

# Centuries of Change



## The Glacial Story

About 20,000 years ago, glaciers nearly a mile deep overran Whidbey and Camano islands, gouging both islands with parallel, north-south hills and valleys. After the northern glaciers retreated, geologists believe another ice-flow from the east advanced over central Whidbey Island, scooping out Penn Cove and leaving a younger set of northwest-southeast landforms on north and central Whidbey.

## A Mountain, a River and a Cove

Can you find Mount Baker? On a clear day this snowcapped peak commands the horizon 60 miles northeast. Glacial melt water from the mountain drains into the Skagit River and flows downstream to Skagit Bay and across to Penn Cove. More Puget Sound salmon are born in the Skagit than any other river. They hug the shores of Saratoga Passage Marine Stewardship Area as they leave and return to their river of origin.

## Native Americans and Europeans

For the last 10,000 years, after the glaciers retreated, Native Americans lived in Penn Cove and harvested its abundant shellfish. Smallpox epidemics devastated the native population before the first British explorers from HMS Discovery came ashore in Penn Cove in 1792. Captain George Vancouver named the bay Penn's Cove after "a particular friend" whose exact identity is lost to history. He named the island Whidbey for Joseph Whidbey, master of his sloop of war. American settlement began in 1850 when Colonel Isaac Ebey homesteaded on Ebey's Prairie a few miles west of here.



Captain George Vancouver

## Canoes, Tall Ships and The Mosquito Fleet

From the 1850s to the 1930s, marine waters were the principal highways for Coupeville and other Puget Sound communities. Early settlers came by tall ship and often hired crews of natives for local travel. Later, the tall ships gave way to engine-powered vessels for freight, ferry service and travel to other Puget Sound settlements. These ships were called the Mosquito Fleet. Coupeville was home to many seafarers and Coupeville Wharf was served by passenger and freight steamers – sternwheelers, sidewheelers and propeller-craft – including two local favorites, the steamers Whidby and Calista.



The Calista



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