

History of the old dock

by Dorothy Neil

For some forty years after settlers put down their roots in Oak Harbor, the little town named for its growth of Garry Oaks, there was no pier that afforded a link between passengers and freight arriving.

One settler woman told of arriving by boat when the tide was low and being carried across the mudflats by a deck hand!

The beginning of the last 100 years saw a decided improvement in the town's progress, with the Maylor brothers, Joseph and John building an all-purpose dock to the channel, and L. P. Byrne's dock farther to the east, which connected water travel with a new business center.

Byrne's dock moved one step further by supplying a car on rails that brought freight and passenger to land!

The steamers that plied the Sound in the 1890s found a healthy response from farmers on North Whidbey, then a "farming community." The

sternwheeler *Fairhaven*, the *Calista*, the *Whidby* and the *Atalanta* were among the ships that connected Whidbey Island to the mainland.

The *Whidby* caught fire and burned in the early part of the century, was loosed from her moorings and floated to Maylor's Point where traces of her remains are to this day.

Oak Harbor and Coupeville travelers to Seattle boarded the *Calista*, *Fairhaven* or *Atalanta* at 6 a.m. returning about 8 p.m., a long day experience! The *Atalanta* brought the mail daily to Whidbey (then Whidby) Island, townspeople turning out en masse to pick up their mail and newspapers!

Before the 1920s, when automobiles began to replace foot traffic and wagons, ferries across Deception Pass, to Camano Island and to Everett made travel to the mainland a bit less arduous.

The Deception Pass ferry was a small boat-steered raft,

which left Cornet Bay and landed on Fidalgo Island where "Blount's Bazaar," a two story general store stood high on the rocks. The roads to and from the ferries were narrow dirt thoroughfares which wound between farmlands and woods.

It was the beginning of growth for this Island town, when the Maylor Dock came into being in 1892. Within the next 20 years automobiles and then even airplanes made their appearance; roads were widened and improved, businesses sprang up along with homes, schools and churches. Water came through wells and cisterns, and "out-houses" on every property were part of the scene.

It would be some years before public water and sewage pipes would be installed. Semi trucks had not as yet made their entry; the dock and Sound steamers comprised the center of each settlement, hauling freight and passengers to and from the mainland.

When the Deception Pass bridge was dedicated across Deception Pass in 1935, the trucking industry was exuberant! Goodbye ferries! No more waiting in line, no more spending hours of a day on a steamer in order to take advantage of "big city bargains." The mail came by express; groceries and other goods used the most scenic waterway in the state to ford the turbulent waters around Whidbey Island.

With the emergence of a new era in history, the World War II aftermath, the Whidbey Naval Air Station on North Whidbey and the sudden realization that Whidbey's main highway was inadequate for ➤

Looking for Good Answers on Estate Planning?

Ask Ed Beeksma

Wills

Living Trusts

Power of Attorney

Living Wills

Estate Tax Savings

Trust Wills

Guardians

Property Agreements

Insurance Trust

Health Care Directive

Zylstra Beeksma & Waller, P.L.L.C.

attorneys-at-law

791 SE Barrington Dr.
Oak Harbor

675-5955

Visit our web site:
www.zbw.com



Above: View from the Maylor Dock in 1892 shortly after birth. The Maylor Store and Ely house at left; the Byrne complex at right. L.P. Byrne had not yet built his dock. That part of town burned in 1921.

Below: Similar view in the early 1960s before the dock burned. The town grew a lot during those years, with much of the credit going to the availability of water transport. Only recognizable building is Maylor's Store; Ely's house is hidden by other buildings.



History of the dock, continued . . .

daily traffic, residents of Oak Harbor realized that the burning of their dock in the mid-60s was much more serious than thought at first. Lack of boat traffic became a problem.

Tourist boats from the mainland bring their passengers as

far north as Coupeville, where they disembark and enjoy the surrounding area. Oak Harbor is suddenly a town with no "front door."

Mayor Steve Dernbach of Oak Harbor appointed a "Citizen Dock Committee" of 13 to

consider and work on restoring of Oak Harbor's lifeline for many years . . . the dock! Men and women, community leaders, are now meeting for furtherance of their mission. It begins to look like a dock might be in Oak Harbor's future!

Ⓢ

Some state happenings of long ago

The Rev. Pascal Ricard established a Mission of St. Joseph three miles below Tumwater on June 14, 1848. Father Ricard had traveled up the Oregon Trail the previous year and was one of the founders of the St. Joseph mission in the Yakima Valley.

Mrs. Stevens, wife of Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens, described this Catholic Mission on the Sound as a "large dark house or monastery, surrounded by cultivated land, a fine garden in front, filled with flowers, bordered on one side next to the water with immense bushes of wallflowers in bloom; the fragrance resembling the sweet English violet, filling the air with its delicious odor.

"Father Ricard, the venerable head of the house was from Paris . . . their fruit was excellent and a great rarity, as there was but one more orchard in the whole country . . . we went often to visit Father Ricard, who was a highly educated man, who seemed to enjoy having some one to converse with in his own language. He said the Canadians used such bad French."

Governor Stevens and his family were quartered for a year in two long, one-story buildings, one room wide, little more than sheds, leased from Father Ricard. In the rear the large yard extended to the beach where Indians camped.

In the spring of 1853, a county government was organized and a town, legally named Seattle, existed as the seat of King County with commissioners' sessions held before the town was platted. Two plats were filed with the County

Auditor on May 23, 1853. They adjoined each other, alike in width of streets and size of blocks, but did not agree in the direction of the streets.

Denny's survey of his and Boren's land adopted the shore fronting, with north and south streets parallel and intersecting streets at right angles, taking the hills the steepest way. Doc Maynard's plat conformed to the points of the compass with the east and west streets ascending the hills from the shore.

Many subsequent plats of different tracts within the city disregarded the topography as well. The Indians own name for the place was *Tzeetzee-lal-itch*, meaning "little portage," and referring to a trail to the large lake (Washington) that was much shorter than the circuitous river route.

A way to remember the names of cross streets north between Yesler Way and Stewart Street is to repeat "Jesus Christ Made Seattle Under Protest." There are two J's: Jefferson and James; two C's Cherry and Columbia; two M's Marion and Madison; two S's: Spring and Seneca; two U's, University and Union; and two P's: Pike and Pine. These are the streets Denny named.

In 1883, many people of note visited the area, among them were General Sprague and John Muir of the Northern Pacific, who gave to the town its pet name, "Queen City," which lasted until the recent tourist attracting appellation of "Emerald City."

Before the advent of lighthouses on Puget Sound, it was not unusual to hear guns fired in the night as signals of distress. The settlers living along the shore would rally and assist in getting the seamen ashore and saving property from the wreck for the benefit of its owners, or aid in getting the ship off, without fee or reward. Many is the ship's master who had reason to thank the Dungeness farmers for assistance in dire necessity.

An ocean mail steamer, the *Panama*, went ashore on Point Hudson at the entrance to Port Townsend harbor on May 10, 1860. The steamer was worked off at high tide and continued to visit Sound ports as late as 1897. *Panama* was one of the original steamers built for the Pacific Coast trade after the discovery of gold was announced. It carried hundreds of passengers during the Fraser River boom in 1858. S



Gift Shoppe



Belle Treasures

Beautiful Treasures for You & Your Home

Seasonal Decor, Rustic Lodge Furniture • Home Accessories
Baby Gift Corner • Beanie Babies • Snow Babies
Collectibles • Beautiful Gift Items

720-1 SE Pioneer Way Oak Harbor 679-2955 Open 7 days a week