

## Denny party landed at Alki 150 years ago

One of the most poignant descriptions of pioneer life was given by Mrs. Alexander, later known as "Grandma Fay" after her marriage to Captain Fay of Coupeville.

Mrs. Fay was a passenger bound for Olympia on the Schooner *Exact*, which brought the little band of early settlers to Alki Point in November of 1851. It was the beginning of the city of Seattle.

A columnist, C.T. Conover, took Mrs. Fay's story from a newspaper interview given many years later:

"I can never forget when the folks landed at Alki Point. I was sorry for Mrs. Denny and her baby and all of them. You see, it was this way: We went on to Olympia, but the rest stopped at Alki. I remember it rained hard that last day and the starch got took out of our bonnets and the wind blew and when the women got into the rowboat to go ashore, they were crying, every one of them.

"And their sun bonnets went flip-flap flip-flap as they rowed for shore, and the last glimpse I had of 'em was the women standing under the trees with their wet sun bonnets flapping over their faces and their aprons over their eyes."

The advance guard for the family was Lee Terry and David T. Denny, who had built a partially completed cabin. There it stood, but without a roof!

All hands turned to and got a roof on and in this small shelter were 12 adults and 12 children, including three babies. A few days later they gave hospitality and a bed on the floor to F.W. Pettygrove and L.B. Hastings, who were on their way to settle at Port Townsend.

If the sea-sickness on the trip north from California, the rain and the prospect of a roofless cabin didn't produce character in these pioneers, living elbow to elbow and blanket to blanket with a head count of 26 must have!

**From "Four Wagons West"**  
by Roberta Frye Watt, a granddaughter of Arthur A. Denny, we get a picture of the pioneers' situation when the "Bostons" came to live among the Indians.

"The little cabin was surrounded by the huts of thousands of Indians and the beach was lined with their canoes. Their half-naked, ill-smelling bodies were everywhere, prying into the cabin and stealing what took their fancies.

"Mrs. Denny struck one across the knuckles when he attempted to steal a ham while she was stirring hot mush.

"When the family wash was hung out it had to be closely guarded. The Indians especially coveted children's clothing."

Having the Indians around paid dividends, however. The settlers learned their ways and how to get along with them. They established friendships which probably saved the settlement when the Indian outbreak came. The settlers learned Chinook and the Indians acquired some English.

The Puget Sound Indians, unlike the tall, straight, handsome Indians of the plains, were short, squat and pigeon-toed. They were canoe Indians, depending largely upon clams and fish for their food. The settlers learned from them what herbs, greens and berries were good and what were not. And they finally learned to

master a tippy dugout canoe.

Mrs. Denny's little white-faced baby, Rolland H. Denny, was an object of great interest to the Indians. They marveled at its curly hair. They had never seen a child with a face like snow and hair like the sun. They shook their heads and said, "Acha-da! Acha-da! Memloose! Memloose!" (Too bad, too bad. He die, he die.) Rolland Denny lived to a ripe old age, a beloved part of the Seattle scene!

**Oak Harbor Indians** encamped on the flat land where City Beach is now. They were friendly and child-like, and adopted the white man's ways, many times to their detriment.

They were unusually susceptible to the white man's diseases: chicken pox, small pox, measles and tuberculosis.

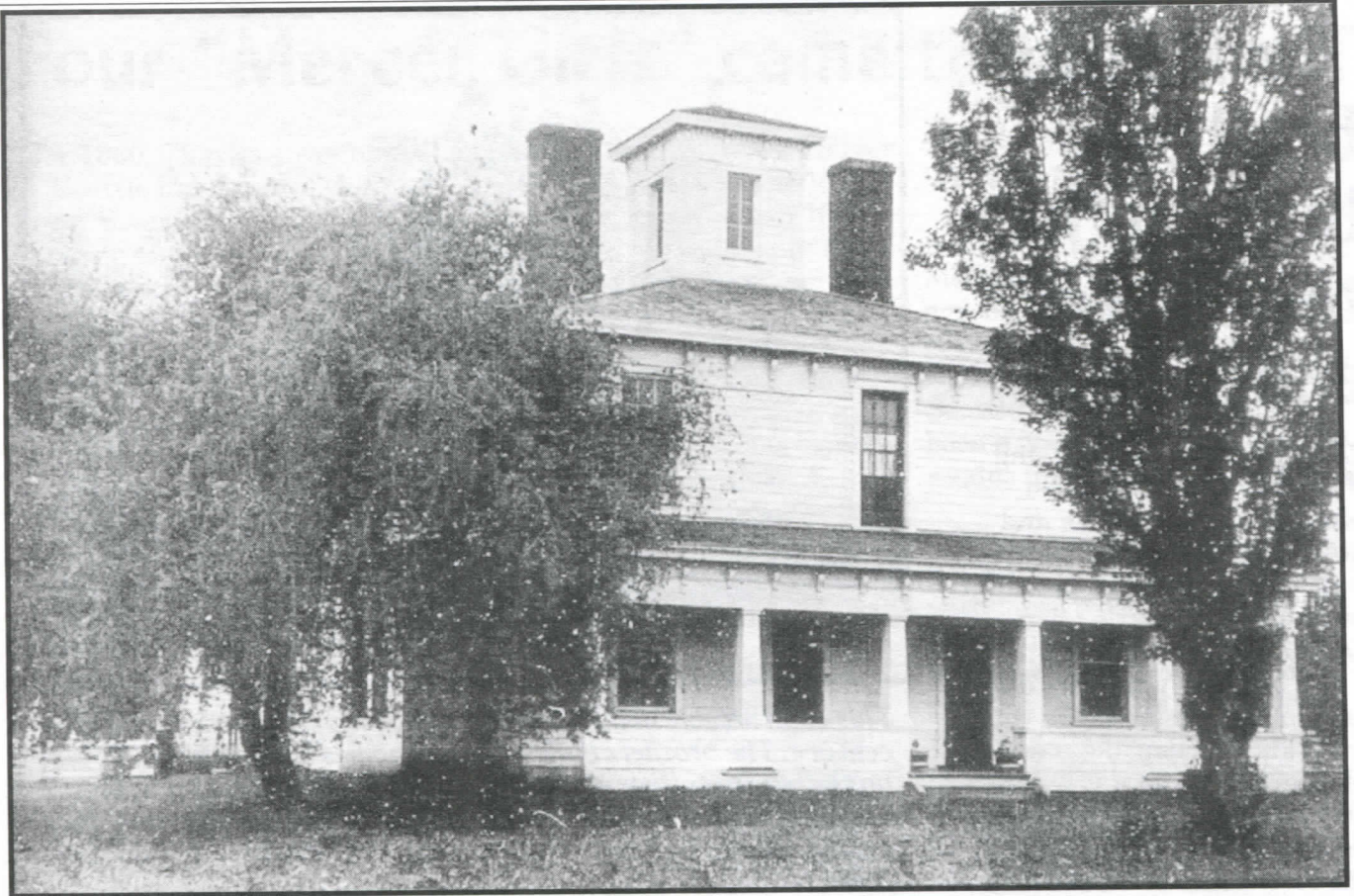
They were also susceptible to "fire water," to such an extent that laws were passed and punishment enacted for supplying Indians with liquor.

### Three men in a boat

The first three adventurers to settle what is now Oak Harbor beat the Denny party to Puget Sound by almost two years.

Zachary Taftzon, Charlie Sumner and Ulrich Freund landed at Miller's Point in December 1849, then paddled to Crescent Harbor in January 1950. They filed Donation Claims on January 4, 1851, marking the beginning of Oak Harbor.





*The old Kellogg House in Coupeville*

## *A Great Gift Anytime*

### **A History of Whidbey's Island**

as told in story and photo by  
Dorothy Neil and Lee Brainard.

## ***"By Canoe and Sailing Ship They Came"***

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## The Maylor brothers built on the town's west end in 1893

**J**n 1893, two enterprising brothers, Joe and John Maylor, who were born and grew up on Maylor's Point, turned their interest toward a business in the little town of Oak Harbor.

The brothers were very different, Joe the businessman was quiet and efficient; John was a photographer and it is to him Oak Harbor is indebted for the many pictures he took during the early years of the century.

While L.P. Byrne had built a nucleus of business houses on the east end of main street along Oak Harbor Bay, the Maylor brothers chose the west end of the street to build a general store and dock.

The dock reached a long finger out toward the end of "Crooked Spit" on Maylor's Point, where local Indians had buried their dead. The store was a two-story building with its foundations built along the slough that divided the town and beach area.

The brothers also built identical homes across the street from the store, with spacious lawns and trees in front, and with interiors as modern as any on Whidbey Island. The Joe Maylor home still stands, now the home of an accounting business. The spacious front yard is now part of the Pioneer Way business section.



*This comfortable home was built by Joe Maylor at the turn of the century. The brothers built identical homes across the street and up the hill from their store. This house is still here, now used as a business. It no longer fronts the main street, but was once surrounded by gardens and orchards with well-tended grounds down to Pioneer Way.*

John Maylor sold his interest in the business in the early 1920s and moved from Oak Harbor. His house stood on property next to the Joe Maylor home until it was destroyed by fire in the 1950s.

**That the Maylor** brothers chose to build a few blocks away from the Byrne dock, warehouse, hotel and store, was a happy circumstance, for one hot summer day in 1921, fire destroyed not only the Byrne holdings but the creamery, livery stable, a home and other buildings on the east end. The business buildings were never replaced, and the town regrouped to the west, with Maylor's Store one of the central businesses.

The "store" sold everything, from feed to dress goods, groceries, lamps, oil and ma-

chinery. The post office was also located there, with Joe Maylor as the postmaster. Farmers tethered their horses along the walkway, awaiting loading of wagons with feed for the trip to the farms.

The Maylor dock extended from what is now Pioneer Way and Dock Street to deep water. Freight and passenger boats loaded and unloaded there daily through the 1920s.

When the Washington Cooperative Egg and Poultry Association bought the dock in the late 1920s, they built a three-part warehouse on the channel.

The structure was abandoned later, and went up in a spectacular nighttime fire in the middle 1960s. It has never been rebuilt.

The store building was 100 years old in 1993. ★

# Four "Mercer Girls" came to Whidbey

**I**n 1860, Charles Prosch, the Seattle publisher of the Puget Sound Herald, suggested bringing single girls out from the east to fill the void in male-dominated Puget Sound. He suggested that not only were wives needed, but dressmakers, laundresses, cooks and school teachers.

It took a young man by the name of Asa Mercer who came to Seattle in 1861 and became president of the University of Washington the following year, to attempt to populate the area with single marriageable girls.

And the "Mercer Girls," as they became known, to this day are an important part of the state's history, as well as the history of Whidbey Island.

**Mercer went east** on a privately financed expedition in 1864 and brought 11 young ladies ranging in age from 15 to 25, to Seattle. They arrived May 16, 1864, to be greeted with a gala celebration that lasted all night.

Mercer's success in bringing single women to Puget Sound, most of them teachers, resulted in his unanimous election to the territorial senate.

The success of his first venture inspired the second in which he hoped to bring 500 women back to Puget Sound, but the journey turned into a disaster, through no direct fault of Mercer's.

Asa Mercer planned to call on President Lincoln, state his case and ask for a fueled and manned ship for his enterprise's journey from New York to Seattle. But Lincoln's assassination changed plans and it

was nine months before Mercer sailed for home. If he could have sailed immediately he might have made his quota of 500 women, but delay and an unfavorable press took their toll.

Finally, General Ulysses Grant authorized a coaled and manned steamship, the Continental, for Mercer's use. But the Army's Quartermaster General refused to honor Grant's order, then agreed to sell the ship to Mercer for \$80,000.

Through a backer the sum was raised, but financial manipulation continued, and only about 100 persons were aboard the ship when it left New York harbor. A news article in the New York Herald, slandered Mercer and stated that all men on Puget Sound were rotten and immoral, and appealed to the women to stay at home.

Of the 100 passengers, 36 chose to stay in San Francisco rather than continue on to Puget Sound. Two children were born on the long three-month voyage, to a Mr. and Mrs. Boardman and to Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson. They also elected to stay in California.

**Whidbey Island's** Mercer girls were Josie, Georgina and Flora Pearson, and Ida May Barlow. Josie, Georgina and Flora came here with their parents and brother. The youngest, Flora, taught piano, and later married Will Engle, an Ebey's Prairie settler. Engle grandchildren and great-grandchildren still live in Coupeville.

Ida May Barlow (Pinkham),

married and lived on South Whidbey for many years.

It is not known how many men signed a contract with Mercer for \$300 for which he agreed to bring a suitable wife of good moral character and reputation from the east to Seattle, but there may have been a good many disappointed swains in Puget Sound country.

**While the** Mercer girls did not come to the Northwest with matrimony only in mind, nearly all of them married within a short time. They did not find their fate as predicted gloomily in San Francisco, as to "the dismal character of Washington Territory, the ignorance, coarseness and immorality of the people, as well as the impossibility of obtaining employment."

The new residents of Puget Sound were not helpless members of the "weaker sex." Miss Barlow, a teacher, could not find a teaching position so she started her own school.

Another, Miss Stevens, said of her new environment, "As for the scenery it would be paying Mercer a most extravagant compliment to say that he could overrate its beauty, only a poet of the first order could do that."

Asa Mercer married one of his "girls," and left Puget Sound for Oregon. They lived in Texas later where he worked as a newspaperman, then moved finally to Wyoming where they had a ranch. He died in Buffalo, Wyoming, on Aug. 10, 1917, survived by three sons, two daughters, and many grandchildren.



# Pearsons came on a Mercer expedition

**P**earson is a name that appears regularly in the annals of yesterday on Whidbey Island and other parts of Puget Sound.

Daniel O. Pearson came with his daughters to Seattle via one of the famed Mercer expeditions. Josie, a schoolteacher, died within a few years; Georgina married Charles Terry, a Whidbey Island farmer, and Flora, the youngest, became Mrs. Will Engle, or "Flora A. P. Engle," as her many writings of her years in

Coupeville testify.

A son, also Daniel O., came with them and then sent for his childhood sweetheart, Clara Jane Stanwood, who traveled here by way of the Isthmus of Panama, by steamer, by foot, and by Indian canoe.

In 1877, when Daniel Orlando Pearson moved to the mainland between the outlets of the Skagit and Stillaquamish Rivers, to a place called "Centerville," he renamed the place "Stanwood" after Clara's family.

D. Carl Pearson, their son, at age 21 ran for Island County auditor and was elected in 1898. The office paid \$600 a year. He also was elected Justice of the Peace. About that time the Island County newspaper was for sale, and he bought it. He hired a young man to help, O. S. Vanolinda, who was to become famous as a publisher in his own right. The judge-newspaper combo worked out well.

**As judge,** Pearson is quoted in a story written by Seattle newspaperman Frank Lynch in 1958:

"Seems there were two doctors in Coupeville, one plain and all business, the other young, personable, but without a license to practice. When the younger was brought to court, Islanders figured his chances at no better than 50-50. They hadn't consulted the women.

"As each juror departed for court he received an ultimatum from his wife: 'You do right by that fine young man, or don't you show back home,' or words to that effect.



"The young doctor made it out on one ballot."

**Marjorie Engle Hazen** of Freeland, daughter of Carl Engle and granddaughter of both Daniel Pearson and William Engle, Whidbey pioneers, wrote the following some years ago regarding the Fort Casey lighthouse and its people.

"My great grandfather D. O. Pearson was lighthouse keeper of the Fort Casey light in the early 1860s, and my grandmother, Flora A. P. Engle was his assistant.

"When she and my grandfather William B. Engle were married in 1875 they lived at the lighthouse with her parents, and on Sept. 30, 1877, my father, Carl T. Engle was born there.

"On the day Carl T. Engle was born, George Dewey, later to become Admiral Dewey, was lighthouse inspector, and he visited there. My sister, Betty Engstrom of Greenbank has the original log kept by the Pearsons during their stay there."



*"Your Word is a  
lamp to my feet  
and a light  
for my path."*

*Psalm 119:105*



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# The Pig War: A pig started it . . .

**J**n 1892, when the Royal Marines of His Majesty's Occupation of San Juan Island evacuated at the close of the bloodless "Pig War," a party of Marines rowed back to the English Camp to chop down the flagpole so that no Yankee flag would ever fly from it.

This event was commemorated in 1972 in a colorful ceremony, complete with Canadian servicemen wearing 1870-style uniforms, cannons firing and speeches given against the backdrop of the blockhouse left over from the English occupation.

This off-beat bit of 19th Century history focused on the shooting of a British pig by an American settler in 1859, which led to the notorious Pig War, that in turn threatened to plunge England and the United States into war.

Both nations claimed the small island as well as the rest of the San Juans, with an 1849 treaty giving the United States possession of the islands south of the 49th parallel and England those north of the parallel. Wording of the treaty said the boundary should be "in the middle of the channel" between Vancouver Island and the mainland, but did not specify which channel, Rosario or Haro Strait.

Both flags flew, and British and Americans interpreted the question in their own way. Small disputes grew into large ones and finally each nation sent in troops. The only shot fired was the one that killed the pig.

**Today visitors** to San Juan Island can tour both the

American and British camps at opposite ends of the island, which together make up one National Historical Park.

Historically, not just two nations, but five, not counting the native Indians, had at one time or other pressed claims for San Juan Island, along with other Pacific Northwest territories.

Spain, France and Russia, besides England and the U.S., all had claims to the region. By 1818, however, these had been reduced through purchase and agreement to the two final contenders, who were to meet in the famous Pig War confrontation.

That sole shot that was fired killed a pig belonging to Charles J. Griffin of Hudson's Bay Company.

**The situation** came about when the pig raided the garden of Lyman A. Cutler, one of 29 American settlers on the island. Cutler shot the pig and reportedly made an offer to do the same for the pig's owner, and anyone else who took step on his land.

British authorities came from Victoria to arrest Cutler, and in return, American citizens requested United States military protection against the threat of an arrest and seizure of the island by the British.

A Ninth United States Infantry company under the command of Captain George Puckett was sent to the Island to oppose a British man-of-war under Rear Admiral Robert Bayne, which was already on the scene. Reinforcements on each side climaxed when the two agreed to end the buildup,



and settled 100 troops from each government on the island.

The British Royal Marine Light Infantry built a blockhouse and quarters under the English flag at one end of the island; the American troops built barracks and remained at the other end of the island under the American flag.

The island area between the two camps became an "everyman's land" when friendly relations developed. Emperor William I of Germany was asked to arbitrate the matter and possession was granted to the United States on Oct. 21, 1872. Today the camps are a national historical park, commemorative of the pig that almost catapulted two great nations into war.

## ***The man who shot the pig***

Lyman Cutler, the man who shot the Englishman's pig and nearly caused a war between England and the U.S., was a Kentuckian, aged 27, who arrived on San Juan Island with the first dozen American squatters.

He arrived in April 1859 and staked a 160 acre homestead later known as the Fraser place, fronting the American Camp Road.

He was described by a contemporary as "one of the unwashed sovereigns of the United States who did not scare worth a cent." He was ►

## He was hungry . . .

also described as a "tall, light-haired, fine-looking and fearless adventurous type, full of fun," and was said to have set up housekeeping with an Indian woman in a pioneer hut.

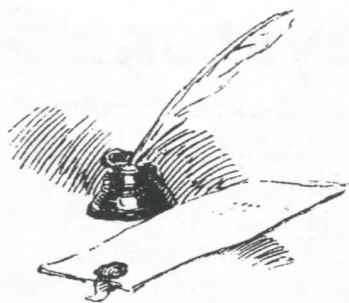
According to historian Lucile McDonald, Cutler made a round trip of more than 40 miles by sailboat to buy a sack of seed potatoes for \$10. He dug a garden in the midst of the Hudson's Bay Co. sheep run and sowed his spuds.

On the morning of June 15, Cutler saw the pig grubbing among his potatoes, chased the animal into the woods and shot it. In the hubbub that ensued, the owner of the pig claimed it was a breeding boar valued at \$100 and demanded payment. Hot words were exchanged and the two great nations geared to defend their rights!

Cutler gained prestige from the episode, was elected constable by the Americans on the island, and later served as deputy sheriff, a post held in May 1864. He then disappeared from the San Juans and was next heard of some years later, 39 years old, unmarried and living in Samish Precinct.

He took a squatter's claim south of Blanchard and north of Bow in present Skagit County. On April 27, 1874, Cutler died leaving an estate of \$489.75, to which his father, brother and a sister living in Michigan were heirs.

Among his belongings was the shotgun with which he was said to have killed the famous pig. A man named D. P. Thomas bought it and many years later it was sent to the Washington State Historical Society where it now reposes. ★



## Among friends

"Thank you for the Spindrift magazine. When it comes, I read it immediately, because it contains such interesting articles.

In the Louis L'Amour books, he speaks about the different Indian tribes. I think that is why I enjoy Spindrift so much, as it give facts about them . . .

The Madrona tree on the cover is majestic looking. It must be years and years old. How beautiful!"

. . . *Josephine Silha,*  
Jefferson, Wisconsin



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# Keystone Sand and Gravel Company

by Roger Sherman

**M**ost people, tourists and locals alike, who drive easterly down the Keystone spit on Keystone Road near Coupeville, do not realize that they are driving through one of Whidbey Island's most interesting historical sites.

During April, 1890, the North Pacific Land Company platted the town of Chicago on what we now call the Keystone Spit. A few buildings appeared, complete with a saloon called the "Stump."

A bridge was built across Crockett Lake to connect with the thriving metropolis of Coupeville and a hotel was built to house the multitudes that never came. When construction on Fort Casey was started, the buildings became a shanty-town that housed the construction workers. The promised railroad never came to Whidbey Island and the developers dreams died along with the town.

As we drive further east, two small ponds emerge. Between the ponds and the beach are the remains of a gravel screening plant. This is in the area called Brooklyn. It is also where the Keystone Sand and Gravel Company made its home for nearly 20 years.

The story of the rise and fall of this company is probably one of the most complicated business transactions that our island has seen. The entire history will be made available to the public, in the library files of the Island County Museum. This is a condensed version.

Andrew (Andy) Morrill was one of the engineers during the construction of Fort Casey. Andy and his associates realized that the spit between Crockett Lake and Admiralty Inlet held vast amounts of gravel, about 3,000,000 cubic yards. He also knew that fresh water was readily available for

washing. On April 29, 1912, they incorporated and called their new business the "Keystone Sand and Gravel Company." The principal stock holders were Ira L. Todd, A. J. Morrill, H. R. James and A. S. Coates.

The company's letterhead had a shaded area over Whidbey Island. It is in the shape of a Keystone, the center, stone or brick, in an arch. The printing on the hand says: "Island County, the Keystone of Puget Sound." It can be assumed that this is where the name Keystone Spit came from.

**The gravel screening plant** and dock were built and were operating in 1913. The sand and gravel was dug by a drag line, screened, washed and separated into sand, pea gravel and gavel. A conveyor, 500 feet long, transported the different mixture combinations to a waiting barge.

It took four or five men to operate the plant. Power came from a steam plant that fed a donkey engine. Large amounts of the gravel went to Seattle where it was used to build the Smith Tower, the Federal Building and the Olympic Hotel. They would deliver anywhere on Puget Sound.

**On February 11, 1914** a major shake up took place. George Freeman Hesselgrave bought out everyone except Coates. He brought his two sons into the business, George Wiley and James Carl Hesselgrave and eventually took over the entire business. Then it got complicated. Remember, when Chicago and Brooklyn were ➤

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## ... an early Island business

platted, the result was literally hundreds of little lots. These were bought and sold and traded and given away. Keystone Sand and Gravel Company was right in the middle, wheeling and dealing.

In 1924, Keystone sold to W. L. Beddow and W. R. Chesley of Seattle, and in 1926 they sold to the Bluestone Sand and Gravel Company. Bluestone immediately leased the gravel operation to Kirk S. Johnson for a term of three years. Johnson was paying Bluestone and Bluestone was paying Keystone. Royalties, on a per yard basis were paid and everyone was still buying and selling lots.

**After 1928**, there were no further recordings made that mentioned the Hesselgraves or the Keystone Sand and Gravel Company. In 1948, the Bluestone Sand and Gravel company was still in business selling lots in Chicago and Brooklyn.

The Hesselgrave and Engle families have recorded as much of the gravel operation history as they can recall. They tell us that Keystone Sand and Gravel sold out to Pioneer Sand and Gravel about 1928 and that Pioneer went bankrupt during the early years of the depression, probably 1930 or 1931.

Our present day G. W. Hesselgrave tells us that the gravel operation was also the site of the first Port Townsend Keystone ferry. He said that, during the mid 1920s, they had a little tug and barge and no dock. The barge had a ramp on it which they would drop on

the beach. As soon as the cars drove off, they would get stuck in the beach gravel and Keystone Sand and Gravel's donkey engine would pull them up to the road. When loading, they had a snatch block on the end of the barge and would haul them up the ramp.

George also tells us about the storm during October 1934. It came during a high tide and breached the jetty between Admiralty Bay and one of the gravel pit ponds. He rowed a boat from the pond into the straits.

The west pond was also the site where the Coupeville Lions Club gave swimming lessons for many years. Lots of

shivering kids.

Most of the spit is now owned by Washington State Parks and thanks to many, will always be protected and open to the public. All that remains of the old bunker is a few pieces of iron, concrete, a large pile of gravel and many memories.

### Contributors:

George (G. W.) and Annie Hesselgrave (G. W. is the son of George Wiley). Joanne Engle Brown (granddaughter of George Wiley), Jack Morrill (grandson of Andy Morrill), Gary Morse, Island Title Company, Island Historical Society, Coupeville. ★

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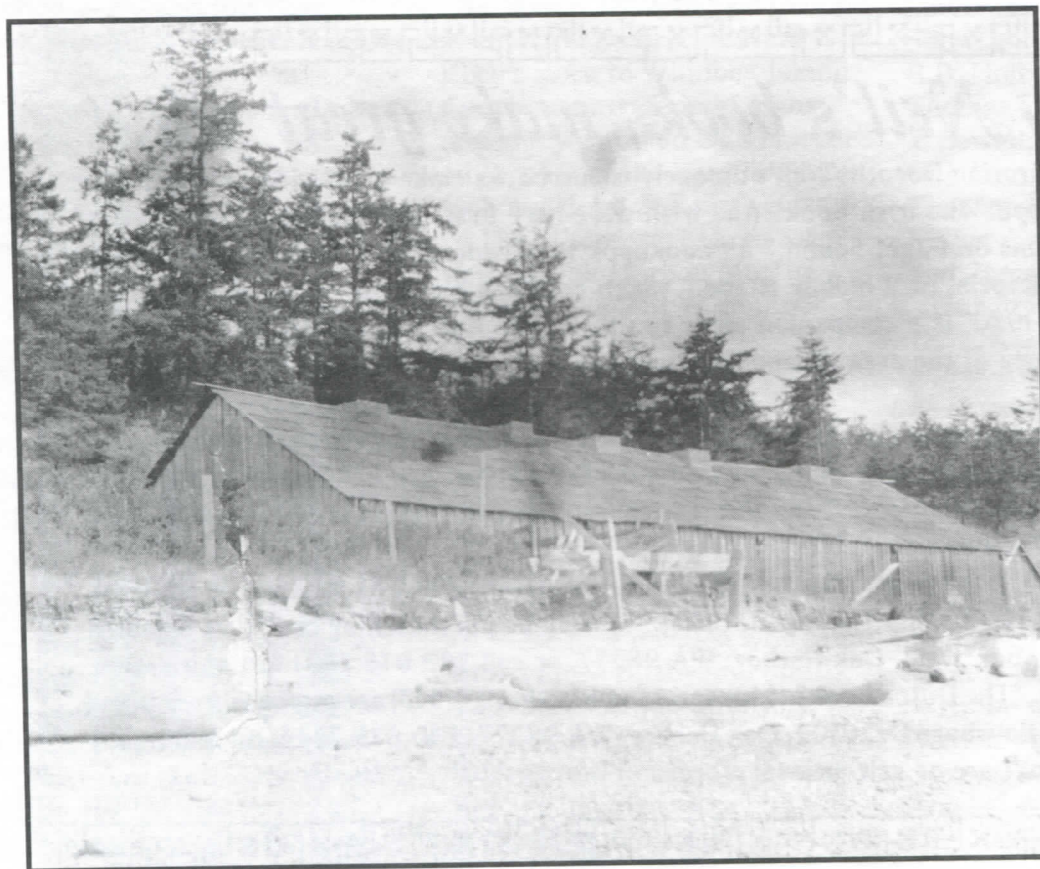
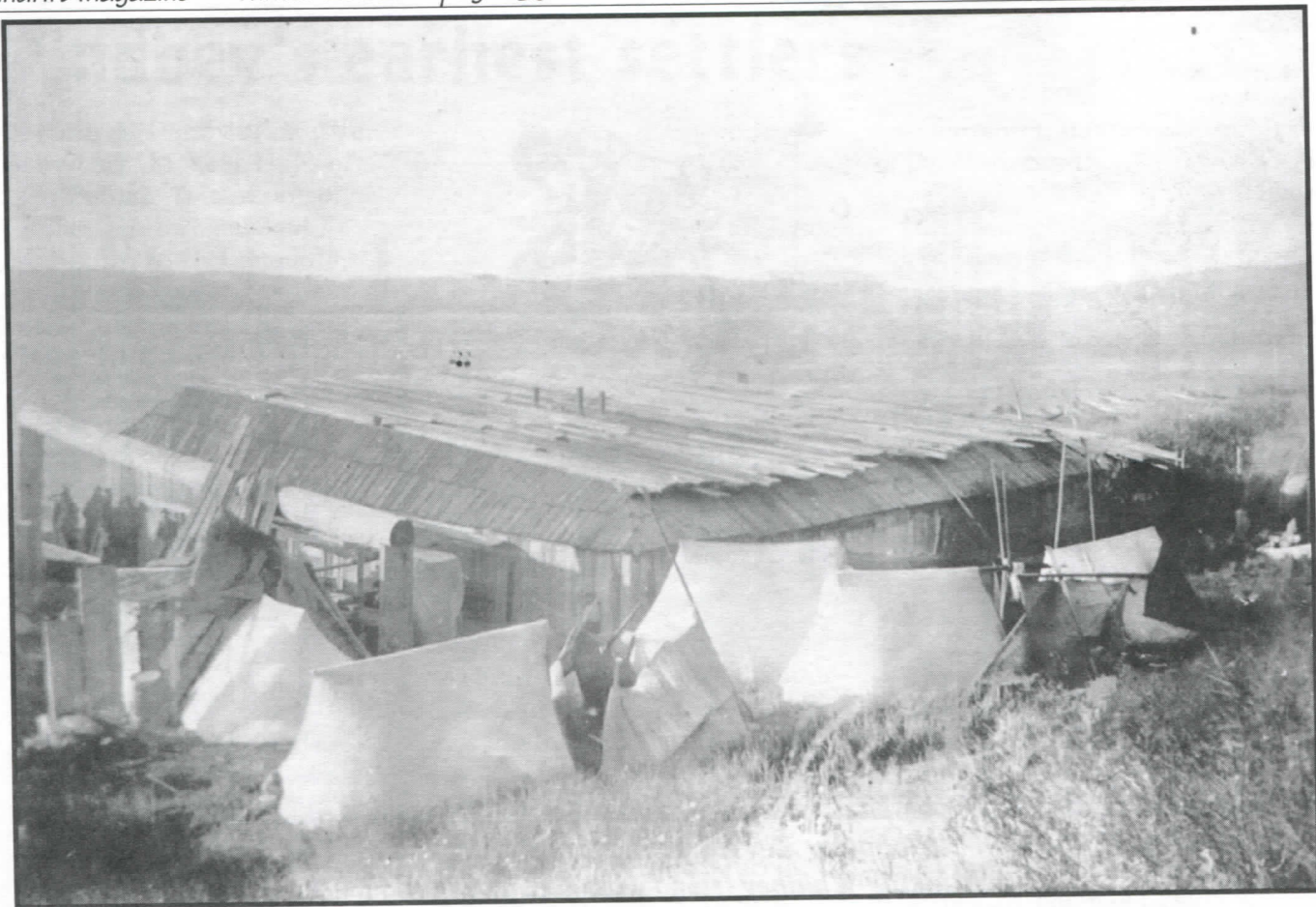
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*Two early Indian Longhouses on Whidbey Island. At top is the one that was at Monroe's Landing on Penn's Cove. The one at left is a smaller one, built on the beach at Crescent Harbor.*