

History of the San Juan Island Public Library

Back in 1922, the first library, Friday Harbor Public Library, opened on February 4th on Spring Street next to the drug store. Books were donated by the local citizens and the Bellingham American Legion. The Legion's Save-N-Auxiliary began contributing \$100 a year starting in 1924 to buy new books and continued this annual donation for fifty-nine years.

Then, in 1935, concerns about the safety of the building prompted a search for new quarters. The community constructed a one-story, concrete block building with funds from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a depression-era program established to provide work for the unemployed. The 30' x 85' structure, owned by the Town of Friday Harbor, cost less than \$7,000 to build and was divided into two rooms. One room served as the Town Council meeting room and the other room served as the library for which the town provided free rent and utilities.

By the late 1970's, the island's population had grown substantially and financial pressure spurred the creation of a **Friends of the Library** group to help support the library's needs. Even with *Friends'* support, continuing financial and space problems prompted the creation of an island-wide library district in 1982. The Board immediately began looking for larger accommodations for the library's growing needs.

The library district purchased the present site, a 4,500 square-foot former restaurant, in 1983 and installed the library with minimal remodeling. The first alteration of the building was undertaken from April to September of 1988, during which the library occupied temporary quarters in the Moose Lodge. The renovated building was dedicated in October 1988.

In 1992, the Library Board initiated a long-range planning process with one of the goals being a facility expansion. In 1994 construction began on the library addition/renovation, which doubled the size of the library to approximately 9,600 square - feet. The expanded library reopened in February 1995. The first volunteer Art Committee provided art exhibits from 1996-2005.

The present layout came in 2005, adding shelf space, a quiet area for study, an enlarged community room, and improved space for the children's and teen's books.



"It is so much fun to come into work and find a whole new collection to enjoy."

"We love that we can bring our art here for people to enjoy."

"Having her drawing here makes her feel so grown up."

"The art works make the library feel so cozy."

*"Can I bring something for the next show?" **YES!***

Please pick up a list of the upcoming dates and themes at the checkout desk.



ART IN OUR LIBRARY

By San Juan Island Public Library Art Committee

Since 1996, artists and art patrons have donated a variety of art to the library. Usually, once a year, items from this permanent collection are put on display. This brochure describes the fifteen pieces that are always on view in about seven areas—inside and out.

Several times a year, the library displays art by San Juan County artists—professional and amateur—in various themes and media. Examples of past shows are *People at Work and Play*, *Winter Wonderland*, *Sea and Shoreline*, *Art Quilts* and *World of Animals and Pets*. The Art committee has schedule cards at the front desk.

On your way into the library, you passed a **Birdbath** created by sculptor Tom Small and donated to the library by Valena Dismukes in 1997. The piece was dedicated on October 11, 1997 to the memory of Mary and Clobert Broussard.





Over the entry you'll find brightly colored hand-painted blooms on silk donated by the artist Mary Sly.



In the director's office you can enjoy a watercolor by Pat Froelich named *Going Fishing*.

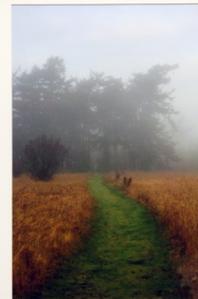
Commanding the large wall in that office, is an antique Chinese silk embroidery donated by Patsy Daugherty. She bought it in Xi'an China while visiting the terra cotta army.



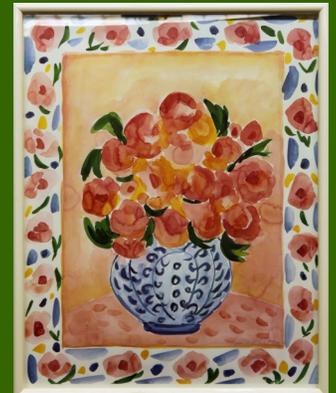
In the Children's section look for the charming small rock Cat by Arctis Cry



Mason to Fry when they were roommates during an Arctic cruise in the summer of 1996. Barbara wanted it represented in the mural as a tribute to the financial donor, Virginia Mason. Among the other items painted are the real, the imagined and the playful: written by our Island's own Ernie Gann is the *High and the Mighty*, the classic children's book, *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White, a nod to one painter's dad, William Bryant, and a tribute to a friend of Rebecca Barnard's Norwegian great-grandparents, Edvard Munch. In a snow globe dances a Winnie the Pooh-like character. Other items deal with San Juan Island's Pig War and Pacific Northwest wildlife and favorite topics such as weaving and painting. There were originally two murals of equal size. The one at the end of the room had a portrait in memory of Fry's sister Mary Helen. The other had a portrait of an unknown woman to balance the murals. In 2010 a needed television screen covered the one mural, so artist Bryn Barnard painted Kaski's portrait into the mural you can see today. Look for the charming credits in the lower right corner that include Rebecca of Befaux & After and Lee Bryant of I Foolum & Howe.



In the restrooms are *Winter Path*, a photograph from artist Robert Hares Stavers and abstract floral, a print by Susan Verbal Gantner, donated by Diane Martindale in 2010





Mural in Community Room

In 1997, Barbara Fry was given \$1000 by Virginia Mason to be used in memory of Barbara's sister, Mary Helen Kaski, who had died the previous July. The library director and Barbara came up with the idea to use the money to enhance the bare community room and make it more inviting. They worked with Rebecca Barnard on the design. Lee Bryant and Rebecca created the faux finish and trim marbling. Lanny Little painted the trompe l'oeil murals. The *Polar Bear* book by Nikita Ovsyanikov was a gift from Virginia

At the end of a wall in the central library is an eight-foot tall sculpture, *Starlight* by artist Tom Small, contributed by Carla Higginson in 1998.

In the Young Adult Section you can find a Small Totem Pole of carved wood depicting a Thunderbird on top and a bear below, donated by Clayton Burrell.



The following pieces usually reside in the front reading area near the magazine racks, but do get moved around.

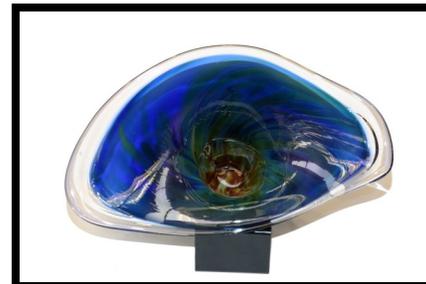


Multi-colored Fused-glass Vase 16 inches tall, by artist Bruce Meund, gifted to our collections by Valerie Dismukes in 1998.

Three-dimensional glass Lotus flowers by Jennifer Holmes



Shell-shaped Bowl in black, white and clear glass, donated by Anne Watson in 2010.



Blue Blown Glass Vase by an unknown Northwest artist, donated by Eve Burton.



Fluted Standing Vase of glass, donated by the artist, John Walsh, in 1996.

Our most-asked-about art piece is the dominant set of carved wooden panels by Ruth Byers. Carved in 1968, they are a tribute to the Spanish folk tale, *El Sombrero de Tres Picos* (*The Three-Cornered Hat*). The artist made a special effort to use Cuban mahogany for this project. Ruth carved a little angel in the clouds in memory of her son. The sculpture was donated to the library in 1995 by James and Lilian Byers.

The Three-Cornered Hat by Pedro Antonio de Alarcón first appeared in 1874. His version was so richly colored that it was the first to give world currency to the oft-told Spanish folk tale.



A guide to the panels is inscribed on the back in Spanish*. Here is the English translation by Juan Lopez. **The guide describes the panels as read from left to right and top to bottom.**



No inscription - priest with old man and dog.

Uncle Lucas and Pinona by the grapevines.

Frasquita Liviana

No inscription - grapes.

The illustrious Magistrate - Mr. Eugenio de Zuniga y Ponce de Leon and Sheriff Gardunia and two laborers-characters of the play "Three-cornered Hat" (1874) - by Pedro Antonio de Alarcon (1833-1891). Designed and carved in wood by Ruth S. Byers 1968.

Madame Mercedes and children (wife of the Magistrate). Mr. Juan Lopes -Town Mayor.

Montserrat - in Cataluna near Barcelona. 9th Century. Destroyed by fire, 1811. Center of resistance during the French invasion of 1808.

The current date is 1827

Alhambra (a castle) Granada. Built 1248-1354. 13 towers, 35 acres. Last stronghold of the Moors 1492.

Bridge of San Martin -Toledo. "Repository of all that is oldest - proudest and most private in the national consciousness." - Presence of Spain.

Alcazar (Segovia). Built for Alfonso the 11th. Destroyed by fire 1862, Currently (German Romantic Gothic Rhineland manner of 19th Cent). Isabel quelled mob there

Monastery of Jeronimos de Guadalupe (city) Pueblo (Franciscan)

The priests or clergymen - you also like Mrs. Frasquita!....and the truth is - added after a moment - that she is good-looking, she is!

* as translated.