



The Gateway Inn and Cabins in Hoodspport during the 1930s was the spring and summer headquarters for Ed Ricketts, a marine biologist and one of John Steinbeck's best friends. He was the inspiration for the character "Doc" in Steinbeck's novel "Cannery Row." Below, left to right, Gig Harbor historian Michael Kenneth Hemp is the author of "Cannery Row: The History of John Steinbeck's Old Ocean View Avenue and Its Connections to the Pacific Northwest." John Steinbeck's best-known novels include "The Grapes of Wrath," "Of Mice and Men" and "East of Eden," which were made into films. *Courtesy photos*

# Connecting legendary novelist to Hoodspport

By Gordon Weeks  
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Did one of the country's greatest novelists, John Steinbeck, spend a week in Hoodspport during the 1940s?

And did a Hoodspport logger named Ernie Dahman teach the author of "Grapes of Wrath," "Of Mice and Men" and "Cannery Row" how to shoot a gun?

The answers to these questions are "holy grails" to Gig Harbor historian Michael Kenneth Hemp, author of "Cannery Row: The History of John Steinbeck's Old Ocean View Avenue and Its Connections to the Pacific Northwest."

"That's the crucial part of it now," Hemp said in an interview with the *Journal*.

He added, "I'm trying to build a new factual history of Shelton and Hood Canal that no one knows about."

Anyone who knows anything about Steinbeck's connection to Hoodspport can contact Hemp at 831-236-2990 or mkhemp@thehistorycompany.com.

Here's a quick biographical recap of Steinbeck for those who haven't touched one of novels since it was required reading in school:

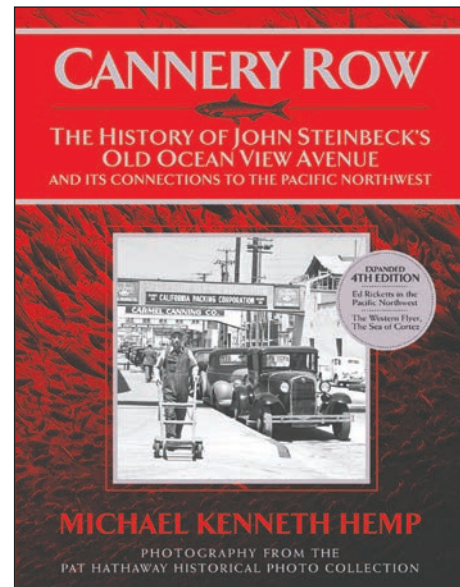
Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California, in 1902. His first published book in 1935 was "Tortilla Flats," a series of humorous stories about Monterey "pisonos."

Steinbeck's works include "Of Mice and Men" in 1937, "The Grapes of Wrath" in 1939, and "East of Eden" in 1952. All were made into major movies starring the likes of Henry Fonda



and James Dean. "The Grapes of Wrath" tells the story of an Oklahoma family whose land becomes unfarmable during the Dust Bowl days of the early 1930s, and travels to California in search of a better life. They become farm workers in labor camps with low pay and no rights. Steinbeck was awarded a Nobel Prize, a Pulitzer Prize and the U.S. Medal of Freedom. He died in New York City in 1968. Steinbeck's connection to the Pacific Northwest came through his good

friend, Ed Ricketts. Ricketts was a marine biologist and ecologist on Cannery Row. Ricketts is the model for the character "Doc" in the novel "Cannery Row." Hemp said Ricketts spent most of the springs and summers during the 1930s in Hoodspport, where he and his family stayed at the Gateway Inn and Cabins. From there, he conducted maritime research of Salish Sea waters that led to his 1939 presentation, "Between Pacific Tides." Steinbeck possibly came to



Hoodspport to see why the area was so important to Ricketts' work, Hemp said. Hemp said a relative of Dahman told him that Dahman taught Steinbeck how to shoot a gun. Steinbeck also reportedly autographed copies of some of his books that were on Dahman's shelf, and whose whereabouts are unknown, he said. Hemp said he believes a Steinbeck connection to Hoodspport and Mason County would attract tourists interested in the historical, maritime, literacy and ecological legacies it shares with Cannery Row and Monterey, and the entire West Coast. Another Steinbeck attraction in Western Washington is the ongoing restoration of the boat Western Flyer in Port Townsend. The purse seiner was built in Tacoma in 1937. In 1940, Steinbeck and Ricketts set off for a six-week journey to the Sea of Cortez on the boat. The voyage inspired Steinbeck's book "Sea of Cortez." The boat is scheduled to be relaunched this year.