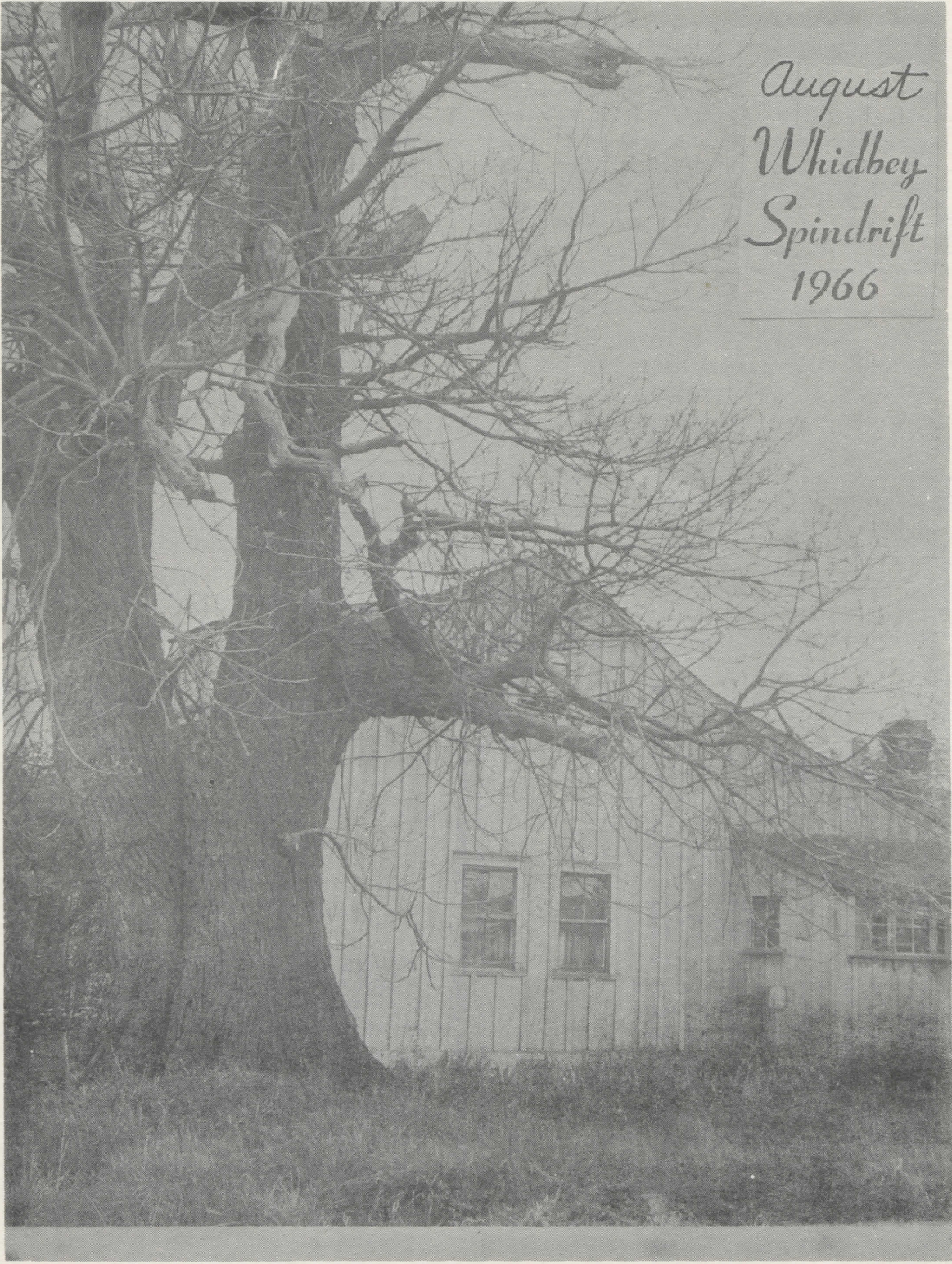


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COUPEVILLE NAMED FOR SEA CAPTAIN

ON the cover of Spindrift this month is pictured the first frame house built in Coupeville that of Captain and Mrs. Thomas Coupe. The structure stands overlooking Penn's Cove today, its grey weather-stripped exterior blending like the smoke from its chimney with the same surroundings that attracted Captain Coupe in 1852.

In November of that year Captain Coupe filed his claim on what was to become the town of Coupeville, Island County's seat of government. The claims of Coupe, John Alexander and Captain Lovejoy filled the pleasant little hollow known to the early day Indians as "Psa-tle", translated "snake basket," according to Flora P. Engle, early day historian. This appellation was a natural designation for a warm, sloping hillside where, no doubt, the harmless gartersnakes of our day basked in the spring sun. Indians who lived in their long-houses on the waterfront gave simple uncluttered and often humorous sounding designations to locations in which the tribes lived and hunted.

At any rate, the daring and adventurous Captain Coupe had some trouble convincing his wife of the advantages of making a home on Whidbey Island. Here, in 1852, was the unknown, an island in a maze of uninhabited, timbered islands, beset in unexpected places by red men noted for their savagery at times. No schools, churches or other evidences of civilization graced this Whidbey's island, there was no transportation other than by water; Olympia (then Smithfield) was the nearest trading post. Small wonder that Mrs. Coupe resisted settling in this remote area.

However, the pioneer mother wanted her captain husband to quit the sea entirely, and a certain exploit brought this matter to a head. Captain Coupe had his wife aboard when he sailed his full-masted schooner through Deception Pass, the first and only time such an adventure was attempted, and had thoughtlessly invited her on deck to watch the procedure. One can picture Mrs. Coupe's dismay and terror as the big ship swayed and wallowed through the narrow whirl-pool lined pass.

In spite of this, Mrs. Coupe came to live on Whidbey; the captain promised to give up the sea and then went back on his promise. Their claim became the site of the town of Coupeville; their home the first frame house in Coupeville; and as an additional memorial, the great walnut tree growing beside the house came from a walnut planted by the good captain himself over 100 years ago. Another tree planted by the captain blew down a number of years ago.

Captain Coupe built three sloops and made three trips around the "Horn" to France in 1855 and 1856. His ships carried spars cut on Camano Island, loaded at Utsalady, and destined for shipyards at Brest, paid for by the French government.

A story is told of Captain Coupe's determination to carry all possible sail regardless of the weather. One day a heavy gale caught his ship under full sail and he gave no orders to take in any canvas until it looked as though the masts would be carried away. Then, when he did give orders to take in sail, the storm was so fierce that the sailors refused to obey because of the danger of being swept away themselves.

In a towering rage, Captain Coupe went up the mast himself, wearing a pair of canvas trousers. High above the deck the wind in a furious gust swept up his bell-bottomed trouser legs, ripped them at the seams and tore them completely off.

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