

# Spindrift Two

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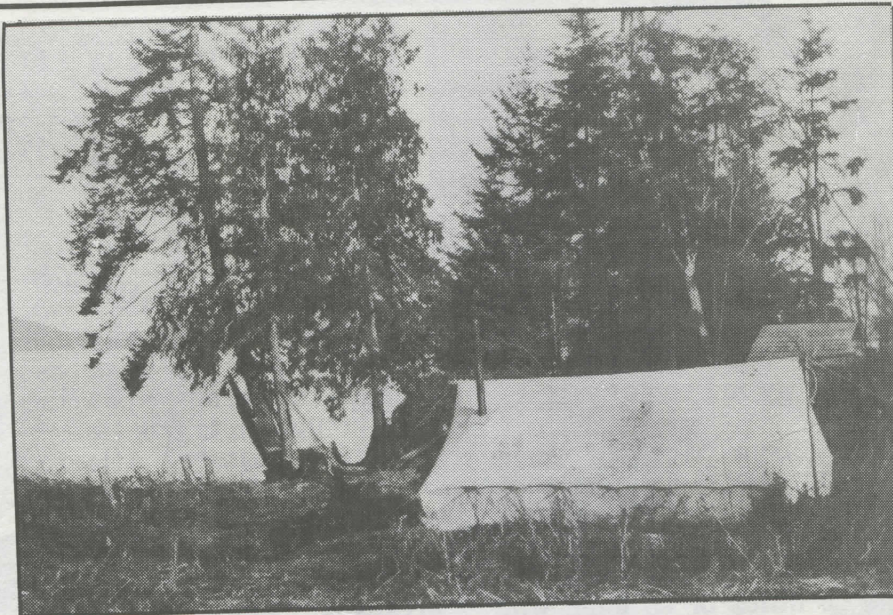
# Dugualla Bay Became Island 'Haven'

Dugualla Bay ... "Haven" to the Skagit Indians who brought their canoes to its recessed waterway for many years before the white man arrived, became a haven to a little family who pioneered the forested promontory on the bay's south side in 1912.

The sternwheeler Fairhaven, the picturesque freight and passenger boat remembered by many an old timer in the area, set Joe and Belle Ducken and their three little boys ashore with their household belongings, tooted a farewell and continued on south.

Joe Ducken, remembered in Island County as the 1930s North Whidbey Commissioner whose primary concern was improving Whidbey Island by providing jobs for Islanders, had a visionary concept which included a county airstrip, and roads that are still in use in 1984.

Belle Ducken had waited a number of years for her fiance as he "walked all over Alaska" seeking gold, and finding some, too. The couple came from Dell Rapids, South Dakota, and although Joe was conditioned somewhat by his work in Alaska, Belle found the transition from a small city to Dugualla Bay, on Whidbey Island, something that took persistence, a hardy constitution and devotion to her family to swallow.



It was 1912, and Joe and Belle Ducken and their three little boys came to North Whidbey to their property on the south side of Dugualla Bay. This tent was their first home, on the site of the present Dugualla Bay Heights clubhouse.

Their homestead of 86 acres was two miles from the nearest road to Oak Harbor, so along with the settlers at Strawberry Point and Olsen's Landing the Duckens went by rowboat to La Conner to shop.

Joe Ducken had invested his Alaska gold in Seattle real estate, but the investment disappeared in the

recession of the early 1900s. The La Conner bank in which his savings were held "went broke" and he had to start life anew on a remote Island served only by boat traffic.

The two youngest Ducken boys, who still live on the 1912 homestead site, now called Dugualla Bay Heights, reminisced about growing up in the "wilds" of North Whidbey. Before the dike was built across the bay, they rowed to school on "the other side."

Later they took the "first school bus in Island County" to the Cornet Bay school. The "bus" was a horse and wagon with a canvas top.

They told how their father cleared land and built their home, while the family lived in a tent the first year on Whidbey Island. Joe Ducken also cleared land for other settlers, using a donkey engine to help pull up stumps and remove trees.

Sid Ducken tells a family story of how his grandparents, who had come from Norway in 1843, were hosts one morning in South Dakota to the notorious Frank and Jesse James, who were passing through the Dakotas. They stayed for breakfast, and Frank held the baby, Belle, and gave her a silver dollar.



On land cleared by Joe Ducken, the Ducken family put in a garden with the help of neighbors and a horse and plow. Orval and Karl Ducken are pictured with their father.



# For Ducken Family in 1912

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A few days later the famous robbery at Northfield, Minnesota, took place. "I sure wish I had that silver dollar," Sid said wistfully.

Joe Ducken, noted for his industry and perseverance, was the right man to be Island County commissioner in the early days of the Great Depression. There was no money and little work, and while Islanders were better off than many because of the fish, clams and wildlife, survival was the keyword.

Ducken saw the opportunity to build and maintain county roads, and put men to work on graders and maintenance in two-week shifts. Goldie Road north of Oak Harbor was built this way, as well as a number of other roads through undeveloped territory.

Ducken had a vision for the future as well, and had land cleared for a county airstrip near Torpedo Road in 1938. He also foresaw a need for a road from Midway in Oak Harbor along what is now the Flintstone Freeway, and west to Freund Hill. Forty years later the project is still being considered by planning authorities.

Today Dugualla Bay Heights residents live on winding roads above the water with one of the Northwest's most spectacular views of Mt. Baker.

And if the past could be reconstructed for one Whidbey Island night



The Dugualla Bay schoolhouse was built on the north side of the Bay about 1917, where the Ducken boys attended for two years before transferring to the Clover Valley School. Pictured from left are: (back row) George and Elmer Trainer, Douglas Emory, Buster Richardson, teacher Anna Sandhigh, and Florence Trainer. (Front row) Syd Ducken, Edna Trainer, Orval Ducken, Eldon Anderson, Glen Emory, Karl Ducken and Milton Anderson.

with the moon trailing ribbons of light across the dark waters and highlighting the pristine sides of Mt. Baker, one might hear the clank and swish of a rowboat coming in from La Conner, or the chug and whistle of a donkey engine digging a road from Dugualla Bay through the forest.

The sounds of a beginning for a brave little family who became Islanders "the hard way." 🌟



Syd Ducken



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# 'Ruthinda' Wallace Found Crescent

Crescent Harbor, just east of Oak Harbor was named by Dr. Lansdale as were other Whidbey Island spots. Crescent Harbor holds a unique place in early Whidbey Island history.

In the early days of 1850s and 1860s, there were wild animals in abundance, including wolves and black bear. Whidbey's last elk was killed in the early 1850s. Mink, fox, deer and many kinds of wild fowl abounded.

Salmon was so plentiful that the Indians sold large ones to the settlers for 25 cents each. One early housewife complained that she was so tired of eating fish she only wished for a good chunk of beef.

Ruthinda Wallace, wife of William Wallace, was not only the first white woman to live in Crescent Harbor, but was also the first white woman to live on Whidbey Island. The Wallaces' daughter, Polowna, was the first white child born on Whidbey Island.

"Ruthinda," a book written by her great-great-granddaughter Christopher Barnes, tells of the life of a pioneer mother so far away from civilization.

The account, which was begun in the Winter Spindrift, continues:

Ruthinda missed observation of the Sabbath since she had been in the wilderness of Whidbey Island, and when a Methodist "circuit rider" minister arrived he was welcomed and preached the first sermon at the Wallace home.

Until now, there had only been Catholic missionaries to the Indians on the Island, and they did not stay.

When Rebecca Ebey died at the age of 30, leaving two young sons and a baby girl, Ruthinda, along with other women on Whidbey, did what little they could to help the bereaved family. This tragic occurrence added to the great feeling of "aloneness" felt by pioneer women in such an isolated place.

In 1855, Ruthinda added a son to Whidbey's male population. James Mounts Wallace was William's first natural son. Many did not know that Isaac (Cornelius) was not William's real son, but Ruthinda was a widow with a son when she married Wallace,

and he was always treated as William's own.

Over the years, Ruthinda made friends with the Indians, remembering the graciousness extended her family by Chief Sealath at Alki on the trip to Whidbey. The only troublesome Indians were the Haidahs from Vancouver Island and north. They paddled 50-foot canoes and would venture several hundred miles away from home to steal and plunder and take prisoners.

It was these Northern Indians who killed Colonel Ebey, and Whidbey settlers never knew when another massacre would occur. The dread of the Northern Indians was well-founded.

Much of the Wallace land in Crescent Harbor was forest and nothing was safe from the wolves that roamed the land. They attacked both man and beast. William was gone much of the time, rowing eight miles to Utsaladdy on Camano Island to work cutting timber for \$1.50 per day. Rowing the Saratoga Passage in all kinds of weather was another hazard. ➔

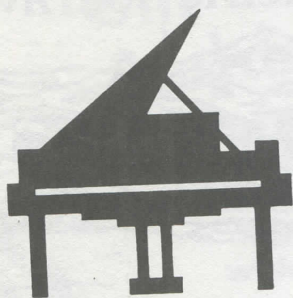
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# Harbor Isolated in Early 1850s

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When mail service was begun in 1857, life became more tolerable for the Wallaces. The first post office was established at Coveland (San de Fuca) and a road from there to the Wallace claim (in Crescent Harbor) was granted at the first meeting of the Island County Road Commissioners, and Ruthinda could receive mail from her family.

In 1858 another baby was born, named Sarah after Ruthinda's mother. Ruthinda was 40 years old. She had mothered six children, five of them her own; the other child was John, the son of her second husband.

It took Ruthinda Wallace a decade to become accustomed to living on an Island. She loved the deer that came to her porch. Sometimes she shared the children's excitement upon seeing a bear! The wolves died out after the settlers poisoned them, but bears continued to be reported on Whidbey.

With the mail service improved, another post office opened at Coupeville. The finer things of life had been forgotten in the first years of settlement, but now Ruthinda could be seen in a new long gathered skirt and a pleated pointed waist. The lace collar covered her neck and the flowing sleeves covered her worn, freckled arms.

In her hair she wore a high backed comb in a new twisted hairstyle she

copied from a mail order catalog.



There were few places to go to "dress up," but Ruthinda was ready when they appeared.

The big social events were driving six or seven miles to the home of a neighbor, where they sometimes stayed overnight. "Visiting out" was the term for Sunday entertaining and to have a dozen people over the weekend was not unusual.

The 1860s brought the Fraser River gold rush, and William Wallace moved his family to the northern part of Whatcom County to live with friends while he went off to find gold. There were too many people on Whidbey Island for William Wallace's restless spirit!

After the gold rush tapered off, the family returned to their Crescent Harbor home. Now, instead of the one room frame house, the family had a much nicer home on top of a hill on their property. They could enjoy the panoramic view of the harbor and Olympic Mountains. The two-story

house had a large main fireplace and plenty of space for the family.

In 1855, the Wallaces had built a school house that was used for an assortment of gatherings in the pioneer community.

It wasn't long before Ruthinda was reunited with John Cornelius, the son of Isaac Cornelius, her second husband. William had seen John in the Fraser River, where he was working as a surveyor, and John came to visit his stepmother on Whidbey Island.

Betsy Wallace was just a baby when her "big brother" went to live with his grandparents, and now Betsy was a young woman. They fell in love and in 1865 they were married with James Buzby, Justice of the Peace, performing the ceremony.



(More excerpts from "Ruthinda" will appear in the Fall Spindrift.)

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# Seattle's Arthur Denny Wrote About

Arthur A. Denny of Seattle, writing "Pioneer Days of Puget Sound," told of one of Whidbey Island's earliest settlers, Dr. R. H. Lansdale, whose claim was at the head of Penn's Cove.

"Recently I received a letter from R. H. Lansdale who came to Oregon in October 1849, in which he gives a narrative of his early experiences on the Sound, and I shall give it in his own language:"

'Reached Tumwater in January 1851. Found Major Goldsborough at Simmon's and Colonel Ebey at Olympia. Being advised by Ebey, started down Sound February 5 for Whidbey Island, with King George, Duke of York, and Duke of Clarence. (These were names given to Indians by the early settlers.)

'Steilacoom was just then being settled, a vessel unloading at the time. Reached Port Townsend, saw immense Indian houses, but no settlers yet. Plummer not long after took his claim there. (I) crossed to Whidbey Island and settled at Oak Harbor, February 10, 1851.

'Made good garden that year. Col. Ebey told me of Snoqualmie Falls, and I had Indians take me. Saw the Falls; prepared and walked...one Indian carrying baggage...to top of Divide in Snoqualmie Pass.

'In the summer Asher Sargent landed horses at Oak Harbor for William Wallace and family who settled at Crescent Harbor, so named by myself. (Lansdale is credited with naming both Crescent and Oak Harbors.)

'I had now been many months alone, the few men being off helping to load piles for San Francisco wharves, so I fastened up cabin, potatoes, etc., and left to spend the winter at Olympia.

'As I approached Alki Point, I saw a white man standing on the beach with a surveyor's staff in his hand looking to see who the white man approaching might be, and he introduced himself as Arthur A. Denny.

'In March 1852, helped to build a scow to take Crockett and Ebey's stock to Whidbey Island. As soon as we landed I abandoned my claim on Oak Harbor on account of the mudflats, and took my claim at Penn's Cove. In 1851

there were three settlers at Oak Harbor, Martin Taftson, Clement W. Sumner and Ulric Freund.'

Denny continues: "In the spring of 1853, the brig Cabot, Capt. Dryden, came from Portland with a number of settlers for the Island. She made Penn's Cove by way of Deception Pass. Of these now recalled who came were James Buzby and family, Mrs. Maddox and family, R.L. Doyle and wife, Mrs. J.C. Kellogg and family, the Doctor Kellogg having crossed by way of the Cowlitz, and Mrs. Smith and daughter, mother and sister of Dr. H.A. Smith."

## Earliest settlers

Of those on Whidbey Island not otherwise mentioned were Robert Bailey, Capt. Wm. Robertson and family, Walter Crockett Sr. and family, John Crockett and family, Samuel Crockett, Walter Crockett Jr., Charles Crockett, Hugh Crockett.

Samuel Hancock and family, Henry McClurg, William and Benjamin Welher, John Kineth and family, J.S. Smith and family, Capt. Coupe and family, C.H. Ivins, John Thomas and James Davis.

Jacob Ebey, Georg W. Beam, Nathaniel D. Hill, Robert Hill, Humphrey Hill, William B. Engle, C.T. Terry, Grove Terry, George Kingsbury, Capt. Barstow, Samuel Libby, Robert Hathaway, Thomas


Cranney.

Lawrence Grennan, Major Show, Isaac Power, S.D. Howe, R.B. Holbrook, G.W. Allen, Thomas Hastie, John Condry, J.Y. Sewell, Edward Barrington, Charles C. Phillips, Robert Fay, Thos. and Samuel Maylor, Caleb Miller, A.M. Miller, John Izett, and James and Milton Mounts.

"Our first year on our claims, 1852, was spent building homes and getting out piles and timber as a means of support. That year we were visited by the brig John Davis, owned and commanded first by Capt. George Plummer and Capt. A.W. Pray. Each lumber vessel carried a stock of general merchandise, and upon them we depended largely for our supplies. In the winter of 1852-53, few vessels visited the Sound for several months, and it was a time of great scarcity, amounting almost to distress."

## Pioneer Food


"Our pork and butter came around Cape Horn, and flour in barrels from Chile, sugar mostly from China in mats. That fall I paid \$90 for two barrels of pork, and \$20 a barrel for flour. I left one barrel of pork on the beach in front of my cabin, as I supposed above high tide, until it was needed. Just about the time to roll it up and open it came a high tide and heavy wind at night, and the barrel disappeared.



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Oak Harbor's West Pioneer Way looked like this nearly 100 years ago.

"It was the last barrel of pork in King County and the loss was felt by the whole community. Some said it would float and had gone out to sea. Others thought it had rolled down into deep water. We all turned out at low tide in the night with torches and searched the beach from the head of the bay to Smith's Cove, but the pork was not found.

"After the loss of the pork, our flour

and hard bread gave out, but fortunately we had a good supply of sugar, syrup, tea and coffee, and with fish and venison we got along well while we had potatoes. But finally they gave out.

"We then had to make a canoe voyage to the Indian settlement on Black River to get a fresh stock of potatoes. Flour sold as high as \$40 a barrel, but finally the stock was

exhausted and flour could not be had on the Sound at any price until the arrival of a vessel which did not occur for six weeks or more.

"This was the hardest experience our people ever had, but it demonstrated the fact that some substantial life-supporting food can always be obtained on Puget Sound, though it is hard for civilized man to live without bread."



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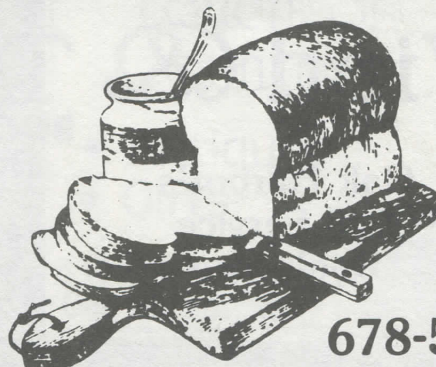
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# From Fruit to Nuts in Just 40 Years

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Until 1892 there was little development on North Whidbey because the Northern Pacific railway had taken advantage of a government offer to sell land for \$1.25 per acre. The railroad bought up virtually all the unclaimed land and held it until after that date.

When the railway company loosed their hold on the land, the Tucker-Potter Land Co. proposed fruit ranches to attract buyers from the midwest.

The company spent a great deal of money clearing and grading 640 acres to plant to prunes. This was instrumental in bringing some settlers into the Dugwalla Bay area before the company folded.

Stockholders in the company turned their holdings over to R. E. Werkman, who set about interesting Hollanders who had settled in the east and mid-west, and in 1894, the steamer Idaho brought its first Dutch passengers to North Whidbey.

Eighteen Hollanders were aboard, and a year later 60 more families arrived. Within two years there were 200 industrious, thrifty Dutch people on Whidbey Island, some with practically no money, but they built homes and began farming through some of the hardest times the country had known.

One wonders at the courage of immigrants to a new and undeveloped country, speaking an unfamiliar language, and with little money. Tucker-Potter advertised a "great fruit area that needs only development to make all owning a portion of it wealthy."

Tucker-Potter assured investors that all of Western Washington would get rich and the Northwest famous for its silver prunes. Each settler was to plant and cultivate for five years, an area one mile square, then return it to the stockholders at \$250 an acre for the land they had paid \$50 an acre for.

A number of 5-acre tracts were sold; only four men paid the company in full for their acreage and remained on Whidbey when the company quit.

Perhaps if the settlers had had enough money to buy the land and plant it with fruit trees, and also enough to support themselves and their families until the trees were old



Oak Harbor from about where City Hall now stands. Photo probably taken around 1910.

enough to bear, North Whidbey Island might be a fruit bearing paradise today, with every bough heavy with silver prunes.

Among the many super-sells to Whidbey Islanders in the past 100 years, one of the nuttiest occurred in the 1930s when a fast-talking promoter came up with the proposition that filberts would produce fabulous crops, and anyone who invested in even a small orchard would reap both a harvest and folding green.

But only the comparatively rich could afford to put in filbert orchards. The Great Depression was on, jobs were scarce, even the county staggered shifts and divided projects in order to give more men work.

It was hard enough to earn the money to buy basic groceries without

investing in nuts. Still, there were those nuts who did invest.

Oak Harbor and Coupeville were surrounded by farms in the early 1930s, so the filbert orchards sounded great. Someone would have to pick the filberts, the orchards would have to be cared for, and sorting sheds would have to be built.

All this gave hope to people who gladly worked at anything for as little as 20 cents an hour so their families could eat.

Remnants of these filbert orchards remain today. The trees make excellent shrubbery for landscaping, but they somehow fell short of producing a crop for the 1930 investors. Some said the trees were the wrong kind, but the investors just might have been the victims of a richly nutty scam.

## Dry It, You'll Like It

If you want to get into drying but don't have a dehydrator, try making fruit leathers in your oven. It's a good way of using up almost any fruit you have on hand.

Fruit leathers make delicious snacks and are great for backpacking trips, boating and camping excursions. Here is a general recipe for making your own leathers:

Puree desired fruit through sieve or food mill. Apples, apricots, bananas, pears, plums or pineapple can be used. Add honey or sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, mace or allspice to taste. A

proportion of 10 cups fruit (before pureeing) and 1 cup sugar is about right.

Line a cookie sheet or jelly roll pan with plastic wrap and spread 2 cups pureed fruit evenly. Place in oven set at 140 degrees or lowest setting and let dry while maintaining that temperature. It usually take 6-8 hours.

When cooled wrap for storing. Roll up leather with plastic wrap. Wrap again in more plastic wrap and seal tightly. Leather will keep at room temperature about 1 month, in refrigerator about 4 months, and in a freezer, about 1 year.