



Buckner  
Homestead  
HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Promoting the care and preservation of the Buckner homestead, orchard,  
and community atmosphere in perpetuity

## 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

### A VERY DIFFERENT YEAR!

*In spite of many weeks of threatening flames, smoke, evacuations, and closing of the Stehekin Valley, limited activity continued at the Buckner Orchard. The historic apple trees were cared for, work parties and events were held pre- and post-evacuation, and visitors slowly returned late in the season. Fortunately, the labor-intensive pruning was completed, while thinning apples remained unfinished, resulting in trees heavily laden with fruit in the fall. All things considered; it was a good year!*

#### FIRE TIME AT THE ORCHARD

**The Buckner Homestead and Orchard remained a busy place during the Pioneer Fire, just not what would be expected during the summer season.**

As an “area of refuge,” formerly referred as a fire safety zone, the Orchard provided an area relatively safe from wildfire because of its openness, large green areas, and easy access from the lower valley. It also served as one of the locations vehicles could be safely parked while residents and others were evacuated. Because of the lower risk of fire, fewer resources and preparations were needed at this historic site.

First and foremost, a sprinkler line was established between the orchard fence and Rainbow Creek, the area from which the fire would most likely approach. As with many other places in the Valley, the sprinkler line was anchored with a portable pump at the Stehekin River. Additionally, fire lines were dug, sprinklers and fire hose were located in and around the historic structures, and portions of some structures were wrapped.

**Vicki Gempko**, NPS Resource Manager, did yeoman’s duty in maintaining the historic trees, as well as coordinating other efforts at the Orchard with the many agencies and their firefighters – a very sincere thank you, Vicki!

*Did you know the Orchard served as the staging and management area for the drones used to monitor and assess the fire?*





## WORK PARTIES AND VOLUNTEERS – Our Strength

Three successful work parties were held during the year, June 13 (7 volunteers, 14 hours), July 13 (15 volunteers, 36 hours), and October 4 (15 volunteers, 30 hours). Work Parties totaled 65 hours, with an additional 100 + hours of individual volunteer time. **Volunteer hours at the Orchard totaled nearly 200, understandably down more than 100 hours from the previous year.**

Volunteers work included:

- Thining apples
- Ditch Maintenance
- Cleaning the Buzzard Cabin and Packing Shed Platform
- Mowing and watering lawns and orchard
- Electric fence repair/replacement and outlet upgrades
- Weed eating and burning
- Fuel reduction near and around structures
- Collecting and stacking brush
- Pruning water suckners from apple trees
- Storing hoses/sprinklers for winter
- Removing invasive plants
- General cleaning and grounds maintenance
- Repairing/rebuilding equipment
- Removing organic matter for rodent control
- And, more!

**Again, special Thanks to Christy Libbey, Wendy Garfoot, and Laurie Thompson** for helping facilitate the work parties, and **Dick Bingham, Chris Sargo, and Wendy Garfoot** for being our expert lighting installers.







**And, there is always a multitude of other tasks that need to be done by volunteers.**

## **MAJOR PROJECTS AND PURCHASES**

Projects at the Orchard were the most severely impacted by the fire, with virtually none being completed or moved forward in planning. The *2025 Annual Work Plan* for the Foundation and NPS now includes these projects carried forward from 2024.

- Planning and compliance for a storage structure
- Planning and compliance for creating a loop river trail
- Installation of ADA ramp at the packing shed
- NPS structural assessment of the root cellar

## EVENTS

One causality of the fire-filled season was the very popular *Square Dance at the Orchard*

**Square Dance at the Orchard 2025 is August 2.**

**MUSIC AT THE ORCHARD**, featuring Stehekin's own, *Agnes on Fire*, brought a very welcome, lively, and entertaining respite to the Valley! It was perfect weather for mid-September, with nearly 200 visitors and locals of all ages enjoying three hours of great listening, dancing, and fun! (182 attendees)



**WHAT FIRE?**

**AGNES ON FIRE!**  
**SAT 9/14/24 7-10pm**  
Buckner Orchard ~ Stehekin WA

**The Agnes On Fire Band:**  
Start Date: 2004  
Containment: 0%  
Total Personnel: 59  
Cause: Human, Under Investigation  
Today's Activities: Masticating  
Incident Commander(s): AWOL

TEAM 3 APPROVED



**MUSIC AT THE ORCHARD 2024**



## HARVEST FEST 2024

Harvest Fest 2024 was, again, a success, with three days of music, picking, pressing, potluck, poetry, and comradery. Visitors had begun to return and, joined by local residents, the festivities of Harvest Fest brought a sense of normalcy to the Valley. **Valley Music Night** and **Poetry Night**, traditional parts of **Harvest Fest**, returned, as well!

**Harvest Fest 2025 is October 3-5.**

**Valley Music Night** There is a lot of extraordinary talent in our little valley! Many sincere thanks to all who joined in, and to **Peggy Ann, Mandy, and Steve** for bringing it all together! It was a great Friday night kickoff in the Stehekin School for Harvest Fest! Thank you all! (126 attendees)





**Picking, Pressing, and Potluck** on Saturday were rain-free and a beautiful day for harvesting an abundant crop of apples! Lots of apples, lots of cider, lots of friends old and new, and lots of chili and other good food! This is what the Buckner Orchard and the Stehekin Valley are all about! (Approximately 120 attendees)



**Flashback!**  
**Harvest Fest 2012**

*Leo Christoffer Photos*



**Poetry Night** was held sitting around the fireplace at the *Golden West Visitors Center*. 41 folks, definitely a record, enjoyed reading and listening to favorites and original pieces, making for a very nice conclusion to the Harvest Fest weekend.



## **BHHF - NPS ANNUAL WORK PLAN AND MORE**

The *Foundation* and *NPS* enjoy a good collaborative relationship, characterized by on-going and open communications, all benefiting the Buckner Homestead and Orchard.

Notable, is a jointly developed *Annual Work Plan*, laying out in the late months of a given year, the projects, work, and efforts to be undertaken together at the Orchard during the next calendar year. In 2024, because of the fire, not all work was completed or even attempted, especially planning for and implementing of projects. As mentioned above, these projects have been reassessed, modified as needed, and carried forward to 2025 as appropriate. As always, staffing, weather, timing, and more will all impact plans for the coming year.



## PARK SERVICE ACTIVITIES AT THE BUCKNER ORCHARD



**Laurie Thompson, Orchardist** - Laurie, a long-time Park Service employee, was hired in 1996 to care for the Buckner Orchard, and her dedication and love of the orchard are very much a wonderful asset for both the orchard and the community. Laurie is a year-round resident of the Stehekin Valley and enjoys sharing her work and experiences with any who ask or wish to volunteer. Along with fellow *NPS* staffers, **Vicki** and **Mack**, the Orchard was in great hands in 2024.

### **In addition to the care of the orchard, and not mentioned above, other National Park Service work at the Buckner Orchard included:**

**Invasive Species Eradication** - *NPS* continues to work to eradicate invasive species such as Rush Skeletonweed and Knapp Weed with intensive search and spraying of plants throughout the Homestead, and the Stehekin Valley. This is very monotonous and time-consuming work.

**Care of the Orchard during Evacuation** – Without volunteers, and Laurie and Mack evacuated, the care of the Orchard fell to **Vicki Gempko**, local resident and *NPS* Resource Management specialist. Changing water, mowing, tending the electric fences, coordinating with others, and more, Vicki did it all!

**Culvert Replacement** – A major culvert carrying water beneath the service road running between the two fenced areas was replaced, ensuring the flow of irrigation water.

**Mowing and Mulching** – *NPS* Maintenance also assisted with mulching brush after pruning and in completing the mowing of the pasture as a part of preparing the area as a fire refuge.

## RECOGNIZING DEDICATION

In 2023, the Foundation presented the first plaques honoring long-time dedication and work at or on behalf of the Buckner Orchard. That initial recognition went to *Mountain Barge Service* and *Tom Courtney Tug and Barge* for their many years of supporting the Orchard by providing much needed shipping of materials and equipment to and from Stehekin and the outside world.

The plaques are 5" X 7" Glossy paint on modern metal and are displayed with an attached easel.

**In 2024, two very special individuals, Vickie Gempko and Wendy Garfoot, were recognized and honored for their long-time work and dedication to the Buckner Homestead and Orchard.**

## VICKI GEMPKO

Vicki has retired after many years as the NPS Resource Manager in Stehekin, with the Buckner Orchard one of her primary responsibilities. Excerpted from the note accompanying her plaque,



On behalf of the Foundation Board, you are presented with this plaque in recognition of your many years of selfless dedication to the Buckner Homestead and Orchard.

A tree at the Orchard is dedicated to you in recognition and appreciation for your unparalleled, and often unheralded, dedication, support, and love. No matter, dead of night, or middle of winter, you were

always there. While honoring and recognizing your extraordinary advocacy and hard work, we are also saddened, for you will be missed in so many ways.





## WENDY GARFOOT

Without the unselfish dedication of the Garfoot Family, the historic trees at the Orchard would literally not exist today. Wendy and her husband, Phil, a Park Service family, lived in the Buckner House for forty years, raising two kids, and growing to love and care for the historic trees. They took it upon themselves to resurrect the orchard, which had fallen into poor condition as Harry Buckner grew older and the price of apples and shipping made commercial production no longer feasible.

Excerpting from the letter that accompanied Wendy's plaque,



It is with great appreciation and love that the Foundation's Board of Directors presents you with this recognition of all you and Phil have done to make the Orchard what it is today. The historic apple trees literally would not exist today if not for your family's efforts to rescue, restore, and nurture them.

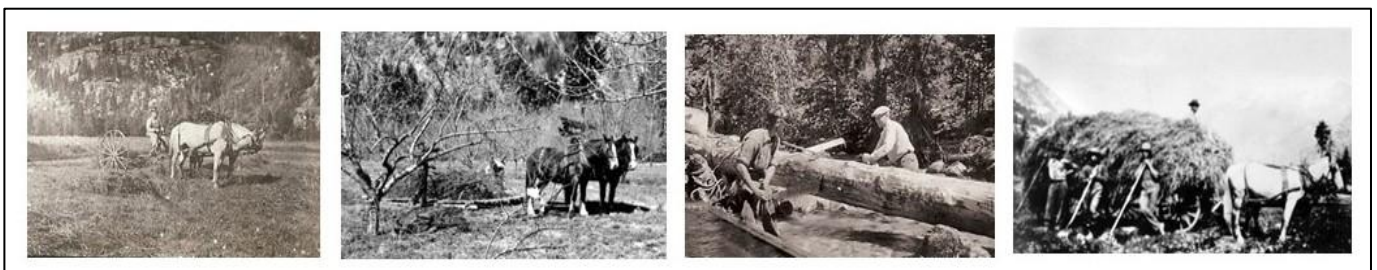
In the years since, your constant and continued support, work, and leadership have always been there, whether it be for cider talks, work parties, cleaning the Buzzard Cabin, setting up for events, posting materials, leading walking tours, and much, much more. No one has contributed more, and for this we are most thankful and appreciative.

Please accept this as a token of our thanks, love, and recognition.



The hard work, love, and dedication to the Buckner Homestead and Orchard by Vicki and Wendy cannot be overstated. Please take the time, when you have the opportunity, to personally thank each of them. They've more than earned it!

**Flashback! - Orchard Work in the 1920's**





## 2024 ANNUAL FOUNDATION MEETING - SUMMARY

May 13 via Zoom

1. The submitted revised *Articles of Association* was approved, including clarifying language and practice, revising quorum requirements, expanding the board, and changing the length of terms for officers from one year to two.
2. **Dick Bingham** (Stehekin) and **Doug England** (Manson) were reelected to three-year terms on the Board, **Katie Turner** (Stehekin) was elected to the open Stehekin Community Rep position which **Bob Nielsen** retired from, and **Will Gans** (Seattle) was elected to a two-year at-large position created by the revision of the *Articles of Association*.
3. The three officers, **Herb Sargo** (Stehekin and Sedro-Wolley) as president, **Christy Libbey** (Stehekin and Manson) as treasurer, and **Laura Reiter** (Walla Walla) as secretary, were elected to two-year terms, again as consistent with the *Articles* revision.
4. The submitted and previously Board-approved budget was adopted as submitted. The status of the proposed storage structure, and the funds donated for this purpose, were discussed and clarified as being delayed while waiting for NPS compliance work.
5. The summary of the 2023 Annual Meeting was approved.
6. **Laurie Thompson**, Orchardist, provided the orchard report.

No trees were lost this winter. Hooray!

Pruning is completed.

This is a big bloom year for the Romes, less so for the Commons.

Watering began a week ago.

Elk were about average, and we're in the process of replacing some fence.

The culvert has been replaced between the two fenced areas

A big year for tent caterpillars

## SUPPORT

### Adopt-A-Tree

Adopt-A-Tree continues to provide funds for support of *Foundation* work at the Orchard, with 45 adoptions totaling \$1,164.12 in 2024. This is a significant increase from 2023.

## Memberships

In 2024, 26 memberships of various levels were received, totaling, \$3,279.56, helping fund projects in 2024 and into the future. This was a decrease in memberships from 2023, but very near the same dollars.

## Donations

**Individual Donations** - \$9,350.00 in individual donations were made to the *Foundation* in 2024, nearly double that of 2023. It should be noted that many contributors don't make a real distinction between donations and memberships, as both are means to support the Foundation and Orchard.

## Grants and Targeted Donations

**Grants** – A grant of \$3,000 for support of the Square Dance was received from a private donor.

**Targeted Donations** – No targeted donations were received in the 2024 fiscal year.

**NOTE** - Targeted donations are use-specific and have little impact on our day-to-day operating budget. They do not replace funds contributed annually to do the *Foundation's* work at the Orchard.

Please contact the *Foundation* directly if you are interested in making a donation, targeted or otherwise, to support the Orchard. All donations and contributions are tax-deductible in accordance with *IRS* rules and regulations.

## In-kind Contributions – Thank You!

Services, materials, and equipment from individuals and businesses make the work of the *Foundation* much easier and more effective. Here are businesses and individuals who assisted us in so many different ways in 2024. This support illustrates just how important the generosity and commitment of so many is needed to conserve, preserve, and keep the Buckner Orchard the jewel it is!

**Barge Shipping/transportation** - *Mountain Barge Services*

**Music Events** - *Agnes on Fire, Peggy Ann Courtney, Mandy Ketchell, Alan Mundal, Tom and Liz Courtney, Alan, Johnathon Scherer, Smith, Wendy Garfoot, Sonjia Pope Shaw, Bhakti, and the Stehekin School*

**Equipment for Harvest Fest and/or Square Dance** - *Stehekin School, NPS, Mike Sherer, Stehekin Valley Ranch, Keith Carpenter, and Nathan Thomas*

**Accounting/Bookkeeping Guru** – *Olivia Libbey*

**Maintenance and continued development of our website** - *Crystalview Graphics*

**Publicity /Reporting** – *Lake Chelan Chamber of Commerce, Discover Lake Chelan*

**Chamber of Commerce Membership** - *Lake Chelan Chamber of Commerce-BHHF exchange*

**Facilities use** - *Stehekin School District and National Park Service*

**Photography** - *Leo Christoffer, Vicki Gempko,, Laurie Thompson, Sandy Potts, and Herb Sargo*

**Equipment repair** – *Keith Carpenter, Kyle Riemer, Herb Sargo, Dick Bingham*

**Sound System storage and management** - *Liz and Tom Courtney*



**Event Transportation** - *Stehekin Valley Adventures, Stehekin Valley Ranch,*

**Posting sites** - *Stehekin Bakery, Stehekin Post Office, Tom's gas pumps, Stehekin Valley Ranch, Stehekin Landing, and NPS*

**Equipment Donations** – *Laurie Thompson, Herb Sargo*

**Harvest Fest Crew** - *Mimi Keller-Knutsen, Roger Knutsen, Candy Smith, Glen Smith, Kathy Christoffer, and Christine Sargo*

**Planning and Design** – *Hibbard Architecture and Planning*

## OUTREACH

*The Foundation* continues to develop relationships with other organizations and to communicate our purpose and goals to the community via local media outlets. To that end, the following were continued during the 2024 program year.

**Lake Chelan Chamber of Commerce** – Memberships were exchanged between *the Foundation* and the *Chamber*, allowing each to be a member of the other.

**Stehekin Guide Book** - A full-page ad featuring *BHFF*-sponsored events at the Orchard was placed in 2024 at a cost of \$315.00. The *Guide Book* is provided free of charge to visitors at various locations and on the boats.

**10 Public Communications** were sent via email during 2024. These were updates and reports, announcements of coming events and cancellations, membership information, and news releases to local media. Postings throughout the Stehekin Community preceded each event, as well.

**2024 END OF YEAR FISCAL REPORT IS ON THE NEXT PAGE**



## 2024 END OF YEAR FISCAL REPORT

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	2024 ADOPTED	2024 ACTUAL
<b>I. Balance Forward</b>		<b>\$ 99,930.61</b>	<b>\$ 99,930.61</b>
<b>II. Revenues</b>	A. Adopt A Tree	\$500.00	\$ 1,164.12
	B. Donations - General Fund	\$2,000.00	\$ 9,350.00
	C. Packing Shed		
	D. Memberships	\$3,000.00	\$ 3,279.00
	E. Interest (Cashmere Valley Bank)	\$250.00	\$ 1,329.55
	F. HF Raffle		
	g. Grants	\$3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
	I. Dedicated Funds		
	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$8,750.00</b>	<b>\$ 18,122.67</b>
<b>Total Funds Available</b>		<b>\$104,985.46</b>	<b>\$ 117,955.78</b>
<b>III. Expenses</b>	A. Equipment repair/maintenance	\$400.00	
	B. Harvest Fest	\$250.00	\$162.62
	C. Priority Projects	\$7,500.00	
	D. Incorporation and Affiliation		
	E. Administrative Costs	\$300.00	\$243.15
	F. Incidentals	\$500.00	
	H. Purchases	\$500.00	\$602.10
	I. Summer Events	\$4,000.00	\$913.00
	J. Dedicated Funds		
	<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$13,450</b>	<b>\$1,920.87</b>
<b>IV. ENDING BALANCE FWD</b>	<b>BALANCE FORWARD</b>	<b>\$91,535.46</b>	<b>\$115,612.94</b>
	Working Budget	<b>\$11,535.46</b>	<b>\$35,612.94</b>
	Dedicated Projects	<b>\$80,000.00</b>	<b>\$80,000.00</b>

The Buckner Homestead Heritage Foundation is a not-for-profit, 501(c)3 organization created specifically to support and preserve the Buckner Homestead and Orchard in Stehekin, Washington, and is registered as such with the State of Washington and the IRS (Tax ID #452913458)