

Honoring Our Country's Flag

The San Juan Island Library has a long history of proudly displaying our American flag.

The Legion Public Library (our Library's original name) was founded by the American Legion in 1922 and housed in the American Legion building. The Legion maintained close ties with the Library until it moved to its current location in 1983 and formed its own San Juan Island Library District. Around that time, a Legion volunteer made the tall flagpole we used to display the flag for many years on Library property.

During the first years we had problems with vandals cutting the ropes that raised and lowered the flag. In response to the vandalism, the ropes were cleated off at 20 feet. Afterwards, we had to ask OPALCO (on a volunteer basis) to use their cherry picker to lower the flag to half-mast when circumstances required, and return a day or two later to raise it again.

Around 12 to 14 years ago the ropes were replaced with a cable, but the tree near the flagpole grew and the flag often became entangled with the tree and was frequently damaged. At least four damaged flags were taken to the American Legion to be disposed of properly. Over the years we were grateful to receive donated replacement flags from various Legion members, including Don Galt and Marshall Sanborn.

Lighting the flag properly on the pole was also an ongoing challenge. We found it would cost a substantial amount to install the strongest lighting, which would still not properly light the flag in the dark due to the height of the pole and the lighting angles required. The lighting issue remained unresolved.

Finally, in 2014 we narrowly missed having a staff member injured when the pole's cable snapped as she was attempting to untangle the flag from the tree's branches. The heavy metal fastenings holding the flag to the cable and the cable itself fell abruptly, narrowly missing her, and luckily avoiding a potentially serious injury.

Taking all of these factors into account, Library administration and the Board of Trustees made the decision to display the flag indoors instead. The pole was removed and the flag is prominently mounted in the entranceway of the Library, where it is respectfully on display, properly lit, and not subject to damage from trees and weather. We encourage visitors to visit our Library and see our nation's flag proudly displayed indoors.

Happy 4th of July! We look forward to seeing you at the parade. We'll be marching with other community groups to honor our nation's and our community's freedoms.

By **Laurie Orton**, Library Director