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Land Records Uncover Old Family Cemetery

by Dr. Jewell Lorenz Dunn, Olympia Branch Researcher

Thomas Griffith was an early settler in Mason County. He was born in Scotland, immigrated to Canada at a young age, and sometime before 1864, settled in Union City, Mason County, Washington Territory.

As was true for many immigrants, Thomas dreamed of marriage, children and acquiring land. Thomas married Kate, a native woman of Haida descent, whom he met on Queen Charlotte Island, British Columbia.

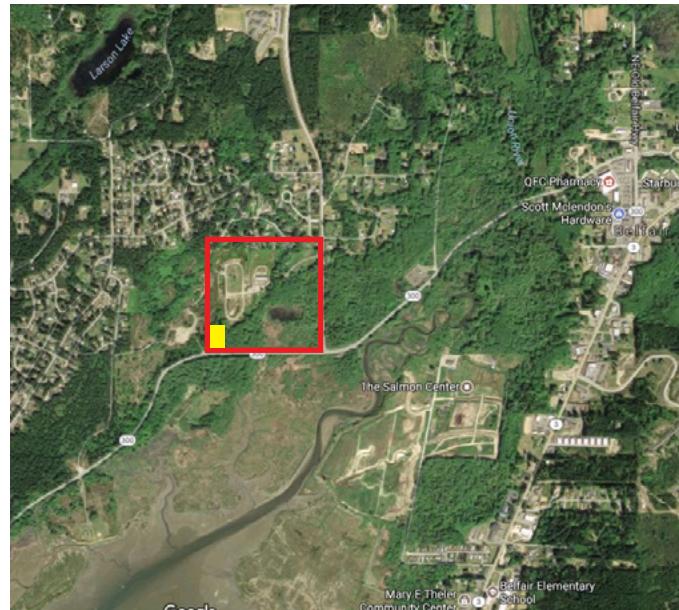
The family moved to Clifton, Washington (now Belfair), where Thomas obtained a homestead of 161.85 acres. The Homestead Act of 1862 brought many settlers to the Pacific Northwest in search of property to call their own. The Griffith homestead was located on the eastern portion of Hood Canal in northern Mason County.

Family lore indicated there was a Griffith family cemetery on the property.

Further evidence could be found in the Washington State Archives. There are several records from our collections to document the transition of the property and location of the cemetery.

The original General Surveyor Map (or survey), from 1872, is the first map of the property. These surveys can be accessed via the [Washington State Digital Archives](#) by Township and Range with approximate dates covering 1852-1980.

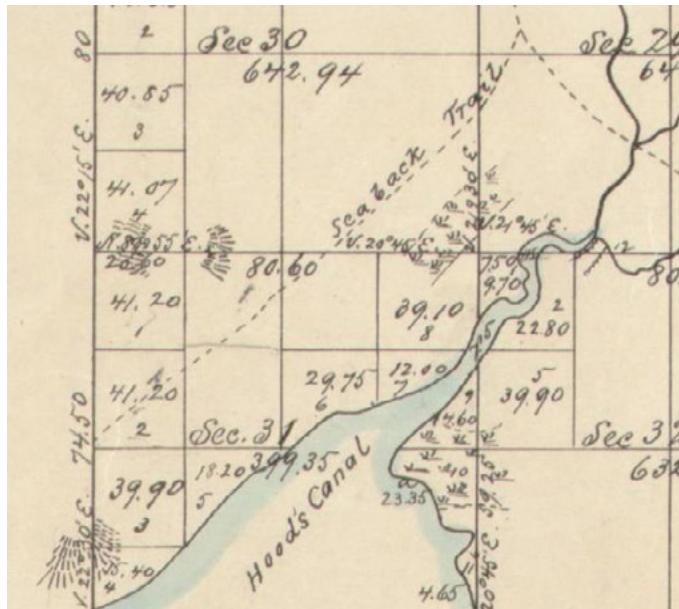
The deed records carry a chronological trail of grantors (sellers) and grantees (buyers) of the property in question. Thomas Griffith was the first grantee as he received his homestead from the



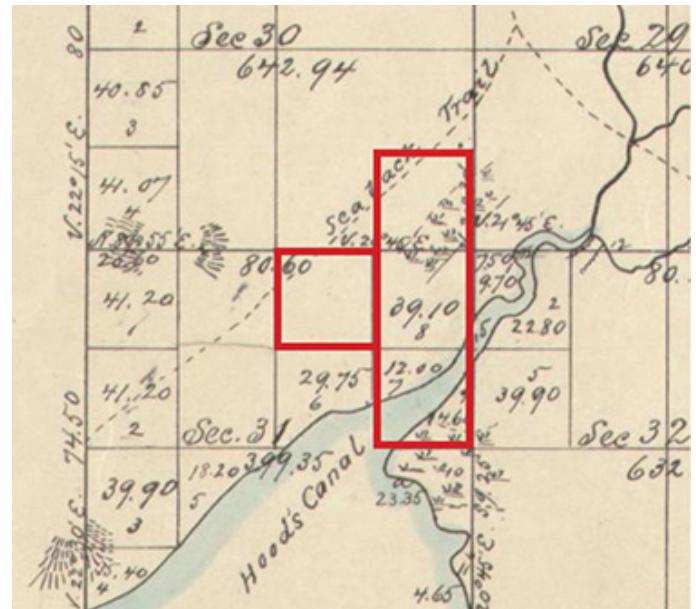
Yellow rectangle is believed to be approximate location of Griffith Family Cemetery.

United States, General Land Office.

Thomas Griffith's homestead included the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 30, the N 1/2 of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 31, and lots 7, 8 and 9 of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 31.



Portion of 1872 land survey Township 23N, Range 1W sections 29-32.



Portion of 1872 land survey Township 23N, Range 1W, sections 29-32 including outline of Thomas Griffith homestead

Thomas and Kate later sold a 40-acre piece of property in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ (Sec 30) to Henrietta E. Mills, with the exception of a 200-foot-by-300-foot portion in the SW corner. The deed did not indicate this was set aside for a cemetery. However, the 1896 Real Property Assessment and Tax Roll for the year of 1896 indicated there was a 1.38-acre cemetery listed on the line right under Henrietta Mills' name where she was taxed for 38.62 acres.

Kate Griffith died just a couple of years (1895) after she and Thomas sold the 40-acre parcel to Henrietta E. Mills. Kate's living children all provided statements via deeds to relinquish their title to the remaining land which was sold to John W. Beard.

William Griffith, one of the older Griffith children died just 6 months before his mother in December of 1894. There is an unsubstantiated claim that Kate and her sons William and James, who died 1902, are buried in the family cemetery along with a dozen other townspeople.

Another valuable map/land collection used to learn about the property were timber cruises.

NAME OF PERSON, FIRM, COMPANY OR CORPORATION ASSESSED AS OWNERS.	DESCRIPTION OF LAND AND TOWN PROPERTY.				No. acres in each tract or part of tract improved except lots.	No. acres in each tract or part of tract improved except lots.	No. of acres in each tract or part of tract improved except lots.	No. of acres in each tract or part of tract improved except lots.	No. of acres in each tract or part of tract improved except lots.
	No. of Tracts	No. of Acres	No. of Acres	No. of Acres					
Shuey John	10	18.4	10.8	1.75	80.22	1	12.0	2	1
Wills Henrietta	1	6.7	0.0	0.0	38.62		0.0	0.0	0.0
Cemetery	1	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0	0.0
Hoff Jacob	1	2.9	0.5	0.0	7.3	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Griffith Thomas	1	6.7	0.0	0.0	36.70		0.0	0.0	0.0
Wills Henrietta	1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0	0.0
Griffith Thomas	1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0	0.0
Paget Mill Co	1	0.0	0.0	0.0	42.60		0.0	0.0	0.0
Griffith Thomas	1	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.0		0.0	0.0	0.0
Hoff Jacob	1	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.0		0.0	0.0	0.0
Paget Mill Co	1	0.0	0.0	0.0	175.98		0.0	0.0	0.0

Figure 4 Mason County Real Property Assessment and Tax Roll.

These cruises were carried out between 1909 and 1972 to access the value of timber on sections of property throughout the county. These assessments are very handy because of the detailed information cruisers included on their maps. They often showed roads, tree density, buildings, bodies of water, schools, cemeteries, logging camps, property owners, and other miscellaneous details not found in other places. The cruises for sections 30 and 31, for Township 23N Range 1W, showed the property after it was purchased by John W. Beard.

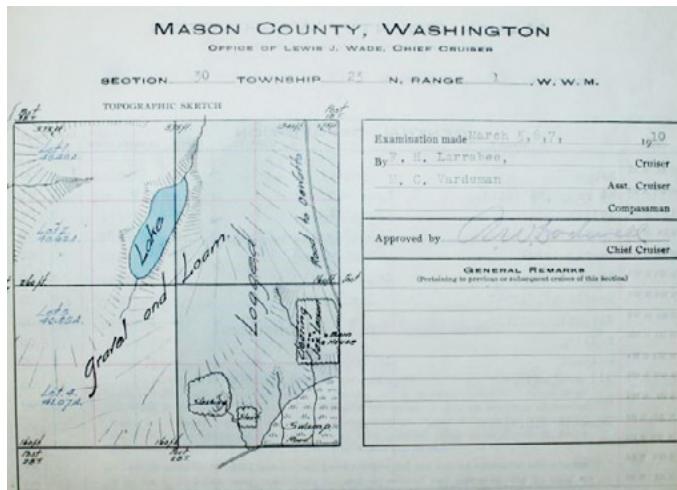


Figure 2 Portion of 1872 land survey Township 23N, Range 1W sections 29-32.

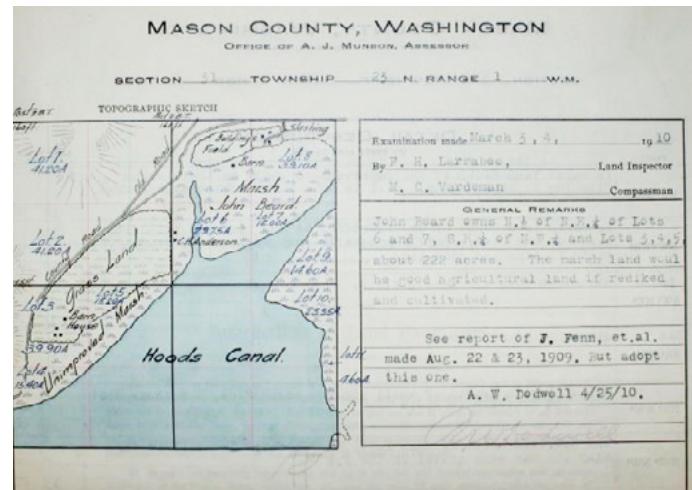


Figure 2 Portion of 1872 land survey Township 23N, Range 1W sections 29-32.

The timber cruisers did not document the cemetery when they made the assessment of timber on the property the week of March 3-7 in 1910. It is not known if any of the family were available to make note of the cemetery. Thomas Griffith had been living in Pilchuck, Snohomish County, with his daughter, Anna Griffith West, and her husband, Otto.

Thomas Griffith coincidentally died on March 7, 1910, in Pilchuck, the last day the timber cruiser made his notations on the Belfair land.

The cemetery at some point became abandoned. Continued vandalism lead to the destruction and disappearance of all markers and stones. The cemetery was eventually overtaken by natural overgrowth, but its discovery has caused some genealogical paths to cross, and now renewed interest inspired the family to locate and reinstate the cemetery. There are efforts being made by descendants to obtain the cemetery land so family can restore and keep its grounds.

- i. 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Schedule I, Union City, Mason Co., Washington Territory, page 1, line 28, dwelling 11, family 11, Thomas Griffith age 37 laborer, born Ireland, wife Kittie age 30, Indian, born Wash Ter, John age 6, William age 4, Maggie age 3, Thomas age 1. Note that several census list conflicting birth origins as Ireland, England and Scotland for Thomas Griffith.
- ii. The Homestead Act of 1862 granted a head of household a 160 acre tract of public land for clearing it off, making improvements and residing on it for the term of 5 years.
- iii. The property was located in sections 30 & 31 of Township 23 North, Range 1West.
- iv. [Township 23 North Range 1 West], Natural Resources, Department of, Survey Plats of Washington, 1852-1980, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives, <http://digitalarchives.wa.gov>, [1-20-17].
- v. Mason County Deed Book Volume V, page 287, Grantor Thomas Griffith, Grantee Harriett E. Mills
- vi. Mason County Real Property Assessment and Tax Roll, page 12, Sec 30- 23N- 1W, line 2 Henriette Mills SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ except 1.38 acre for cemetery, line 3 cemetery 1.38 acre, 31-23N-1W, line 6 Thomas Griffith lot 6 -7 acres, line 7 Henriette Mills lot 8 –north 30 acres, line 8 Thomas Griffith lot 8- south 9.10 acres, line 10 Thomas Griffith NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of NE $\frac{1}{4}$. *Note on line 12 the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW/1/4 was vacant in this year.
- vii. Mason County Register of Deaths, page 2, line 57, Kate Griffith, died May 31, 1895, age 46, female, married, Indian, place of death Clifton, died of Consumption, born Queen Charlotte, information of parents unknown, information Thomas Griffith.
- viii. Mason County Register of Deaths, page 2, line 52, William Griffith, died Dec 23, 1894, age 28, single, mixed Indian & white, died of Typhoid F, occupation hook tender, father Thomas Griffith born Glascon, Scot., mother Haida (Indian) born Wash.
- iv. Mason County Register of Deaths, page 4, line 143, Nov 9, 1902. Age 22, white & Indian, born Clifton, cause of death suicide, resided in Clifton, laborer, father Thos Griffith, mother unknown.
- x. 1910 Mason County Timber Cruise Township 23 N, Range 1W, sections 1-31. The cruises indicated John W. Beard was the owner of what was previously the Griffith homestead.