

# Oak Harbor's Ties to the Sea

*'Why do we love the sea? Because she has the power to make us think things we like to think.'*

– Robert Henri

## The Old Wharf and Steamships

Look offshore toward Maylor's Point and you will see a concrete block that remains from Oak Harbor's historic Maylor Wharf, built in 1893 and destroyed by fire in 1966. In the 1800s logging was big business, with tall ships transporting the island's logs worldwide. By the 1900s, steamships of the Puget Sound Mosquito Fleet visited daily to load passengers, freight and farm products. Farming and shipping were the heart of island life. Big changes came in 1935 when Deception Pass Bridge opened and in 1941 when the Navy arrived and built the PBY Seaplane Base and Ault Field, transforming the economy. The hulk of one early vessel, the steamer Whidby, still lies on the bottom at Maylor's Point where she drifted and burned in 1911. Fire in 1920 destroyed the nearby Byrne Wharf and part of Old Town, just upslope from here. The business district gave up on the area and rebuilt westward.

Steamer Whidby was one of many vessels that visited Oak Harbor regularly till the boat burned at Maylor's Point in 1911. Photo courtesy Peggy Darst Townsdin.



Maylor's Wharf was busy in 1912. This view looks shoreward toward the Oak Harbor waterfront and the area of today's Flintstone Park. Photo courtesy Peggy Darst Townsdin.



Maylor's Wharf and Crooked Spit on Maylor's Point nearly touched in the 1940s. The spit was later dredged away by the Navy to create space for seaplanes to land. Photo courtesy Peggy Darst Townsdin.

## The Garry Oaks

Remnants of a Garry Oak savannah, for which Oak Harbor is named, are visible just north and east of here at Smith Park and nearby Navy property behind the public library. The tree was once common in dry, open meadows from British Columbia to California, growing alongside camas, shooting star and other native plants and grasses. Many of Oak Harbor's larger oaks are 150 - 300 years old.

## Our Changing Shoreline... and Flintstone Park

Where you are standing was once a swampy lowland. The Navy completed major dredging of Oak Harbor Bay in 1942, and in 1968 the city further dredged the bay in front of you for a marina. But this marina site was later exchanged for the current location to the southeast.

With the dredge spoils the city filled the swampy lowland for a shore-side street. They asked anyone with large rocks, fill or other material to dump it here. The resulting jumble prompted an offhand crack about the Flintstone cartoon characters. The name stuck. The road became Flintstone Freeway and this spot Flintstone Park. A local businessman built the stone car.

Garry Oak

Camas

Shooting Star

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