

“ The Curious Case of Vashon Ivy”
By Bruce Haulman and Terry Donnelly

English Ivy. It chokes everything in its path. It is lush and green. And, it is everywhere. Vashon Island has the perfect climate and growing conditions for English Ivy to flourish. It has flourished so well it has become the kudzu of the Pacific Northwest. In fact, ivy has thrived on Vashon to the point that King County Parks has started an “Ivy Free Vashon” program and the Vashon Land Trust has developed “The Vashon Ivy League,” an ivy eradication program, to try and rid the island of this creeping menace.

So, how did English Ivy make its way to Vashon and become such a threat to our ecosystem. Like most things sinister, the origin of Vashon ivy is a relatively simple story. This is the way it was recounted in the 1935 *Vashon Island News-Record*, the *Beachcomber* of its day.

Souvenir Gavel Made From Ivy Originally Grown by Ezra Meeker
By Louise Dahl

In 1879, around the log cabin home of Ezra Meeker, of Puyallup, twined an old and rugged ivy as if to hold together in its sinuous arms the domestic love and felicity of the old pioneer. How well the family prospered beneath its leafy shade is known by the long and illustrious life of the one who planted first its feeble root. The old log cabin still stands in Pioneer Park. Although removed from its original site the ivy still winds its leafy arms around those ancient logs. Cement pillars, like a cane to an old man, help support the falling limbs – limbs that now measure a full twelve inches through. J.M McClintock, at that time was manager of the Ezra Meeker Store. One day he cut a slip from this old ivy, and planted it on his homestead at Ellisport. It thrived and grew until 1884 when the McClintocks moved to Burton, and started in business. The ivy like an old friend was brought along and transplanted near the store, by the wood shed. Many changes have taken place since then the old store no longer stands, replaced by a restaurant, meat market and drug store. The ivy grew along with the years, until it completely covered the old wood shed, and had its rotting sills beneath a thick of shining leaves. At last, one Christmas morning, a thick blanket of snow added to the weight of years bore the old patriarch in the last resting place. Some attempted to raise the old ivy but found it impractical. An ardent gardener, J.F. Shaw of Burton preserved a portion of the trunk. A portion of the wood was given to A.J. Lewis, manual training teacher of the Vashon Island high school who proceeded to make it into a gavel. The gavel was presented by Mr. Shaw to the Burton Improvement Club on March 1 with hope that the good luck and prosperity that accompanied this old ivy through all those long years, will remain, and add even greater good fortune to the Burton Improvement Club.

We have to thank pioneer homesteader J.M. McClintock of Ellisport for bringing ivy to Vashon. What I want to know if where is that Burton Improvement Club

Gavel? It should be preserved and presented to the Land Trust on the day they finally eradicate ivy from the island. If anyone knows where this gavel is, please let us know.



Lover's Lane, Ellisport, Wn. 1910 Postcard



Ellisport Ivy, Terry Donnelly Photograph

These two photographs of Ellisport, one from about 1910 the other this year, give you a sense of the impact ivy has had on the island. The 1910 Lover's Lane, Ellisport, WA photograph shows a path through a relatively young alder forest that is ivy free. The 2015 Terry Donnelly photograph, taken in Ellisport, shows what 130 years of unrestricted ivy growth can do. The trees are much bigger and the forest is more mature, but so is the ivy. It is everywhere.



Ivy Out at Judd Creek, Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust Photograph

If you want to join the Land Trust's efforts to eradicate ivy on the island, please contact The Vashon Ivy League through Julie Grunwald at the Vashon Land Trust.

Bruce Haulman is an island historian.
Terry Donnelly is an island photographer.

Photo 1 – Lover's Lane, Ellisport, WA circa 1910 courtesy of the author.

Photo 2 – Ellisport Ivy, 2015 Terry Donnelly.

Photo 3 – Ivy Out at Judd Creek, Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust