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# Spindrift Two

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## Planes came to Whidbey 50 years ago

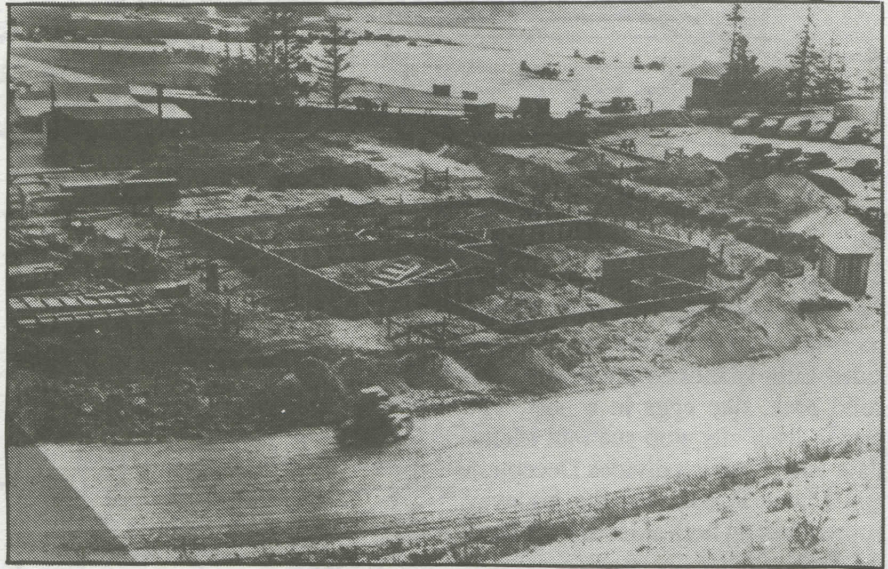
In September of 1942 the first PBY Catalina seaplane landed at the Seaplane Base in Oak Harbor. The base was formed on an enlarged spit that reached to Maylor's Point, with Oak Harbor on the west side and Crescent Harbor on the east.

Fifty years have passed since 1942 when three PBY squadrons were based there, one for training. The big slow planes, speed at less than 100 miles per hour, droned over Oak Harbor as they made regular flights from Crescent Harbor, around Maylor's Point and the town, then settled down again in the waters of Crescent Harbor. It was wartime, and everyone available went to work at the Whidbey Naval Air Station.

In 1944, towards the end of the war Ault Field was under construction on North Whidbey's Clover Valley, once the idyllic home of early settlers who cleared the land by hand. The September 1992 Memorial service was held on the hill overlooking the Seaplane Base, at the site of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and there were from three to four hundred people present.

Memories flooded the area as two seaplanes staged a "fly-by" in front of the onlookers. Here young officers put in their days below at the hangar with crew quarters and a training and ready-room, awaiting orders for three months in the Aleutian Islands on patrol.

On the hill above were the Victory Homes, which are still there, and the Quonset Huts which were added for living quarters. An important adjunct to the Seaplane Base was the little tug,



*In 1940 a contract was let for building a Celestial Navigation Training Building on the Seaplane Base. This photo of the beginnings of what was later became the Admin Building was taken about 1942 from Saratoga Heights, looking southwest.*

*Lily*, which patrolled Crescent Harbor for driftwood so the big fly-boats landing would not suffer a hole in their fuselages from a collision.

The *Lily* crew located a crab bed in the harbor and the young officers built a place to cook the crab on the apron. Needless to say, the *Lily* became one of the most popular occupants of the Seaplane Base!

The PBY's primarily patrolled the Aleutian Island in Alaska, where two of the islands were occupied by the Japanese. It was reported that 40 percent of the seaplane crews were lost in the vital operation which located Japanese supply boats and notified headquarters which dispatched a destroyer.

Oak Harbor was a very small town in 1942, with the business district reach-

ing from the theater west to what is today the YMCA. Today's Midway shopping district was then a part of Goldie Road. The Seaplane Base of World War II is now home for the Navy Exchange and for the Oak Harbor Marina. On the hill above, the "Victory Home" houses still are located, along with the branch of the Skagit Valley College, and a new combined library building for the college and Sno-Isle Library.

The memorial services commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the base brought a number of veterans who had lived in Victory Homes and flew the big ships. Adm. Jim Russell, who was an instructor in those far-away days, was present, with Mrs. Russell. He celebrated his 90th birthday recently.



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# Fish traps at West Beach

Fish traps were part of the offshore scenery on Whidbey Island for 31 years, from 1903 to 1934. A vote at that time by the people outlawed the traps which were removed forever from Island waters.

Shelby Clark, who worked on the Ebey's Landing fish traps and on Lopez Island in the San Juans in 1933 and 1934 as the traps were voted out, also helped remove them. During the traps' lifetime, a normal haul was three tons of mostly salmon. The halibut, skate and dogfish were thrown back, along with all steel-heads as they were a game fish.

Clark told of the Point Partridge trap where two others, Tony Johnson and Andy Arensen worked with him. "I did the cooking on an old fashioned wood range. We burned bark chips. Our pay was \$60 per month, up ten dollars from 1933 plus \$10 per man for groceries. The trap boss got \$10 extra.

"The built-in bunks were terrible to sleep on. We ate mostly fish to save our grocery money for other things. Sometimes we traded fish for homemade bread, cakes and pies. We walked the cap log of the trap to shore then hiked a mile and a half to Prairie Center to buy groceries."

One time at Partridge Point the crew caught a half grown seal pup in the trap and kept it for a couple of days. They had a big bell from an old schoolhouse that weighed over 500 pounds. The bell rang when they heard a boat whistle.



*Pete and Antone Muller with Chris Bos and cook at the West Beach Fish Trap bunk and board building, in 1905. Fish traps were outlawed in 1934.*

The crew got used to rough weather, and once a violent storm at Point Partridge tore out part of the trap. The same gale tore out a trap at Admiralty Bay and upset a pile driver at Dewey.

It was a pleasant life when the weather was good. By November the fishing season was over and the traps dismantled.

An interesting footnote from the Island County Times of May 10, 1922: "Capt. Gunderson of the fishing schooner Mariner found a monstrous sea lion in the West Beach trap that was nine feet three inches in length and weighed 821 pounds. He had killed 200 salmon in the trap."



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# Izetts were early Crescent Harbor settlers

The pioneer Izett family name is still prominent in Oak Harbor and Crescent Harbor, where its founder John Izett took land in the Crescent Harbor area in the early 1850s.

From notes taken in an interview with Art Izett, grandson of John, in 1977, a number of interesting happenings were revealed. Art's father, George Izett, founded the Crescent Harbor Creamery in 1905, when Art was seven. The creamery had eight employees, including Art's aunt, Henrietta Izett (Frostad) who kept the books, and a hired girl, Sadie Hagar for the Izett house. The creamery furnished the first payroll for Oak Harbor, until Jim Neil came with his pole camp in 1910, said Art.

Art Izett recalled the "big snow of 1916" when snow was 36 inches deep on the level, and all traffic stopped except that which was moved by sleigh. He and his brother Jim used the Izett sleigh and cut wood for the schools which furnished them with spending and school money. The creamery flourished and George Izett kept as many as 100 hogs on his farm near the creamery. The hogs grew fat on the skim and buttermilk fed to them. Down the Crescent Harbor road is the little red barn with the rock foundation built by George and John Izett, and which is still standing in good shape (1992).

Will Izett was Art's uncle. Will's farm was the northeast portion of Oak Harbor today, from 400 Ave. East,



*John Izett and family in front of one of the first cabins at Crescent Harbor.*

north to 700 Ave. He built the big two story "bungalow" type house with the long front porch that still stands on the upper side of 400 Ave. E. in a Garry Oak dotted area. Will Izett gave the land (10 acres) for the first high school in Oak Harbor, where Memorial Stadium is located today. It was given with the understanding that the property would always be used for school purposes, and besides the stadium, the administrative offices, bus barns and maintenance and storage buildings are located there.

The three story (including the above ground basement) school was torn down in the 1950s after the Navy base came to Whidbey, but the basement remains, the "flat-top" building. The

ten acres was large enough for the high and elementary school, a gymnasium built by volunteer community effort, and a sports field for baseball and football. Art Izett pitched for the high school baseball team. Ben Faber was catcher and Marcellus Maylor also pitched.

A hundred years ago, the Izetts built the Crescent Harbor Methodist church and parsonage and furnished them both with gas lights. The original parsonage still stands, a remodeled house, at the entrance to Crescent Harbor Road.

Will Izett had three children, Wilma, Blandon and Bryan, who grew up in Oak Harbor. What today bears the plebian name of 300 Avenue East was first named Izett Avenue, in honor of the family. ♣

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# As it was in the beginning . . .

**W**hen the first Board of Island County Commissioners met in January of 1853 the first issue of the day was the building of roads. Up to that time all travel was done on horseback or on foot, on trails through the woods or over the beaches.

The Legislative assembly of Oregon Territory appointed the first board, which included Samuel D. Howe, John Alexander and John Crockett. George W. Allen was appointed Sheriff and Dr. R. L. Lansdale, Probate Clerk. Allen refused the appointment and Hugh Crockett was appointed temporarily in his place.

The first business was to consider a petition from I. N. Ebey and 11 others for a county road from Coveland (San de Fuca) to the Northwest Corner of the Ebey claim. This later would be from the Captain Whidbey Inn to the Ralph Engle farm. A road from Coveland to the claim of William Wallace on Crescent Harbor was also granted at this meeting.

The first taxes were levied. This was a four-mill levy to be used for Territorial roads from Snohomish Falls to Walla Walla and from the Cowlitz to Olympia, the levy to take place if all the counties voted yes. Island County at that time included everything west of the Cascades and east of the Olympic Peninsula. In the September session of 1853 the four-mill levy was assessed, plus a \$5 poll tax. The first County warrant was drawn by W. B. Morse for his work as Assessor, \$50 in amount. The first school levy of two mills was passed.

D. Snow was road Supervisor and was authorized to work all hands on both sides of Penn Cove in opening and working the roads, two days in all.

During the road opening the first white bread seen on the Island was said to have been brought in the lunch of John Alexander. W. B. Engle, having brought no lunch, killed a sand crane

and cooked it over an open fire.

In 1857 the Commissioners voted \$60 to build a small bridge over the tide creek at the head of Penn Cove, but in two years nothing had been done and the order was rescinded.

In 1854 the County was wealthy enough to buy a table for the Clerk's office and Lansdale received \$5 for a "case of pigeon holes" for his office. The Auditor's office was a log cabin in Coveland at \$4 per month rent.

In 1858 there were 93 persons assessed: 126 white males and 52 white females; 34 white males under 21; and 26 white females. The whole white population was 180, with 16,000 acres

claimed, the whole value assessed at \$161,600. There were two stores and 14,880 acres of taxable land. The next year the population had increased to 257; there were two school houses and one church; 809 cattle and 144 acres in potatoes.

From George Albert Kellogg's "History of Whidbey Island," "So it happened that in one decade leapt a Nordic culture across three thousand miles and three thousand years. Ideas and ideals common to Moses, to Socrates and to William the Conqueror supplanted an aboriginal ideology on an almost virgin soil." ♣

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# Crocketts followed Ebey to Island

The family of Captain William Crockett is remembered as early settlers who came to the Coupeville area in 1852, and built three blockhouses to guard white settlers against Indian uprisings of that decade. One of the blockhouses has been preserved and stands near Fort Casey,

William Crockett's uncle Samuel Crockett was one of the first Americans to settle in Western Washington. They staked their claims on the prairie south of Budd Inlet, near where Olympia stands today. The whole Northwest country at that time was either Northern Oregon or a part of Canada, depending on one's national identity.

Samuel Crockett wrote many glowing descriptions of this region to his family back in Missouri, and a friend of the family, Isaac N. Ebey, was so impressed by Samuel's reports that he traveled overland to the West Coast in 1848. On Oct. 15, 1853, Ebey filed a land claim on the west side of Whidbey, at what later became Ebey's landing, and for which Ebey's Prairie of today is named. Ebey's letters, along with Crockett's, were enough to bring both the Ebey and Crockett families on the long overland journey west.

Rebecca Ebey, wife of Isaac, and their two small sons, Eason and Jacob, left Plumb Grove in northern Missouri in April 1851. She was accompanied by her brothers, James, Thomas and John Davis. On the second evening out they were joined by the Crocketts who had wintered in Centerville, Iowa, a town near the Missouri border. In this group were Sam Crockett's father and mother, Walter and Mary Crockett, and his four brothers, John, Hugh, Charles and Walter Jr.

John Crockett, the second son of Walter and Mary was born in Virginia in 1826. He served in the Mexican War and married his second cousin, Ann Crockett of Kentucky. When the Crockett-Ebey caravan moved westward, the youngest member of the group was Samuel Davidson Crockett, infant

son of John and Ann. He had been born in Centerville on June 23, 1850. Their next child was William, born in Olympia on Jan. 4, 1852.


After the long trip cross-country the party reached the banks of the Columbia River. The group transferred to small boats, and like Lewis and Clark before them paddled down stream to get through the Cascade Mountains. They arrived in Olympia Nov. 18, 1851, a full two years before Washington Territory was established.

The immigrants decided to stay there for the winter, since times were good, owing to the Gold Rush of 1849, when there was a market for all kinds of goods, especially timber for wharves. Then in the spring the David, Ebey and Crockett house households moved to claims on Whidbey. They moved by barge. John's claim on the south of Capt. Thomas Coupe's claim, and east of Isaac Ebey's claim. It developed into one of the finest farms in the territory.

When Samuel D. and Willie Crockett were small, they went to school in a log schoolhouse on Ebey's Prairie. They were the oldest of the children of John and Ann, and the only ones not born on Whidbey. The others were Sarah, Mary, Emma, Margaret, Georgia, Lizzie, Lillie and Harvey, a total of ten children.

The Territorial Census of 1871 lists Ann Crockett, then 40, as a widow. Her children ranked in age from 4 to 21. In 1881 she remarried, Dr. Joshua Highwarden, one of Whidbey's early physicians.

Willie Crockett at 28 was listed as a farmer, and single. He married Amy Ann Garrett, 18, daughter of Eliza R. Garrett who had been brought to Washington Territory by her parents, Augustus and Eliza in 1862. In 1883 William was still listed as a farmer, but not for long. He turned to steamboating, and became a Puget Sound Steamboat Master.



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## A Clinton Christmas

**S**outh Whidbey was growing in the early 1900s, and one of the major highlights of the holiday season was the Christmas program at St. Peter's Lutheran Church. The programs for the first few years were in Norwegian, in deference to the Norwegian population. The Pastor rowed from Camano Head to Whidbey Island to take part in the service, then rowed home, hopefully by moonlight. A stay overnight was not unusual. The Pastor had three or four pioneer churches to serve, so the Clinton Church only got about one service per month.

On Christmas the tree was cut from the forest and decorated with candies and popcorn balls. Tiny candles sparkled on the end of each branch, and three or four buckets of sand were placed around the tree just in case a lighted candle "exploded." After the songs were sung and the recitations made, the children received a bag of hard candy with some nuts, and sometimes, even an orange.

Most of the roads were one way wagon trails, and travel at night was usually done by walking and carrying a lantern for light. Because travel was so difficult many families would get together at one home and sing Christmas carols. People from Glendale rowed by boat to Clinton unless they were lucky enough to catch the local steamer. But people managed to come together for the Christmas event, at homes and at the church, some staying with friends overnight, and some making the trip home by horseback or walking through the forests. As one old timer recalled, "Sometimes we just stayed at home and ate apples." ❀

## Captains stressed schooling, but were hard on teachers

**I**n the 1870s and '80s Whidbey Island's Penn Cove became the Port of Sea Captains, a refuge after years of traveling the stormy seas, a home for their families. The seafaring men who settled there made up a large part of the population and included Captains Ed Barrington, James Henry Swift, Eli Hathaway, Robert C. Fay, George Bell, Thomas Coupe, Samuel Libbey, H. B. Lovejoy, William Robertson and Richard Holbrook. Many men from their crews also settled there.

A not-very-impressed Seattle Post Intelligencer writer once observed: "Many of the inhabitants are pioneers, very good people who have grown seedy, who have got up on stilts and like the Forty-Niners of California consider that any editions of the human race that have appeared since they were issued are below par. The people are generally well to do, many are said to be very generous. Their common schools are well-supported, they pay liberal wages to teachers, from \$25 to \$75 per month. The Superintendent is an old sea captain who doubtless car-

ried his vessel through many a storm and who knows little more about instructing a common school than a land lubber would know about sailing a vessel to the North Pole."

One sea captain wrote to friends in the East asking for help in getting school teachers who would conduct themselves with more dignity. He protested against school teachers who slid down straw stacks with their pupils at the lunch hour, and played kissing games with them in the evening. As a result, one young lady came West to teach, resolved to maintain the decorum. She promptly married into the School Board itself.

In the 1860s the first schoolhouse was a log cabin on Smith's Prairie, and where Schoolmaster Lyle taught, slept and ate. The Indian children would stand and wait for recesses or lunch hours when they might play with their young white friends. The Indians learned English from them and the whites learned Chinook from the Indians. ❀



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## Flood of 1911 caused water shortage

Last summer's water conservation effort in Seattle reminds us of the Great Seattle Water Shortage of 1911.

In that year, Seattle was a city of 240,000 people when the heavy rains and two days of Chinook winds melted snow and swelled rivers in the Cascades. A bridge over the Cedar River 28 miles east of Seattle was swept away and took about 150 feet of the main wooden water supply pipe with it. The water pipes in tens of thousands of Seattle homes went dry, with three-fourths of the water supply cut off. There was only a two-day supply of water in three municipal reservoirs!

Thousands of people flocked to the reservoirs armed with pails, bottles and cans to carry water to their homes. It was "every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost" as Seattleites weathered the worst water famine in its history.

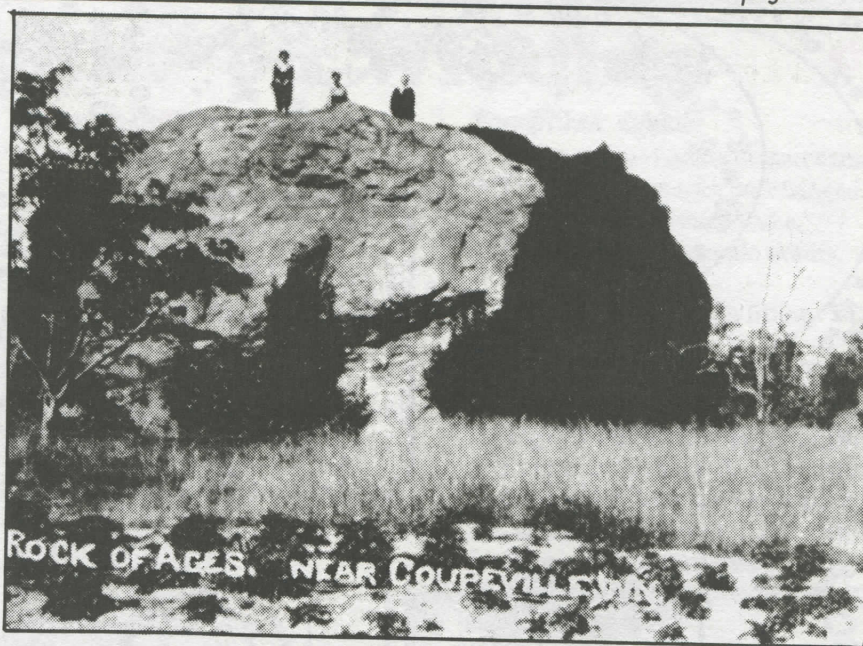
Bathing was prohibited, and about two dozen water wagons owned by the city and two electric sprinkling cars holding 6,000 gallons each were put into commission to supply hospitals and the jail.

Entrepreneurs with trucks and other vehicles that would hold water hauled the precious liquid about the residential areas offering it for sale.

Downtown springs remembered by old timers, were brought into service for drinking water. And water was pumped to Seattle from Swan Lake about six miles from Renton. The Seattle Times urged its readers to boil their drinking water.

To make matters worse, a power shortage was caused when a 5-foot wooden addition to the top of the Cedar River dam washed out and all city electricity was cut off. Power was restored six days later as was water to most of the city.

In just short of a week the Great 1911 Water Shortage was over. ♣



*Prairie Center boasts what is said to be the largest above ground glacier rock in the state. Here 1920s types climbed the rock to have their pictures taken for posterity.*

## The Prairie Center Story

Island County's Museum at Coupeville presented the Prairie Center Story as part of the area's Harvest Fest which opened Oct. 10. "Old timers" Mickey Clark, Lillian Dean Huffstetler, Herb Pickard, Edwin Sherman and Wilbur and Grace Sherman contributed to the narrative of the exhibit which included photographs to round out the story of the area now celebrating its 70th year.

While Prairie Center is very much a part of "today" it has an interesting history. It began when Sam Hancock had "Pop" Coates build a store for Henry Fair and Oscar Hull, early day businessmen, who intended to provide dry goods and groceries to the Ebey's Prairie farmers.

In 1921 the store which became the "mercantile" was purchased by Pickard and Gelb. Carl Dean followed with a mechanic shop and car dealership in a building behind the store. Dean opened Dean Motors in 1929 and sold Chevrolets. A new building housed a barbershop, cafe and rooms to let where today's Tyee Restaurant is located.

Prairie Center is a unique place,

across from the Coupeville High School and at a crossroads which lead to the ferry to the Olympic Peninsula and to South Whidbey. ♣

## What's in a name?

Real people's names you're not likely to forget is a hobby of one John Train, millionaire investor, who gives us a few of these mind-bogglers.

Cardinal Sin is the Archbishop of Manila, Philippine Islands.

Cheatham and Steele are bankers in Wallowa County, Oregon.

Constant Agony lives in Chazy Lake, New York.

Solomon Gemorah lives in Brooklyn, New York

U. S. Bona is the safe deposit manager of Harvard Trust Company, Cambridge, Mass.

Plummer and Leek are (what else?) plumbers in Norfolk, England

And Charlotte Blob is director of the Unidentified Object Center in Appleton, Wisc.! ♣



# The last of the Island Indians

**T**he remaining Indians on Whidbey Island continued to play a part in the life of the Islanders until well into the twentieth century. The Indian women did washing and ironing for the white women, the washing for one dollar, and the ironing for 75 cents, in both Coupeville and Oak Harbor. The Indian men dug potatoes sheared sheep and paddled canoes for their white brothers. Snaklum Charlie was an expert sheep shearer.

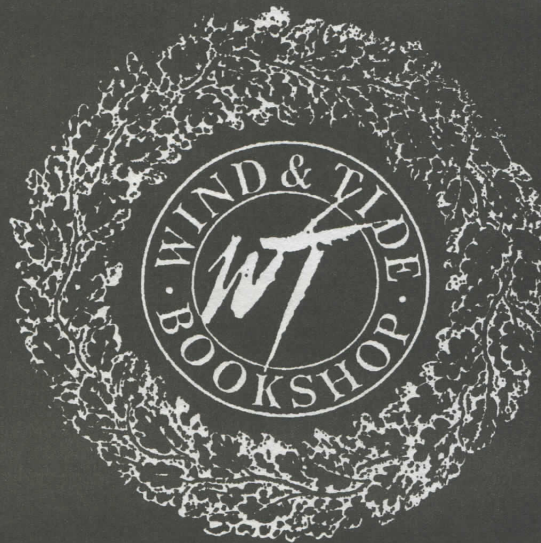
Mel Neil of Oak Harbor remembered that Charlie Snaklum sheared the sheep on the Neil farm, and that he asked him once how old he was. "Me not know, many moons. Mebbe one hundred." Charlie was so in demand for shearing that farmers gave him transportation to and from his home during shearing jobs. Pappy Job was known as the oldest and most wrinkled of the latter day Indians; Charlie Paul was most intelligent and had a black moustache; Michael Job lost the end of his nose in a fight with an Indian Beau Brummel known as Albert. Albert bit it off!

"Friday" was marked because of his curly hair and Charley Shoemaker drew his name from his ability to cobble shoes. Billy Barlow was known for his oratory. "Schnappes" came by his name when he worked in a Coupeville store where Schnappes were sold, and he became addicted to the back room where the drink was stored. Nanaimo who lived to be very old was a slave of early days taken during a war with Northern Indians. He intermarried with his captors and had a small son called "Wiggler."

In 1923 the oldest Indian woman was Squinty, mother-in-law of Aleck. She sold clams and lived with her daughter and son-in-law, whose home was built for them by the city of Coupeville. They were the last family of Indians in Coupeville. ♣



Skagit Chief Billy Barlow and wife with Pastor VanderBeek at Chief Barlow's Longhouse in Penn Cove. Barlow was a well-respected local Indian leader.



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