

*Whidbey Island's own magazine*

*Fall 1978*

25<sup>c</sup>



# *Spindrift Two*

Volume 2

Number 2



# *When the Navy PBY Built its Nest*

In 1942 when Whidbey Island Naval Air Station was aborning, Maylor's Point to the southeast of the town of Oak Harbor made an excellent fly-around for a succession of huge flying boats on bombing practice missions.

Suddenly the quiet and peace of the waters of northern Puget Sound was shattered by the roar of the huge "flying boxcars" as they lifted off the waters of Crescent Harbor, bombed their targets and returned over Oak Harbor, flying so low that according to one old-timer "you could almost reach up and touch them."

The bombing runs were conducted during the day at five minute intervals, and in the community of Oak Harbor when the big plane was overhead, all conversation ceased and for a half minute windows and dishes



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# in Crescent Harbor

rattled. But it was wartime, and in the fast-paced realities of sacrifice and a continual alert, intrusions like considerable noise were taken as part of everyday living. After all, they were OUR PBY's!

The low-flying PBY, dubbed "Catalina" by the British, was used by all the Allies and produced in greater numbers than any other patrol seaplane. The PBY served with distinction in every World War II combat theater. The seaplane base at Oak Harbor (Maylor's Point and adjacent areas) was home to the PBY crews who spent overseas duty in the Aleutian Islands guarding Alaska and the mainland from Japanese invasion.

"I Ain't A'Gonna Grieve . . . Oh, you can't get to heaven in a PBY 'cause a PBY don't fly that high" . . . was part of a rowdy WWII song commemorating the PBY that became a symbol of the war that was fought from Alaska to the South Pacific, in Europe and the Mediterranean.

And Whidbey Naval Air Station became "home" to several crews who still observe reunions of the intrepid flyers who flew them.

As the seaplane base roared and reverberated to the PBY's, a small tug called the "Lilly" was employed to keep driftwood from Crescent Harbor to prevent damage to the seaplanes. The Lilly became an interest for young officers stationed at the seaplane base because Crescent Harbor provided a fertile field for crabs and the Lilly regularly put out its crab pots!

Some years after the seaplane base was closed and the last of the big float planes left Whidbey, it was proposed to bring a PBY to Whidbey again and mount it as a memorial to those early day

World War II pilot crews and their ships.

After much search, the hull of a PBY could be obtained from California, delivered without engine for a mere \$20,000! Most of those left were being used as cargo planes in the South Pacific.

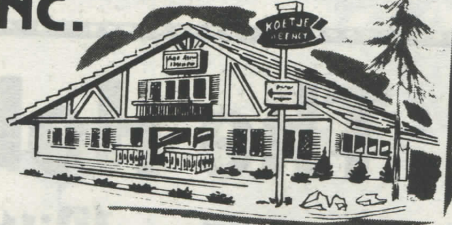
The price tag was the stumbling block and the project dropped, but in the hearts of both civilians and Navy personnel there remains the unfulfilled wish that a fitting memorial be placed on or above the seaplane base area at Whidbey Naval Air Station.



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# Crescent Harbor Indians and Whites

History of Crescent Harbor  
written by

Henrietta Izett Frostad

A July 4, 1874 picnic on Crescent Harbor Beach . . . exercises (patriotic) were held in the Haller warehouse. Seats had been built of planks gathered from the beach, around the sides of the big storage room.

At one end of the long room was a platform for the speaker and singers, and Mrs. Ned Barrington's square piano, one of the few on the Island. Fiddlers were engaged for the evening dance, for no Island picnic gathering was complete without a friendly dance.

My father, John Izett, read the Declaration of Independence.

My mother led the singing and to my young ears it was wonderful.

Great preparations had been made for the musical program. It was begun in the old log schoolhouse at Crescent Harbor. Newcomers from New York, Mr. and Mrs. Alvah Blowers, had organized a Union Sunday School here.

At the close of a session a few Sundays before the fourth, Blowers suggested a big celebration place to hold it. The men went down to the beach to look at Haller's warehouse and made plans to make it usable for the grand event.

An excursion boat from Utsalady, a thriving mill town then, brought folks from LaConner and Utsalady, many from Seattle came, and of course all of North Whidbey Island was represented.

The neighborhood of Crescent Harbor was all agog, cleaning and decorating. The lean to where Col. Haller's sheep sought shelter in the hot afternoons was filled with long plank tables and benches for the picnic dinner.

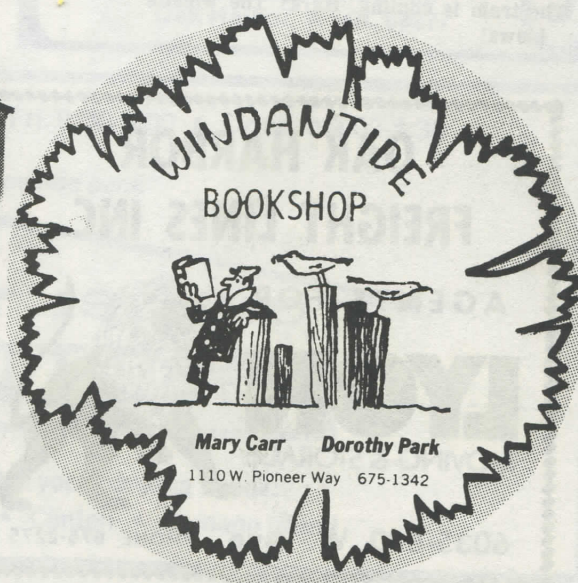
We, the Izetts, as well as most of the other settlers, came in a big lumber wagon. The wagon was very bright, with a freshly painted green box and red wheels. We had two spring seats and a pile of straw in the back.

My brother Jim and I sat together where mother placed us. Only a fifth of the people who came could get even standing room inside the building, but nearly everyone heard the speeches and music.

After the program the ladies set the tables, but even with all those long tables there were so many people that it was necessary to spread cloths on the grass under the cherry trees, crabapple and hardhack bushes where the brush had been cut away. There were people all over the flat and up on the bluff.



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# Celebrated July 4 in 1874

My brother Jimmy, 3, had on his first pants and jacket (little boys wore dresses until about that age in those days) and it was my duty to look after him. I wore the white dotted-swiss dress that had been handed down from my sisters Julia to Jean to me. The dress had been made from a dress belonging to Mrs. Selucius Garfield who wore it at a President's reception in Washington. That fact did not impress me so much as having a white dress to wear when my usual "best" dress was one of light colored calico!

At the picnic Jimmy and I sat upon the "chest" out of which Mother had brought such huge supplies of food. She put it on her "best" cloth, as every other housewife did. When the crowd was all seated we sang "God Bless Our Native Land" led by Capt. George Morse, our singing school teacher.

As we were eating, a wildly shooting white man on a dripping pony arrived. Someone said "Poor George Copeland, drunk again," and another said it would

be a wonder if there were not a pack of drunken Siwashes arriving soon, for Copeland was here with a lot of whisky while the exercises were going on.

Sure enough, soon a great commotion was heard down the beach, where 100 or more Indians had gathered, and before long a fight was in progress. Several of the men went down, and it was a scary time for the women and children as they listened to the yells and shots.

The Indians were friendly enough when sober, but the white man's "firewater" made them mean.

Jimmie somehow got away from me, and Mother frantically searched for her baby. Someone

said "the little tyke ran into the hall and pulled down a syringa branch and shouted 'I'se gonna stop those Indians fighting!'"

A klootchman brought Jimmy back from the fray. The Indians were finally quieted without Jimmy, one was badly knifed, but lived to a ripe old age.

It was found that if a friendly Indian woman had not drawn the loads from a pistol, father might have been killed, as her man pointed the pistol at him and pulled the trigger several times, being angry with him for confiscating the whiskey.

The klootchman acknowledged her part in the peacemaking by referring smugly to the "no polalie" (powder) in the gun!



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# The "Chinese Problem" Caused Unrest

Chinese on Whidbey Island came as a surprise to many who have lived here many years, have learned about the Indians the sea-captains, the Irish, the Dutch, the Scots, the Scandinavians and the Navy, but never knew there was an "Oriental Era."

In the 1880s many Chinese came to the West Coast, from California to British Columbia. On Whidbey Island they settled around Coupeville and San de Fuca, with a few at Oak Harbor. They were single men who came to America to make their fortunes and to return to their native land wealthy. They were orientals in an occidental society, and for protection they clung together in their own settlements. Few ventured outside to live "with" the white man.

In Coupeville the Chinese lived in a barracks-type building near Ebey' Prairie, and fanned out during the day to farm for others and for themselves. They were used to working long hours for little pay, and this was probably the cause of their eviction. They worked too cheaply, sent the money home to China, and took no

part in the development and integration of the new country. American politics were foreign to them.

The May 1891 Island County Sun reported there were Chinamen on Captain Morse's place, clearing land and putting in potatoes. They had rented 70 acres. (Captain Morse's place was north of 700 West in Oak Harbor, from the Old Highway to Midway.

The same issue said: "The Chinese question must be settled on Whidbey sooner or later . . . while only a few here. The move to clear Whidbey of Chinese should not be put off until they secure land for another year."

May 23 . . . "The constant agitation by this paper of the Chinese question is about to result in some measure to forever solve it."

The Chinese potato pits on Capt. Morse's farm were burned.

John Gould of Oak Harbor became a county hero when he was offered three times as much for his land on Ebey Prairie by Chinese as Ed Jenne was paying

for it, but "refused to rent it to Celestials."

The Chinese proposed buying teams and doing their own teamwork, thus "robbing" white men of work, said the Sun. "They are crowding out honest white labor and will no doubt become land owners soon."

The "grippe," it was noted, had passed through the community, and the Chinese were the only ones who did not catch it. "Even the dread disease will have nothing to do with the Orientals," the newspaper pointed out.

Tabs were kept on post office money orders sent from Coupeville by the Chinese.

"In one year the sum of \$2,251.20 . . . much also by postal note and check, and a greater sum carried to Port Townsend and Seattle and from there to China . .



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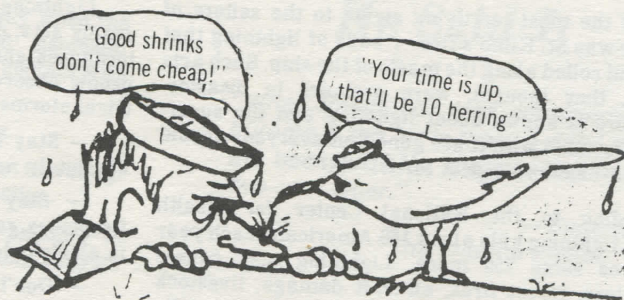
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# on Whidbey Island

not less than \$10,000 never to return. Had white men invested it it would still be in circulation here. Every Chinaman employed on Whidbey and paid a dollar means that 75 cents will never return."



In spite of this there were several Chinese who elected to stay with the families for whom they worked. Wah Lee worked on the Hancock farm and when he died he was buried in Sunnyside Cemetery in the Hancock plot. He was a friend as well as a servant.



Wah Lee brought a remedy for arthritis from China: six big golf-ball size pills plus a quart of pure alcohol in which horned toads were pickled!

Wah Lee also owned a Chinese bandit knife "stick in stomach, kill heap quick," he said.

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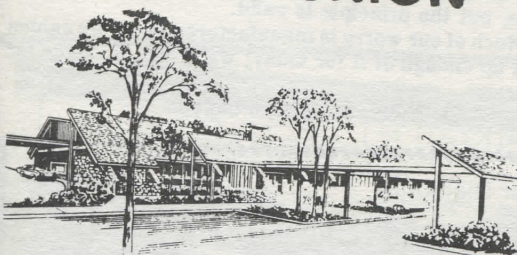
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# Island Indian Lore

Flora Pearson Engle, who came to Whidbey Island in the 1860s on one of Asa Mercer's much-publicized ships, wrote a great deal about "pioneer days" which included the Indian population of Coupeville.

She told of a day in 1867 when a great outcry was heard from the Indian longhouse on the beach in front of the town of Coupeville. The young people, curious, went to see what was going on.

"It was an ill-smelling shack we entered, reeking with malodorous oil and smoke. A fire burned in the middle of the room and a number of squaws sat in a semi-circle, chanting a discordant, minor tune. In the center of the group lay a sick Indian, and the squaws were trying to exorcise the evil spirit 'ta-man-oo-us' that had laid him low. If after hours of this treatment, the man did not get well, he was taken outside somewhere to die. When he died he was placed in his canoe along with his hunting and fishing tools for use in the happy hunting ground, and the canoe hoisted in a tree, preferably a maple."

The Indians always had a belief in a Great Spirit. One of the older Indians had told Mrs. Engle about Indian names of various places, and that the Great Spirit had told them what their names should be.

Aleck Kettle, a Coupeville Indian said that the Skagit locality was not rightly named. "Skagit no there" he said, pointing to the mainland, "Skagit here" pointing to the head of Penn Cove. Many of the Indian names meant simply "the point" or "the mountain." Mount Baker had several Indian names, from separate tribes.

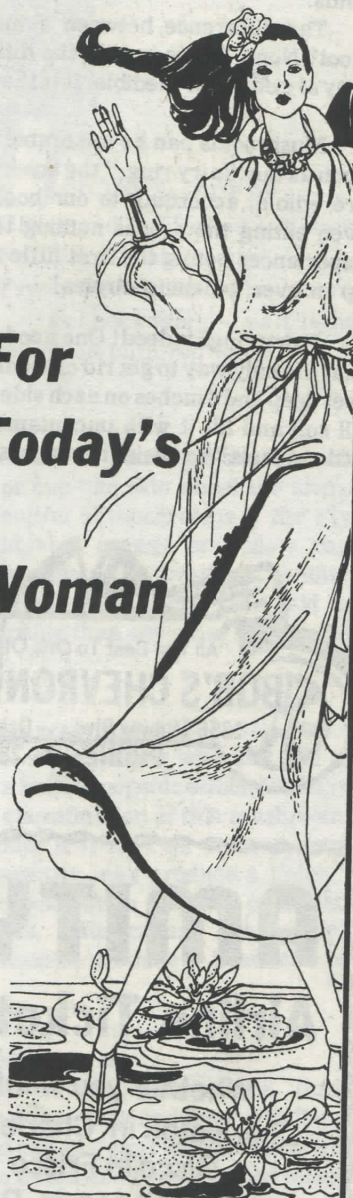
Puget Sound was "Qwhol-ich" meaning the whole water; Whidbey Island was "Stche-kol-che" but it is difficult for white men to reproduce the guttural intonations and thick "s" sounds in their native language.

The Hudson Bay company invented the Chinook jargon for use in trading and was never intended for a real language. But nearly all the early settlers learned to use it. Many of the words came from the French, "la porte" for door, and "la tete" head.

Indian women did most of the work, collecting roots, digging clams, drying berries, braiding mats and preparing meals. They also did their share of paddling the canoe, and it was women's work to pull the heavy

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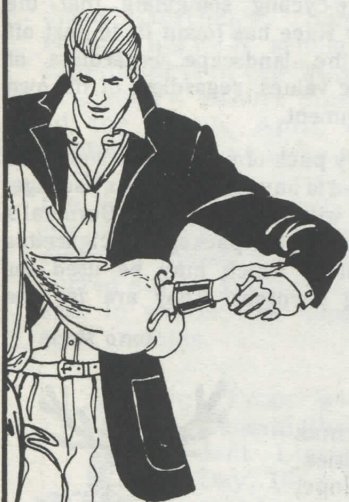
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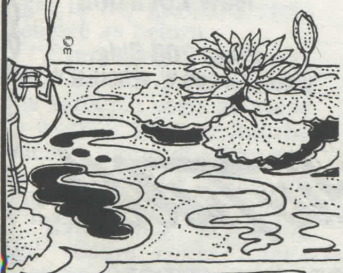
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## told by 1860's Pioneer

canoe up on the beach at the end of a journey. They braided heavy rush mats called "kils kwis" to line their houses and beds.

Joseph Whidbey recorded that he was met by friendly Indians who were followed by a great many little white wooly dogs, from which they took wool to knit into clothing. Some of the baskets they wove were so tight that they would hold water.

The white men did not interfere with the Indians' tribal customs, nor did they do much about education for the Indians. They took quickly to the white man's clothing, and the women did menial tasks about the houses for the pioneer women, washing and ironing and caring for the children. The men were helpful to pioneer farmers in haying and harvesting, and they had prodigious appetites. They were especially fond of potatoes.

At the threshing tables it soon became the practice to serve the Indians double what it took to feed white men, and no second helpings. They had evidently learned to clean not only their own plates but every other one on the table.

Flora Engle wrote of an "Indian potato" that was delicious, snow white and mealy when boiled, exceeding other potatoes in flavor. But the Indian potato, like the little white wooly dogs, gave way to the more prolific Irish potato as the dogs gave way to sheep.

Indian women charged one dollar to do a pioneer washing, and a "klone quarter" or 75 cents for ironing.



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