

# BLACKBERRY PRESERVES

The Journal of the

## KIRKLAND HERITAGE SOCIETY



You may not know of Lanny Ross but your parents and/or grandparents did. Many old time LP record collections will have his records. Born in Kirkland in 1906 to Winifred Williams Ross and Douglas Ross, Lanny was the Grandson of Walter W. Williams. As a child Lanny spent his summers in Kirkland at his grandparents summer home, Glandwr. When his films played at the Gateway Theatre, it was a Kirkland "event". See page 4.

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[www.kirklandheritage.org](http://www.kirklandheritage.org)



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

LOITA HAWKINSON

Happy 2015. We are coming up on the Centennial of the 1916 lowering of Lake Wash. I truly hope the art community will partner with schools to have the original shoreline marked with fish tiles.

February is again History Month so the historic plaques and banners will be in place. We add a few additional plaques each year so that more businesses can be involved.

The Cannery has been sold by Thad Pound. Thad worked hard and long to find a buyer he knew could be trusted to preserve Kirkland's last WPA project. And Thad wanted to find a buyer who would be welcomed by his neighbors. The building has been cared for and will now be restored by the new owners. Aside from the ferry system, nothing brings back more fond memories than the cannery.

Frank Rosin has contributed this issue's history lesson. Frank is very involved with *Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound* so has friendships with and history about many original radio personalities. He has long been one of the sound effects specialists for *Jim French Productions*. Frank has always had a keen interest in Lanny Ross because of the radio and Kirkland connection. KHS has always had an interest because of Lanny Ross's connection to Kirkland and Walter W. Williams, a Kirkland Founder. Most of the historic photos provided in this issue came from the Nancy Williams Bell Collection. Nancy's father, Hubert, was the youngest of the Williams' 9 children. Hubert was born in Kirkland in 1895. Nancy was an only child and until she died in 2013, she was our closest link with the original founders. Nancy was Lanny's youngest cousin. She had fond memories about him.



**Hubert Williams and Lanny Ross in 1969.** Photo taken by **Arline Stokes Ely**. Arline was researching and writing about Kirkland's history. Later she was the author of *Our Foundering Fathers*. Hubert was an uncle to Lanny. He was the grandfather of KHS member Dave Bell.



**Tori Dennis** is enrolled in the UW's Museology Graduate Program. Part of the requirements is an internship to provide hands-on experience working with collections. We are fortunate that Tori lives in Kirkland and selected KHS to do her internship. Tori's work will give her a good idea of how really dry history can be. Before research can even begin, records and photos need to be identified, scanned and then entered into the PastPerfect Museum Database. After that, research is easy and fun. Members have identified hundreds of photos in the East Side Journal Collection. Limited time has kept many of these photos archived but not data entered. Tori is helping with that. She is putting in names, dates and details. We are lucky indeed.



## Lanny Ross by Frank Rosin`

Lanny Ross was born in Kirkland in January of 1906. It was a small residence toward the back of the bank, the brick building built in 1888 at the foot of Market Street just across the street from where the Kirkland Heritage Hall now stands. This building later became the local telephone building where a switching center for Kirkland remains today. Your author was born 30 years later about 3 blocks down the street to the south in a line-of-sight across Moss Bay as long as the ferry was not in to block this line-of-sight view.

Lanny's name was actually Lancelot but in the early days was called 'Lanty' by his family and friends.

His mother and father had a home at 35th Avenue and Pike in Seattle where he was brought up but also spent many days with his family in Juanita. He sold his aunt's lemonade at his stand on top of 34th Avenue which was one of the prominent Seattle streets in those days. Everyone that knew him thought him a mischievous little fellow with a very friendly smile. He did the things other boys did, delivered newspapers and led his division during World War I in selling Liberty Bonds. It was here his mother gave him his first voice lessons. He went to Madrona Grade School in Seattle where he was active in Boy Scouts and then to a boy's school in Victoria.

When Lanny was 12 years old he went to the Cathedral Choir School of St. John the Divine in New York. There he obtained a scholarship to Taft at Watertown, Connecticut, and then was given a four-year scholarship to Yale in 1924. He graduated from law at Columbia University and passed the New York Bar.

Lanny by the 1920s was living in New York and had joined the choir at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. He entered Yale University in 1924 and was a member of the track team winning the championship in 1924 and 1927. He was also a tenor soloist in the Yale Glee Club

Mr. Bartholomew, the Yale Glee Club director from 1921 to 1953, convinced Lanny to go to Europe as a singer with the club the year he graduated. He gave up going to the Amsterdam Olympics as National A.A.U. 300 yard champion for the music tour.



Lanny was featured in many advertisements.

In 1928 as a member of the Glee Club he appeared on the fairly new NBC Radio Network. Lanny Ross went on to become a singing star on radio, the stage, in movies, and early television. Because he didn't want to explain to the media where this place, Kirkland, was located, he always said he was born in Seattle.

As popular and famous as his tenor voice had become there are very few actual radio programs of him performing that survive among the over hundred thousand other radio programs held by collectors today, perhaps less than a dozen with Lanny. There are, of course, phonograph records of individual songs available. Kirkland Heritage has a CD with several surviving radio programs that was obtained from a collector in Germany, that may be copied if you would like to hear him as he was on the radio. The CD has several of the 'Lanny Ross Show' fifteen minute episodes from the 1940s and a 'Maxwell House Show Boat' from the late 1930s, probably 1937, available.

Some of the radio programs he appeared on were 'Show Boat,' 'Troubadour of the Moon,' 'The Swift Show,' 'Your Hit Parade,' 'Mardi Gras,' 'Lanny Ross and his Log Cabin Orchestra,' and the 'Lanny Ross Show.'



Lancelot,  
Lanty  
or  
Lanny.

Always a  
charmer.



Continued on page 6

In 1888, the US Government had planned to build the ship canal which would have connected Lake Washington with Elliott Bay. This was the reason Peter Kirk and Leigh S.J. Hunt selected Houghton to be the townsite for the Moss Bay Iron and Steel Works. (Yes, Kirkland was originally Houghton). The canal promised a direct link to the Pacific. Heritage Hall is located where Kirkland-made Moss Bay rail would have been loaded aboard freighters. By 1892, another US Congress had other ideas and dashed all plans for the ship canal. That is the real reason the steel mill failed. In 1890 the Iron Masters had already decided against a local smelter because the local coke was not of the grade required for Bessemer steel. But that was a mere bump in the road. Steel ingots were going to be imported and used at the mill. The smelter had originally been platted on the land near the Kirkland Post Office. The actual foundry and rolling mill, located on Rose Hill, where built in 1890 and 1891. In 1892, they remained idle. Private money was being invested to build the canal but the 1893 economic crash stopped that final effort.

In 1910, the ship canal was again funded by the US Government for a number of reasons. Once again, the shores of Lake Washington were desired for industry. And the Lake needed flood control. With only the Black River to drain rain water and winter run off, the Lake's elevation varied greatly. When Lake Washington was high, water filled what is now Lee Johnson Field and Peter Kirk Park.

The canal was not designed in haste. The Cedar River which emptied into the Black River was necessary for the Salmon's annual run upstream to spawn. The Cedar was diverted into Lake Washington before the canal was started in 1911. Once opened in 1916, the Ballard Locks and the fish ladder allowed Salmon to migrate through Lake Washington and continue up the Cedar.

But Burke and Farrar were not concerned about the Salmon. They knew Kirkland would become even more desirable once the lake level was stabilized and industry could build. It was not a coincidence that Burke & Farrar purchased the Kirkland Land & Improvement Company in 1910. They, like Kirkland's original Foundering Fathers, were betting on the canal.



SEATTLE'S  
MOST

KIRKLAND

IMPORTANT  
SUBURB

The Lake Washington ship canal will play an important part in Kirkland's future. From present indications the canal will be opened and in use within the next ten months. Then more than 100 miles will be added to Seattle's water front, and Kirkland will become a seaport town on the largest fresh water harbor in the world. This means added values to Kirkland real estate. Have YOU bought a lot in Kirkland yet?

Every day in the classified section of The Times you can find some property in Kirkland described.

**BURKE & FARRAR, Inc.**  
 Owners of Kirkland Townsite.  
 CAPITAL AND SURPLUS \$1,000,000.  
 2d Floor N. Y. Block, Over Dexter  
 Horton National Bank.

LITTLE STORIES OF KIRKLAND  
No. 25.

Seattle Times-- Sept. 25, 1915

## Lanny Ross continued from page 4

These radio broadcasts paid for his college days. When he graduated from Yale, he entered Columbia University Law School and completed his law degree in 1931. Since that first solo appearance on Christmas Day 1928 at NBC as a member of the Yale Glee Club, by the time he got his law degree he was making five times what he was offered at a law firm in those depression days by singing on the radio so he never did practice law. He became the star of 'Show Boat' and undertook graduate studies at Juillard. By the time he was established as a radio personality and concert singer his version of 'Moonlight and Roses' became popular and eventually his signature theme.

Lanny Ross went on to become a singing star on besides radio, the stage, in movies, and early television.

In 1934 he contracted with Paramount for three films, 'College Rhythm,' 'Melody in Spring,' and 'The Lady Objects.' By 1936 he started appearing on Broadway in several productions but his main interest continued to be radio. In 1939 he was the voice of Gulliver in the Rotoscope/animated Fleischer feature, 'Gulliver.'

He enlisted in the U.S. army in WW2 and advanced to the rank of major. When returning from the army after the war television was the new thing in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He was on the 'Swift TV Variety Show' and the 'Lanny Ross Show' in those early TV days

Lanny's grandfather was Walter W. Williams who had come to this area with Peter Kirk in hopes of establishing a steel mill. The Williams family originated in Wales and were among the pioneer families there. In England he was a well known Workington band conductor and was secretary to Peter Kirk.

Of course we know the steel mill failed, thankfully for the Kirkland environment, but Walter W. Williams stayed in the area and worked as secretary at the Hofius Steel & Equipment Company in Seattle. The family continued to summer at their home at Glandwr which is land now known as Rose Point in Kirkland. Glandwr is a Welsh name meaning 'by the water.'

Winifred 'Freda' Williams, the daughter of Walter W. Williams, was Lanny's mother. She was a concert piano player who played for Anna Paviowa, a Russian dancer, at Covent Garden in London

Frieda met Douglas Ross who was a violinist, piano player, and Shakespearian actor. Douglas Ross, Lanny's father, was featured in *Disraeli* and by the age of six Lanny's father arranged to have him appear on stage in New York in a production of 'Disraeli.'

Douglas Ross was born in England and went to St. John's College and then clear across the ocean and the USA to Ellensburg where he got a teaching certificate. He taught in public schools here in the area and made a theatrical debut in the West here in 1903 doing Shakespearean roles. He was a drama coach at Carnegie Institute of Technology and Yale University. Douglas Ross had two brothers, Lanny's uncles, Patrick Ross was a Greek and Elizabethan Stage Literature teacher and Lancelot Ross who Lanny got his name from, that lived in New York

Lanny never forgot his love of Lake Washington and Glandwr. He returned every few years to Kirkland to swim and fish in the lake and ride the ferry from Madison Park to Kirkland. He loved the smells and sounds of the steam ferry 'Lincoln' and even the smells and sounds of the ferry 'Leschi' in later years. During the summers at Glandwr he delivered newspapers and eggs by rowboat, singing as he rowed.

Someone from the *East Side Journal* was always there to write something about his return visits to Kirkland and in 1946 he wrote an article for the *American Magazine* describing his youthful memories in Kirkland and his grandfather, Walter W. Williams, who greeted him on arrival with a pocketful of popcorn. He always looked but never did find the tree he carved his initials in as a child all those years earlier.

Lanny Ross died in April 1988 at the age of 82 in New York. His wife, Olive White Ross, had died in 1984. The major part of his estate went to Yale for scholarships in their music programs



The **Urania** at the Glandwr dock about 1900. After the lake lowered, they no longer had ferry service.

# Blackberry Preserves

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\* Chair or Co-chairs

\*\* During WWI, the Hello Girls were ladies who served as telephone operators. For KHS, these sweet ladies call and remind you of the next meeting or event.

\* Kirkland Natives or deep roots serving on the KHS Board.

Webmaster: The late Dale W. Hawkinson.

## Kirkland Heritage Society

[www.kirklandheritage.org](http://www.kirklandheritage.org)

**425-827-3446**

**KHS is 100% volunteer with no paid staff.  
Your memberships make it happen.**



### 2015 MEMBERSHIP

**Kirkland Heritage Society**

**January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015**

KHS qualifies for tax exemption under 501(c) (3) and your contribution is deductible to the extent allowed by law. We qualify for matching gift contributions by those employers who offer this benefit.

### Membership Category

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Heritage Hall, Lower Level  
203 Market Street  
Kirkland, WA 98033.



## TO RENT HERITAGE HALL

**Call Kevin Ball at Kirkland Parks**

**425 587-3398**



Built in 1888, this was the original brick building that housed the bank and offices for the Kirkland founders. Later the Kirkland Land Company rented the upper floor to the Lake Washington Telephone Co. for \$5 a month. That small dwelling to the right was a home. Here is where Lanny Ross was born. See pages 4 and 6 for history on Lanny.

**Blackberry Preserves** is produced by the **Kirkland Heritage Society**, for KHS members and those interested in Kirkland's past. **Loita Hawkinson, Editor.** For information on KHS - visit our website: [www.kirklandheritage.org](http://www.kirklandheritage.org), or call 425 827-3446 to leave a message.

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Kirkland Heritage Society

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