

Edna Holden Biography

Edna Holden's philosophy on life was to give her very best at everything she did. She grew up in the Olympia area, but after marrying a Navy man the family left to travel the world. She and her family took up residence in Shanghai China, but when World War II loomed on the horizon the family boarded a cramped ship and made the journey home. She was known to share stories about the trip from China to the West coast on board ship with many of her friends and neighbors.

After the war she and her family took up life on what was originally the George Bush family homestead, just east of today's Olympia Airport. The family operated a meat packing and storage facility on 2nd avenue in Tumwater, near what is today the entrance to Michael T. Simmons Elementary School. Edna became very active in the Tumwater community. When her children were attending local schools she coordinated, with other parents, the organization of a ski club for students on Mt. Rainier near the Deschutes River. Edna was interested in preserving history for students and made a valiant attempt to get others interested in restoring and preserving the original Bush farmhouse. While ultimately the house had to be demolished to prevent the wandering and curious kids in the neighborhood, she did not let this deter her. She was the President of the Tumwater Historical Association from 1987 to 1990, during which time she helped raise funds for, and operate, the Henderson House as a Museum. In 1984 the museum received 14,000 visitors.

One thing Edna was most proud of, and gave her vigorous support to, was the formation of the Homesteader Program at Tumwater Middle School. She also participated in visitor tours for kids, at the Henderson House museum. Kids were able to see rotating exhibits like a Woman's History Room, School Room, and an early 1900's kitchen. This all required funding so Edna, with the help of others, had garage sales, Art on the Green, Style shows (with antique clothing), a gift shop at the museum, and "Museumfest". Edna also initiated a "Children's Historical Poster Contest" for students in the Tumwater School District.

In 1993 the Edna Holden Scholarship was started, and the first two recipients (John Lindar and Bernie Koontz) were recognized. The scholarship has continued in her honor for students who embrace history and are willing to always give their best at whatever task they take on.