officer of the Chelan Commercial Club. A popular speaker, he was invited to address many gatherings of the Old Settlers Association (pioneers who had come to the area before 1901) in Chelan, Leavenworth and Wenatchee, including a three-day picnic and encampment drawing 500 people in June 1908.<sup>14</sup>

### Field sells hotel

In 1915 the Great Northern Railway completed its line up the Columbia River from Wenatchee to Oroville. The railway announced its intention to build a larger dam at the foot of Lake Chelan to produce electric power, which would raise the lake level several feet



A man fishes for trout in the Stehekin River in the early 1900s. Photo by Lawrence Lindsley.





*The Field family in 1910. From left: Olive, Hal, Mattie, Joy, Merritt. Son Walt was born in 1913.*

and inundate buildings such as the Field Hotel. Field decided to sell out to the Great Northern. He, Mattie and their four children – Olive, Hal, Joy and Walter – left Stehekin for Deer Point, or sometimes to another home they had purchased in Manson. In 1925 they sold those homes and bought the “Gaines place,” a ranch/orchard near Twenty-five Mile Creek on the south side of the lake, about 15 miles from Chelan. This became known as Field’s Point.

Olive married Harry Buckner of Stehekin in 1917, so the Fields always had a place to stay when they visited their beloved town at the head of the lake.

The GNRR continued to advertise the “Hotel Field” as “a resort with quality in the heart of the mountains.” In 1919, eighteen dollars could buy a week of hunting, fishing, bathing, boating, and dancing at the hotel. Every Saturday night a grand dance was held, supplemented by weekday evening dances. Autos were available for hire to take tourists to Rainbow Falls and other nearby points of interest. Indeed, there was “something doing all the time at Hotel Field.”<sup>15</sup>

The last proprietor of the hotel was Jack Blankenship, an early Forest Service ranger. When the dam was completed and the lake level about to rise, he dismantled the structure and used its large timbers, beams, moldings, windows, stone fireplace and staircase to build a new hotel above the water level. The Golden West Lodge operated from 1927 to 1971 and now serves as a National Park Service visitor center.

M.E. and Mattie Field spent the rest of their lives at Field’s Point. They were active in the Lake Chelan Grange (of which they were charter members) and in Chelan society. M.E. was a member of the Chelan Valley Masonic Lodge and served several terms as president of the Chelan Chamber of Commerce and the Four County Council.

Their Buckner granddaughters lived with them at Field’s Point during the school year to attend high school in Chelan, as the Stehekin school only went through eighth grade. Bucky Gans said her grandfather was a “real nice guy” who was warm and loved kids. She described her grandmother as loving, positive and a great cook. “She was tiny! Her wedding dress had a big bustle. None of her descendants could fit into it.” Bucky’s wedding veil was made from the skirt of Mattie’s dress; several other relatives subsequently wore that historic veil.<sup>16</sup>

Mattie died in 1944 following a long illness. Merritt married Beulah Morehead of Manson a year and a half later. He died on March 10, 1949, but his reputation as “Father of Chelan County” lives on.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Gretchen A. Luxenberg, North Cascades Historic Resource Study, 1986. ([www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov))
2. “The Stehekin Choice, History Edition,” [stehekinheritage.blogspot.com/2017/06/the-field-hotel.html](http://stehekinheritage.blogspot.com/2017/06/the-field-hotel.html)
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Wenatchee Daily World*, May 10, 1906.
5. Chris Rader interview with Bucky Gans July 17, 2018.
6. *World*, Nov. 13, 1908.
7. *Resorts on Upper Lake Chelan*, Annette Byrd, 1995.
8. Notes by Field descendant Harriet “Hobbie” Buckner Morehead, courtesy of Elizabeth “Bucky” Buckner Gans.
9. Byrd, op. cit.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *World*, Aug. 24, 1908.
13. *World*, Feb. 22, 1908.
14. *World*, June 22, 1908.
15. Luxenberg, op. cit.
16. July 17, 2018 interview.



*The Wenatchee Elks Band poses in front of the Field Hotel on a Stehekin outing on June 26, 1921.*

Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center #012-51-4232

## Buckners Active in Stehekin for More than 100 Years

by Chris Rader

The Buckner Orchard Harvest Fest is a fall tradition for Stehekin, the picturesque hamlet at the head of Lake Chelan. Held on the historic grounds of a homestead first settled in 1889, this free event welcomes people to pick apples and press cider from one of the last Common Delicious orchards in the U.S. An evening music program featuring talented local musicians and a community potluck with live music round out the festivities on Saturday. So what’s the story of that orchard?

“My grandfather, ‘Daddy Van’ Buckner, started planting the orchard around 1912,” Elizabeth “Bucky” Buckner Gans told this writer. Gans and her two

sisters, now deceased, grew up in Stehekin and wrote of their childhood in the charming paperback book

*The Stehekin We Remember*, published in 2007. Now 93 and widowed, Gans still spends summers in a large cabin on the land William Van Buckner



Photo by Chris Rader

purchased in 1910.

Van Buckner had been the sheriff of Kings County, Calif., when he, his wife May and their five sons set out from Hanford (near Fresno) to Alaska in 1910. Van’s brother Henry, who was living in Seattle, invited Van and May to make a detour and join him for a while in Stehekin where Henry was prospecting in Horseshoe Basin, a large cirque at the head of the Stehekin Valley.

Van and his family stayed at the Rainbow Lodge, a boarding house owned by Miss Lydia George near a spectacular waterfall (now the site of the “new” Stehekin School) about three miles from the boat landing. They were enchanted with Stehekin’s scenery, mining possibilities,



Courtesy of Mimi Keller

*The Buckner Orchard Harvest Festival has become an autumn Stehekin tradition. The public is invited to pick apples from the historic orchard, chop them with hand-crank grinders (center), and press them into cider. This photo is from the October 2018 celebration.*

hunting and fishing, and friendly residents.

Bill Buzzard, one of the tiny town’s earliest pioneers, had sold 10 acres to Miss George and was ready to unload his remaining 150 acres. Buckner offered to purchase the land for \$5,000. Buzzard, who recognized the dangers of his love of alcohol and gambling, arranged for Buckner to make payments of \$50 per month for the rest of his life. This ensured a steady income for the elderly pioneer with no possibility of losing it all in a gambling binge.



Courtesy of Elizabeth Buckner Gans and Herb Sargo

*The Buckners in 1913. From left: Carroll, Hugo, Van, Frank, May, Harry and Ross.*





*The Buckner family moved into Bill Buzzard's cabin in 1911. The cabin still stands today, at the Buckner Orchard.*

By the time he died in 1919, he had received \$4,950. With the remaining \$50 Van Buckner purchased a headstone for Buzzard in a Chelan cemetery.<sup>1</sup>

The Buckners moved into Buzzard's small cabin in the spring of 1911, and Van and his sons started work on the land. Buzzard had cut acres of fir, pine and cedar trees to sell for steamboat firewood, leaving acres of stumps. With a horse and stump puller the Buckner men gradually cleared these away. They also put in an irrigation system from Rainbow Creek, eventually including miles of ditches. They began planting apple trees and, over the next few years, built several sleeping cabins.

While the men were working outside May kept house, cultivated a flower and vegetable garden, and preserved food for winter. She also found time for china painting, tatting, poetry and watercolors, including a collection of Stehekin wildflowers.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Buckner and Field families unite**

The Buckners spent their winters in California. However, Harry, the youngest at 20, stayed in Stehekin alone during the winter of 1915-16. He spent some of his time visiting Olive Field, a girl his age whose father, M.E. Field, owned the large hotel that catered to tourists and miners. They married in 1917.

Harry and Olive moved into one of the cabins on the Buckner ranch, which now had a young 50-acre apple orchard. Brother Frank and his wife Irene doubled the size of one of the sleeping cabins for their home. Irene died in California during the 1918 flu epidemic, while Frank was in Stehekin; he then went back to California and never returned to live on the ranch. Harry and his family moved into the larger cabin and, over the next 45 years, enlarged it even more.<sup>3</sup>

Harry served at the end of World War I as a motorcycle messenger in France in 1918-19. Olive

remained in Stehekin and California with her in-laws. While he was overseas Harry's first daughter, named Irene after the deceased sister-in-law, was born in 1919. Harriet ("Hobbie") followed in 1921 and Bucky in 1926. By this time, Harry's family was the only one living full-time on the ranch.

Olive suffered from asthma and was unable to help with the orchard or strenuous chores, but she stayed busy with cooking, canning, laundry and gardening. They had cows that produced milk and butter, chickens for eggs and butchering, venison, and all the



*Olive Field Buckner holds baby Elizabeth while Harriet "Hobbie," left, and Irene pose in front for a photo in 1926.*



*Hobbie, Bucky and Irene hold hands in this 1927 photo.*

Courtesy of Elizabeth Buckner Gans and Herb Sargo

Courtesy of Elizabeth Buckner Gans and Herb Sargo

fish Harry could catch. "Dad loved to fish," recalled daughter Bucky. "The limit for trout at that time was 21. It was not uncommon for him to go out and catch 21 fish."<sup>4</sup>

Olive's skill with needle and thread paid off one day when a visiting doctor using a buzz saw cut off most of his thumb. Under his direction and using his medical supplies, Olive sewed it back on again.

#### **Everybody worked**

Like most rural children, the Buckner girls soon were assigned work in the house and out on the ranch: feeding chickens, bringing in the cows, washing the cream separator, weeding the garden, thinning apples, making wooden apple boxes, and doing laundry for their family and all the California relatives who visited each summer.

Laundry was always a family affair in summer, done outside. There was a fireplace built next to one of the water boxes. Daddy got up early Monday mornings, built a fire in the fire pit, and filled the tub that fit over it with water. This tub, made of galvanized sheet metal and about 4' x 2' by 26" deep, consisted of two compartments: one contained clean water for rinsing; in the other, white clothes were boiled. Three wash tubs (round, conventional type) sat on a bench on the opposite side of the water box. Daddy came in from whatever work he was doing about 9:00 a.m. to help with the ensuing project. He manned the first tub, using a wash board as needed before wringing out the clothing and passing it on to the next tub.



*The Buckners were still using a horse and wagon to put up hay in the 1940s.*

Courtesy of Elizabeth Buckner Gans and Herb Sargo



*Hobbie Buckner drives a truck full of box shook (boards for making apple boxes) from the Stehekin landing to the Buckner ranch. On top, from left, are Dorothy Arbough, Phyllis Marshall and Bucky Buckner.*

Courtesy of Elizabeth Buckner Gans and Herb Sargo

Here Olive and Irene handled the clothes, rinsing out most of the soap and moving the items to a third tub for another rinse. White clothes entered a fourth tub which contained bluing, a compound which helped prevent them from turning yellow. (Bluing was also used on the family's beestings.) Finally, Hobbie and Bucky fed the clothes through a wringer. Everyone helped hang the laundry on clotheslines.

With sometimes as many as twelve sheets to hang up, there was need for lots of line space. Two lines (telephone wire) ran from the side of the cellar to trees in front of the "fireplace woodshed" and two others ran from the back porch, one on either side of the path, out toward the same woodshed where they attached to trees. White clothes were hung in the sun to bleach, colored ones in the shade to minimize fading. Some Mondays the washing more than filled the lines.<sup>5</sup>

The sisters also helped their father make hay. Harry Buckner had planted alfalfa between the rows of apple trees; this was cut twice a year with a horse-drawn mower. After the cut alfalfa had dried for a few days, he would hitch up to the hay rake and gather the hay into windrows.

The next step was to follow along with pitchforks to make

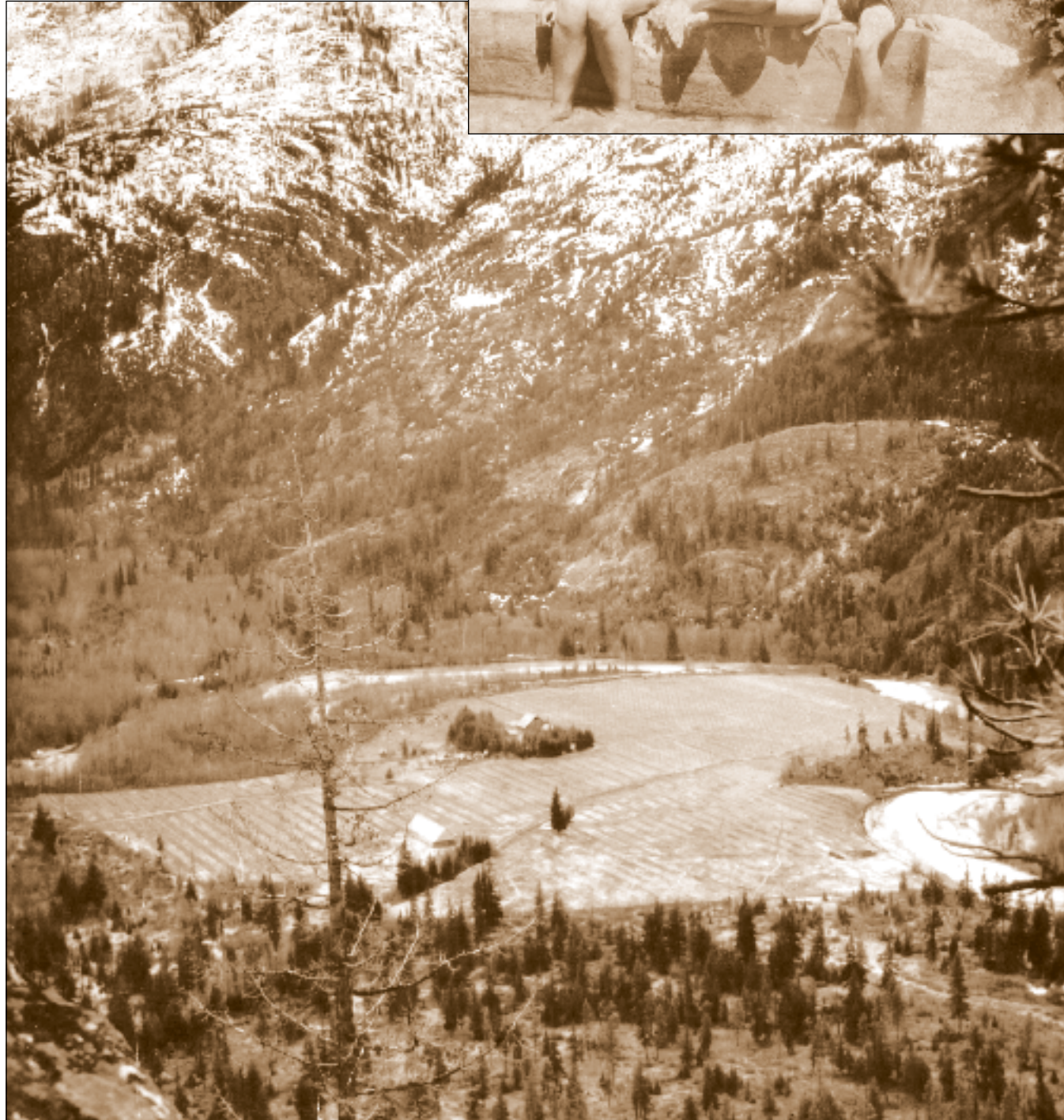


*Irene, Hobbie and Bucky prepare for a swim in the Buckner homestead swimming pool in 1930.*



*Courtesy of Elizabeth Buckner Gans and Herb Sargo*

*The Buckner orchard in 1923 was dwarfed by tall mountains of the North Cascades.*



*Courtesy of Elizabeth Buckner Gans and Herb Sargo*

each windrow into two shocks, one on each side of the row. To haul the hay, one person rode the wagon and drove the horses. Ideally, there were two people to load, one on each side of the row.... Loading was done by sticking a pitchfork straight down into the shock of hay so as to pick the whole thing up at once and place it upside down on the wagon, starting with each corner, the next two overlapping, then one in the middle of each side. After that, a row of five was placed down the middle of the wagon bed. This process was repeated until the load was as high as was safe to drive back to the barn.<sup>6</sup>

The Buckners had a hired man, or a series of them, who would come in early summer and stay through apple harvest. Jim Lowrie and Lee Williams were two whom the girls especially liked. Lee was a young man from Arkansas who fell in love with the mountainous Stehekin landscape. Once he went deer hunting but saw only a coyote, which he killed. Unfortunately the coyote turned out to be neighbor Charlie Byrd's dog.

#### *Stehekin entertainment*

The Buckner girls attended the nearby one-room Stehekin School with just a handful of other children. "The sun was always down when we'd get home from school!" Bucky recalled. "We didn't have much of a social life" in the traditional, urban sense. "But there was always a community picnic for Mother's Day, and ski parties in the winter." Harry and Olive took their daughters on wagon rides for picnics and fall huckleberry picking. On winter days the Buckner girls sometimes roller skated in their living room – and all family members were avid readers. And of course Stehekin children all rode horses up and down the valley.

"We had a small juke box in our dining room that played 78 rpm records," Bucky said. "When we were thinning apples in front of the house we'd turn it up as loud as we could." Their favorite album was the sound track to the musical "Oklahoma"; the girls knew all of the words to every song.

In 1920 Harry and his father Van built a cement swimming pool as part of the irrigation system. This was a delight to the Buckner girls and their friends. They also had a play house, a teeter-totter and a swing. Around 1930 Harry built a croquet court. "We and our visitors had great fun with this, and even friends staying at the nearby Rainbow Lodge would come over in the evenings for a game of croquet. Mother would make sandwiches and lemonade, and we could eat out there while the games were going on."<sup>7</sup>

Olive Buckner, having grown up in the Field Hotel where many parties were held, had learned to dance at a very young age. Harry, on the other hand, was raised in a good Baptist family and only learned to dance as a high school senior, thanks to a non-Baptist sister-in-



*Courtesy of Elizabeth Buckner Gans and Herb Sargo*

*Dan Devore, at left, was credited with bringing the Field family to Stehekin in 1892. He was a horse packer for decades and befriended all Stehekin families, including the Buckners. He, Harry, Hobbie (on horse) and Bucky stand by the weather station that Harry maintained. He reported measurements to the National Weather Service for 50 years, earning a plaque of appreciation from the U.S. government.*

law. In the mid-1930s their Chelan friend Lon Varney, on a visit to Stehekin, introduced the Buckner family to square dancing. At this point Harry became a good and enthusiastic dancer.

We didn't have a fiddler to make music for this activity, but Bill McLean turned himself into a one-man band for the occasions. With a harmonica holder to free his hands (he actually had a metal device for this purpose, but seemed to prefer to have one of the kids stand behind him and hold the harmonica), he could play two drums and the harmonica and turn out a real hoedown tune for the rest of us to dance to. We did eventually get square dance music on records, but Bill provided us with a good many hours of fun before that happened.<sup>8</sup>

Harry Buckner actually learned to call square dances himself, and could even call and dance at the same time.





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*Stehekin Community ball game, 1935. Back row from left: Laurence Courtney, Curt Courtney, Guy Imus, Hugh Courtney, Bob Owens, Ray Courtney, John Gladney, unknown, Horace Cooper, Harvey Cook, Keith O'Neal, Bill Course. Middle row: Courtney Miller, Roy Cave, Lee Cave, Harwood Lotspiech, Unknown, Harry Buckner, Jim Lowrie. Front row: Margaret McMullan, Marjorie Dark, Harriet Buckner, Maida Merritt, Elizabeth Buckner. The Courtney family has been in Stehekin for 100 years.*

Varney and hired man Lee Williams also taught Stehekin residents to schottische, polka, waltz, two-step and fox trot. The Buckners' apple-packing shed, built in 1922, became the dance floor for many a community summer dance party.

Community baseball games also began in the 1930s, on Sunday afternoons. There weren't always enough men for two teams, so older girls were sometimes allowed to participate.

#### ***Buckners sell ranch to National Park Service***

Irene, Hobbie and Bucky cherished their childhood in Stehekin. During their mid and late teens, each moved closer to Chelan for the school term to attend high school. They stayed with their Field grandparents or with other families, returning to Stehekin on fall weekends to help with the apple harvest. Following high school, each girl eventually left Stehekin.

During the late 1930s Irene Buckner met Anton "Tony" Sargo, who had joined the Civilian Conservation Corps and was assigned to the camp at Twenty-five Mile Creek on Lake Chelan as an instructor. They married in 1941 before he shipped out to serve in World War II; she lived in California during the war. When Tony returned, the couple moved back to Stehekin where they lived in the old Buzzard cabin. Their two eldest sons, Herb and Chris, were born while living there. Jeffrey and daughter Danita came a few years later when the family

had moved to Manson.

Hobbie Buckner married Kenneth Morehead in 1946. They lived in Manson and had six children. Dwight and Lawrence were from Kenny's first marriage and were raised in Seattle. Adrienne, Lucinda, Christy and Scott were Hobbie's biological children; she was mother to all six and grandmother to their children.

Bucky married Bill Gans, a geologic engineer, in 1947. They lived in Wenatchee, El Salvador, Brazil and Mexico, eventually settling in California and Stehekin. They had three children: William, Judith and Phillip.

Olive Field Buckner died in 1948. Harry married Lena Ward in 1954 and served as Stehekin postmaster. In 1970 they sold 108 acres of the original homestead, including all of the buildings and the orchard, to the National Park Service. Phil and Wendy Garfoot moved onto the homestead, maintaining the site and raising their family. Over the next 40 years the caretaking couple hosted many community events at the Buckner Homestead: weddings, graduations, retirement and birthday parties, memorial services, and cider pressings. The Garfoots were instrumental in resurrecting the orchard, which had deteriorated due to Harry's advancing age and the decline of the Common Delicious as a favored apple.

The original Buzzard homestead was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. Harry died in 1976. In 1989 the Buckner orchard and remaining



Courtesy of Elizabeth Buckner Gans and Herb Sargo

*Above, the Buckner family hosted Mrs. Mundt's bridge club on a summer afternoon in 1939. They appear to be giving the ladies a tour of the property (including Harry's weather station), in their old pickup truck. Atop the cab are, from left, Hobbie, Irene and Bucky.*



Courtesy of Elizabeth Buckner Gans and Herb Sargo

*Harry Buckner takes the horses down to the Stehekin boat landing to pick up relatives visiting for the Christmas holidays.*

buildings were designated a historic district. The Buckner Homestead Heritage Foundation was established in 2000 and continues to work with the National Park Service to maintain the site, "an intact example of early farming of rural mountain communities of the interior Pacific Northwest," for public enjoyment.<sup>9</sup>

#### **ENDNOTES**

1. Irene Sargo, Harriet Morehead, Elizabeth Gans, *The Stehekin We Remember*, 2007.
2. Notes by Harriet "Hobbie" Buckner Morehead, courtesy of Elizabeth "Bucky" Buckner Gans.
3. [www.bucknerhomestead.org](http://www.bucknerhomestead.org)
4. Chris Rader interview with Bucky Gans July 17, 2018.
5. Sargo et al, *op. cit.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. [www.bucknerhomestead.org](http://www.bucknerhomestead.org)



Courtesy of Elizabeth Buckner Gans and Herb Sargo

*From left: Hobbie, Bucky and Irene in 2006. The three Buckner sisters published a charming book, *The Stehekin We Remember*, the following year. The book is on sale in the Wenatchee Valley Museum's gift shop.*





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*Both Edward Curtis (above) and Frank Matsura photographed Native Americans.*



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**First Friday Reception: Beauty of Bronze,** Friday, Dec. 7  
**Wells House First Friday:** Friday, Dec. 7  
**Coyote's Corner Free Art Class:** Saturday, Dec. 8  
**Wells House Holiday Tea:** Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 15-16  
**Farrell Family Adventures (film):** Tuesday, Jan. 15  
**Rex Buck, Story of the Wanapum People:** Tuesday, Jan. 22  
**Curtis and Matsura Photos Comparison:** Thursday, Jan. 24  
**First Friday Reception and Ceremonial Closing of Curtis Exhibit:** Friday, Feb. 1  
**Night at the Museum:** Saturday, Feb. 2  
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