



The Coupeville dock prior to 1900 was in the center of town. Most of the buildings pictured are still in use, a notable exception being the Puget Sound Academy behind the Glenwood Hotel.

Capt. Clapp . . . life before the mast

"The sailing boat was the only real boat that ever went to sea," was the opinion of Sea Captain J. W. Clapp, one of the "Sea Captains" who made Penn Cove famous in the early days as their "home." Born in 1843 in Cituete, Massachusetts, he received all of his schooling there, including high school and Academy work.

Coming from a long line of seafaring people, Clapp's vision encompassed the opportunity of sailing on one of the big canvas-powered boats that had played such a history in his family. Growing up, he found pleasure in browsing through his father's seafaring logs, and dreamed of the day when he, too, would see the world under the sails of a boat.

In 1935, Captain Clapp was

interviewed briefly by a reporter from the Island County Times, and told of his life before the mast.

"The work was hard when I first sailed before the masts," he said. "But the thrill of working beneath those billowing masses of canvas was enough to make anyone bear the hardships, yet enjoy the work."

Captain Clapp traveled over all the world and anchored in the biggest shipping centers of the world. For many years he worked on the trading vessels out of Boston and New York and commanded vessels on the San Francisco to Liverpool wheat run.

A few he named: his vessels took him to Australia, Hamburg, Liverpool, London, Cardiff, and China as well as ports on the

west coast of South America. His last boat was with the Puget Mill Company when he sailed from Port Gamble to Australia, carrying lumber. He had his home built in Coupeville on Whidbey Island and came back here to retire in 1889.

Captain Clapp was never involved in a wreck, but said he had many close calls. He recalled one time in the English Channel when his boat nearly ran ashore. But his only real accident occurred when as a boy he fell from a yardarm through a skylight, and only sprained his ankle!

At the close of the interview he said with gusto and spirit in what was probably his characteristic as Master of his boat, "If I was a young man I'd try it again!"

