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## **Thurston County Sesquicentennial**



Olympian file photo

Mary Ann and Daniel S. Bigelow discuss their family history with genealogy consultant Connie Bailey (center) in 2000 at the Bigelow House in Olympia.

## **Bigelows stay true to their traditions**

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*"In those days every family had its own rules. The rules of this family still stand, and we go by them." -- Mary Ann Bigelow*

One family that is strongly rooted in tradition is the well-known Bigelow clan.

Daniel and Mary Ann Bigelow speak of their forefathers almost as if they know them. They've given countless talks about their ancestors and have regular visiting hours for their home, which is on city, state and national historic registers.

The family pioneer, also named Daniel Bigelow, was a lawyer who came to Olympia in the early 1850s.

He built the area's first large house in 1854, farmed 325 acres of land, started several business ventures and took an active role in shaping the area in which he settled.

Present-day Bigelows speak of him fondly, relating stories from his diary.

Mary Ann Bigelow, 89, who married into the family, likes to cite the story about a woman hanging her clothesline up on the roof of the boarding house the family pioneer lived in before coming west.

"He wrote, 'I never expected to see a woman rise so high in the world,' " she said.

Daniel Bigelow also was a very moral, Christian man -- a trait his descendants emulate, she said.

The family follows other traditions as well.

Almost every generation of Bigelows has a lawyer in the family. Daniel Bigelow, 90, practiced law for his father for a time, and then took a job with the state as an attorney.

For the Bigelows, education comes second only to the Methodist church, with family members always expected to complete college.

"In those days every family had its own rules. The rules of this family still stand, and we go by them," Mary Ann Bigelow said.

Bigelow children also have to know how to swim, how to play the piano and how to type.

Daniel and Mary Ann Bigelow, who married in 1935, inherited the Bigelow House along with their family traditions.

"There's always been a Bigelow in the house. It's just a family thing," she said.

They raised their four sons there, none of whom are lawyers. One of their grandsons picked up that thread.

Son George, 63, worked for Xerox for 30 years and is now retired. John holds a doctorate in organizational behavior and is a professor at Boise State University in Idaho. David fixes control panels for marine generators all over the world, most recently traveling to Korea to fix one on a fishing boat. Their fourth son, Timothy, is a youth leader in the First United Methodist Church.

The extended family remains close, just as in the old days. Each Sunday, everyone available goes out to eat.

"We just automatically meet for lunch on Sunday," Mary Ann Bigelow said.

On holidays, the 23 family members who still live in the area get together.

The family continues to grow, with the couple's great-granddaughter Zoe Rochelle Bigelow the newest addition.

"I've got a purse full of pictures," Mary Ann Bigelow said.

The growth in the family is bringing inevitable change, however. The Bigelow House is on the last 2 acres of its original 325, with Daniel and Mary Ann Bigelow being the last family members who will live in it. In the family tradition, Daniel has known no other home.

Despite that, the name will live on through the house. When no one in the family wanted the house, Daniel and Mary Ann Bigelow decided to sell it and nearly everything in it to the Bigelow House Protective Organization, retaining the right to live in it for the rest of their lives.

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