

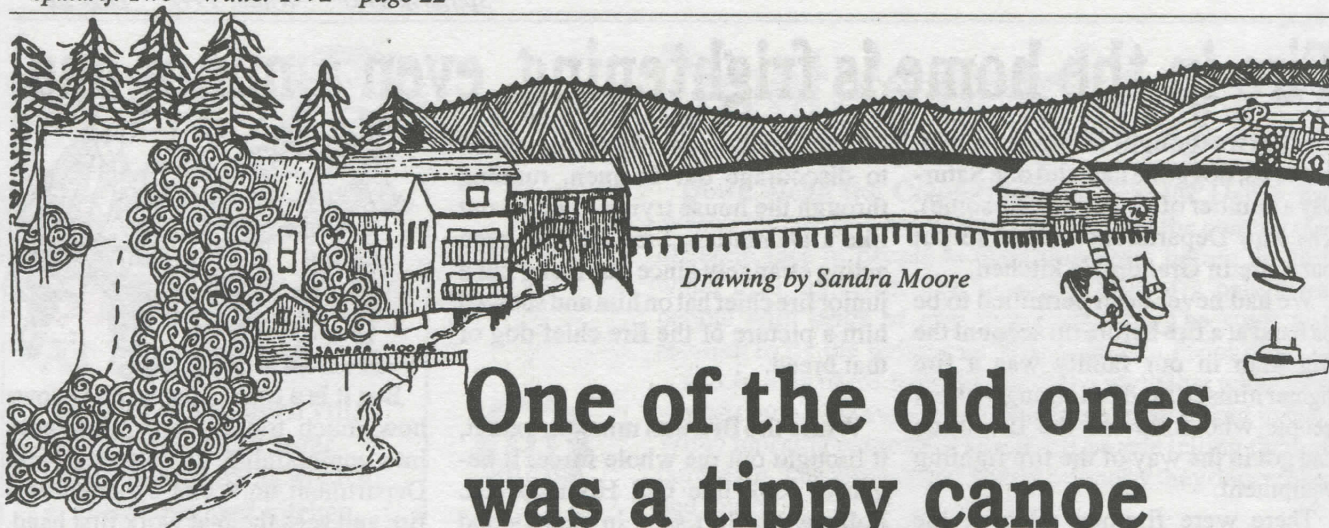
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# Spindrift Two



WINTER 1992

VOLUME 14 NUMBER 2



Drawing by Sandra Moore

## One of the old ones was a tippy canoe

Just south of the new Island County Historical Museum on Alexander Street in Coupeville, near the Alexander blockhouse, are four Indian canoes of ancient vintage and as late as 1934.

The War Canoe is believed to be the oldest dugout in the State of Washington. It was made by Sam Wick in the early 1850s and was first used by Chief Snetlum (Snakelum etc.) Chief of the Skagit tribe to which Indian Sam Wick belonged.

The Telegraph, a racing canoe made in 1910 by Charles and Dick Edwards in La Conner at the Indian Reservation. The Telegraph became famous as the winner in the International Canoe Races in Coupeville from 1929 through 1941. The Telegraph was manned by 11 men, a captain and 10 paddlers. Their recorded average over a three mile course was 60 strokes per

minute in a 22 minute, 30 second time.

The Tillicum (friend), a "Tip Over" canoe was a two man canoe made by Aleck Kettle in 1933. The tip over canoe was paddled a short distance, then stopped as a competitor approached. The paddlers stood, each holding a long pole that was padded on the "jabbing" end. The object was to push each other out of the canoes and tip the canoe over. After a tip over, the Indians climbed back in their righted canoes and continued the race.

The Elson, a lone man hurdle ca-

noe, was made also by Aleck Kettle for his grandson Elson. It was entered in the International Races in 1934. The canoe is paddled up to a greased log anchored along the race course. Speed and timing must be perfect and as the canoe bow reaches the log the paddler throw his weight back, lifting his bow light enough to go over the log. Then with a powerful stroke of the paddle he threw his weight forward to slide the canoe over the log.

The canoe had to be kept upright and go in order to win the race. ✱

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# From the journal of a pioneer woman

**C**aroline Leighton, young Boston-born wife of a courier for the U. S. Treasury Department, who lived in Port Angeles and Port Townsend from 1865 to 1874 wrote in her journal about life in the Northwest. Excerpts from the journal were printed in the Pacific magazine of the Seattle Times-Port Intelligencer June 30, from "Life at Puget Sound" printed in 1980 by Ye Galleon Press in Fairfield, Wash.

July 20, 1885

We reached here day before yesterday very early in the morning. Before us was a dark sea-wall of mountains, with misty ravines and silver peaks, the Olympic Range, a fit home for the gods.

A fine blue veil hung over the water between us and the shore, and the air being too heavy for the smoke of the Indian village to rise, lay in great curved lines like dim, rainbow colored serpents over sea and land.

The path to our house was an Indian trail winding about a mile up the bluff from the beach, and all about us a drooping white spirea, a most bridal looking flower. Here and there on some precipitous bank was the red Indian flame.

All about us were fir trees to 300 feet high, and all around, in the burnt land a wilderness of bloom, the purple fireweed, that grows taller than our heads, and in the richest luxuriance, of the same color as the Alpine rose, a beautiful foreground of snowy hills.

August 17, 1865

Hunter, a local native stopped to rest today on our doorsteps. He had a haunch of elk meat on his back, one end resting on his head, in a cushion of green fern leaves. He called me "*Closhe tum-tum*" (Good Heart).

We find a number of canoes suspended in the large fir trees on the land with the mummies of Indians in them.



These are probably the bodies of chiefs or persons of high rank. There is also a graveyard on the beach which is gay with bright blankets raised like flags, or spread out and nailed upon the roofs over the graves, and myriads of tin pans. We counted 30 on one grave.

Nov. 5, 1865, Seattle

We saw here a very dignified Indian, old and poor, but with something about him that led us to suspect he was a chief. We found upon inquiry that it was Seattle, the old chief for whom the town was named, and head of all the tribes on the Sound.

He had with him a little brown sprite that seemed the embodiment of the wind, such a swift, elastic little creature, his great grandson, with no clothes on, though it was a cold November day. To him, motion seemed as natural as rest.

Here we first saw Mount Rainier. It was called by the Indians, "*Tacoma*" (the nourishing beast). It is also claimed the true Indian name is *Tahoma* (Almost to Heaven). It stands alone, nearly as high as Mont Blanc, triple pointed and covered with snow, most grand and inaccessible looking.

We walked out to Lake Union and found an Indian and his wife living in a tree. The most primitive of the Indians, the old gray ones, who look the most interesting, do not commonly

speak the Chinook at all, or have any intercourse with the whites. On the way there we found the peculiar rose that grows only on the borders of the fir forest, the wild white honeysuckle, and the glossy, *kinni-kinnick*, the Indian tobacco.

We saw a nest built on the edge of the lake, rising and falling with the water, but kept in place by the stalks of shrubs about it. A great brown bird, with spotted breast rose from it. The Indians say this bird was once a human being, wife to an Indian with whom she quarreled. He was transformed to the great blue heron, and stalks about the marshes. With the remnant of her women's skill, she makes these curious nests, in sheltered nooks on the edges of lakes.

August 23, 1866 (following a three month tour up the Columbia to Eastern Washington.)

On Sunday we reached Olympia, and saw the waters of the Sound, and the old headlands again. I had no idea it could look so homelike, and when the mountain range began to reveal itself from the mist, I felt as if nothing we had seen while we were gone had been more beautiful, more truly impressive, than what we could see any day from our own kitchen door.

As we approached Seattle, we began to gather up the news. Seattle, the old Chief, had died. When he was near the end, he sent word to the nearest settlement that he wished Captain Meigs, the owner of the sawmill at Port Madison to come when he was gone, and take him by the hand and bid him farewell.

We learned that the beautiful Port Angeles was to be abandoned. Congress having decided to remove the custom house to Port Townsend and that no vessels would go in there. It seemed like leaving Andromeda on her rock.

# Holiday celebrations survive hard times

Harvey Hill, who came as a young man to Whidbey Island in the 1880s, told of a Christmas dinner and dance in the 1890s in Oak Harbor.

"During the winter we young people had a series of dances and house parties. The two Burnash boys and a boy working for A. W. Bash and I decided to have a Christmas dinner at their quarters, and a dance in the evening at the Grange Hall plus a supper dance at the Bash home.

The Burnash boys cooked the dinner and Eugene, my brother was to help. We had been to a dance on Christmas Eve and on Christmas morning Marshall Morse (Capt. Morse's son) and I drove up to the Bash house in the forenoon. The table was loaded. The boys had cooked seven turkeys, there were vegetables and all kinds of drinks. Eugene had been head bartender in the old Hoseshoe Saloon in Seattle and he had Tom and Jerrys, eggnog and everything else. It was about four o'clock before dinner was over, and we had to do chores, clean up and gather the girls in for the dance. The dinner had been strictly a stag affair.

Marshall Morse and I had a couple of girls about nine miles out so we started early. Unfortunately the girls had a couple of small brothers, Albert and Will, and they insisted on coming with us! We told the girls goodbye, and made as though we were starting home. The girls came out by the back door and through the orchard, and thus we gave the boys the slip!

The Christmas dance was a grand affair. Joe Goodwin played, assisted by Mrs. Thornton. The hall was crowded and at midnight all took their girls and started for the Bash house and supper. And after supper we went back to the hall and danced until morning."

Christmas 1935, arrived despite the Great Depression. Whidbey Islanders survived regardless of the lack of money and jobs. Everyone was poor, so they made the best of it. In the cities there were bread lines and people selling apples for a nickel on street corners. But on Whidbey Island there were clams and fish and nearly everyone had a pen of chickens and every neighborhood a cow for milk and but-



ter. Neighbor helped neighbor, and the doctor got paid in vegetables and if he was lucky, a chunk of meat. Those were times that today's young people would have a hard time understanding.

From a story in Spindrift's "The Wintertime Book" of 1981, in 1935 Oak Harbor was exploring the possibility of city water, and Well No. 1 showed better water quality than Well No. 2. No 1 also produced about three times as much water as No. 2. The stream tapped was a "fifteen footer" that flowed under the hillside. City water was a dream of folks who had relied upon wells and cisterns for water for 85 years.

Oak Harbor Christmas festival included bargains such as coffee 17 cents a pound; raisins 2 pounds for 25 cents at Dyers' Red and White Store; a davenport and chair upholstered in tapestry, \$49.50 at Oak Harbor Furniture; men's shoes as low as \$4.50 at Wright's; and one could buy a new-fangled portable typewriter for \$49.50 at the Farm Bureau News.

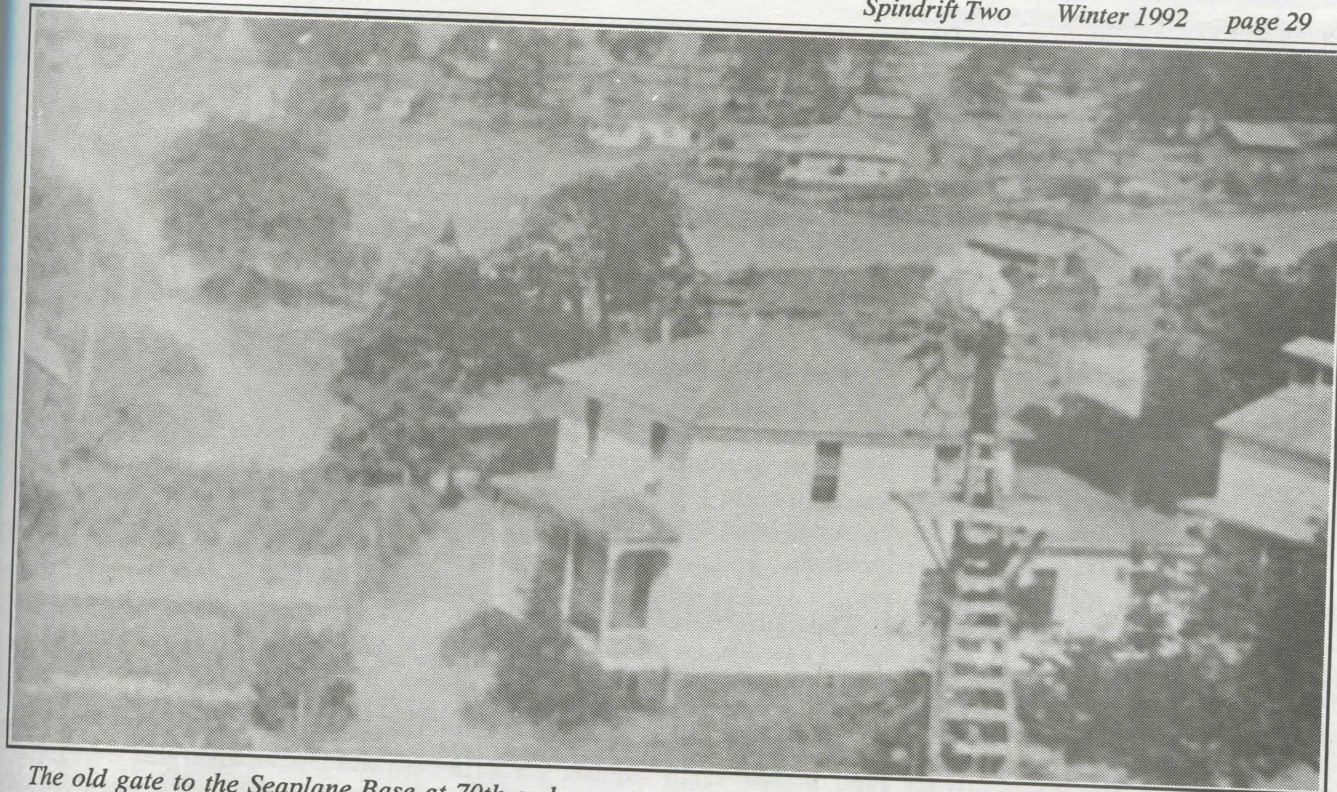
A big public auction to benefit the Oak Harbor Fire Department included free coffee and cookies for all who attended. And the Oak Harbor Library Club took a step forward and located in the west room of the City Hall, then the former OH Elementary School. Mr. Wellington, local photographer and town benefactor had left some 3,000 volumes of books. The club added 350 volumes collected in the past year, and the Oak Harbor Library took off with Ruby Weaver, librarian. The former school building was leased by the town for use as a fire station, city hall and library. When the new city hall was built the old building was moved to West Oak Harbor to become a church.

## *Oak Harbor Thriftway*

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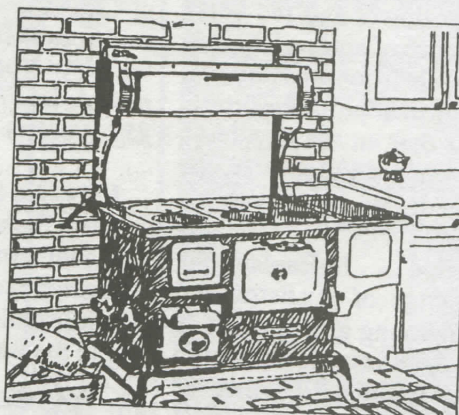
The old gate to the Seaplane Base at 70th and East Pioneer Way, was for many years the site of a big square two story farmhouse built by an early settler, A. W. Bash. When Bash was sent on a Presidential directive to China, he sold the house and surround farmlands to a newly arrived Dutch immigrant by the name of Eerkes, and the rise in ground became known as Eerkes Hill. The family farmed the acreage, put in the garden and second generation brothers John and Herman Eerkes built a new house in place of the old. When the Navy arrived to take over the farm for Victory Homes, it moved the new house to Maylor's Point to become the Admiral's quarters.

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