

PORT ORCHARD FIFTY YEARS AGO*

Returning to San Francisco from Arizona and the Colorado River in the spring of 1867, I shipped before the mast in the ship *Helios* owned by Glidden and Colman, of Pier 21, Stewart Street, for a voyage to their sawmill at Port Orchard. As most of the freight to Puget Sound ports went by sail in those times, we "lay on the berth" for several days receiving freight for Seattle and the mill.

There was nothing noteworthy on our passage up the Coast, but coming from a hot country I well remember how the northwest winds seemed to search out the very marrow in my bones; and I never was colder in my life than when I was "lookout" on the night we passed in by Cape Flattery. Of the crew of twelve men before the mast there were a few exceptional characters whom I remember distinctly. One was the former carpenter of an English ship, who had deserted in San Francisco and shipped with us, who could never get accustomed to the abundance of food served to the "fo'castle," and who developed an amazing appetite for stewed dried apples. In fact, the watch would often let him eat all that was furnished for six men, just to see him gorge himself.

There was another, a New York sailor, who had always been in the New York and Liverpool packets, a "bos'n," and one of the old-time sailor-men, who knew nothing but the water-front of New York and Liverpool, and ships. How well I remember him in his singlet, arms burnt to an old mahogany color, breast bare and as hairy as an ape's, and his little close-fitting skullcap with a dab of plush in the crown. But more of him anon.

There was an Englishman by the name of Brown, a very steady-going chap, who sailed on the Coast in summer and worked in the sawmill in winter, saving his money to buy a piece of land to farm. Years later I met him, and learned that he had a nice place on Whidbey Island, and had his mother and sister with him from the Old Country.

It was sometime in July when we sailed into Seattle, let go the starboard anchor with eighty fathoms of chain, and swung in alongside the only wharf there, at the foot of what is now Yesler Way, then Mill Street. I think we were only a day or so discharging our

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freight, and so unimportant was the town then that no one cared to go ashore except the Captain, who had to collect his freight money. We then made sail again, crossed the Sound, and worked up through Port Orchard Narrows (and quite a little task, too) to the mill at Port Orchard, which was located about a mile north of Manette, at what is now Inatai, the summer home of Mr. Maurice McMicken.

Of course the first thing was to whip out some four hundred tons of ballast, after which we hauled into the wharf, got our chutes rigged, and started loading.

The firm of Glidden & Colman owned three vessels: the ship *Helios*, the largest and best, and the barks *Scotland* and *Huntsville*, of which the *Scotland* was at the wharf loading when we arrived.

The first Sunday was a bright, warm day, and immediately after breakfast it was all hands for a swim; but the water was so cold that none remained in longer than necessary. Some of us went up the beach to the hotel, which was on the spot now occupied by the residence of Mr. L. A. Bender; but all old residents of Port Orchard and Port Washington will remember the old Fellows' House. At that time it was the hotel for the mill and as I remember The Williams was running it; but of this I am not positive. It was later used as a schoolhouse and sold to Mr. Fellows. Some years later I was going up into Port Washington Bay for a boom of logs in the steamer *Linnie* and passed the place just as school was being dismissed, and I never shall forget the sight of those children climbing into their canoes and scattering in all directions.

Returning to the "bos'n" I spoke of earlier, we were all back aboard again long before he returned. The trees and the wild country were something entirely new to him and the driftwood on the beach was a perfect marvel. But about three o'clock he came into the "fo'castle" boasting of the funny kitten he had found, which would make a nice pet for us, and opening his shirt wherein he had placed it for safe-keeping, turned loose a cyclone among a dozen men. With a screech it shot out of that "fo'castle" and was ashore in a jiffy. How he had got it he never was able to explain. It was a young wildcat which he had caught and the chest and upper part of his abdomen were a sight to behold.

It seems that the firm which owned the mill was in financial difficulties and sometime during the next week a deputy sheriff, one George MacDonald, quite notorious in later years, came up and attached the mill and the lumber on the wharf, and that put a stop to our loading. A day or two later the two vessels were also attached

and Mr. MacDonald came aboard as keeper, but as neither vessel would feed him, he had to go to the cook-house for his meals.

On the next Sunday the crew wandered off as before and I chanced to return before any of the others. Captain Nickels was on the wharf and near her gangway. That you may understand what is to follow I will explain that in those days it was customary for vessels loading lumber to drop an anchor out ahead and then haul stern-on to the wharf, taking their lumber in chutes through the stern ports. In that position they were at right angles to the tide, which ran along shore. The *Helois* had out one stream-chain and a hawser as stern moorings; the *Scotland* two hawsers.

As I came up to the gang-plank to go on board the Captain asked me if I thought we could cast off the chain mooring as there was a pretty good strain on it, to which I replied that I thought we could. He then told me to go on board and get an axe from the carpenter shop, and when I returned, sent me to the stern moorings of the *Scotland*. After a bit he sung out for me to cut, and then I cut the hawser of the *Helois* just as he let go the chain, and we both scrambled up the gang-plank as the two vessels swung away from the wharf. MacDonald, who was ashore getting his dinner at the time, saw the vessels swinging away from the wharf, ran down on the beach and, jumping into a canoe, came alongside the *Helois* and started to climb aboard, but the Captain, with a six-shooter, convinced him that as the vessels were riding to their anchors they were out of his jurisdiction and only a United States marshal could take them by an order of the Federal Court.

That afternoon Captain Houdlette of the *Scotland* came over from Seattle with two steamers to take us in tow. The *Scotland* went to Port Madison by way of Agate Pass, and the steamer *Black Diamond*, which was about as big as a grasshopper, took us in tow for the sawmill at Freeport, where Luna Park now is; but about ten o'clock we were routed out to make sail, as a breeze had sprung up and the steamer could not handle us. We passed her astern and worked our way out of the Narrows and across the Sound to the mill, where we finished loading and sailed for San-Francisco.

That ended my first experience in Port Orchard Bay. MacDonald remained in charge of the mill and lumber, but as there was no chance of a settlement the sawmill crew scattered, and sometime that fall, the mill caught fire and burned to the ground. That was the last of Port Orchard as a sawmill.

The most distinct recollection of the Bay I have is the old "Fellow's House," just inside the Narrows, and the scow that used to tow

logs down from the head of the Bay to the mill. They had several coils of rope and two anchors with a boat. They would run out all the rope they had and then drop an anchor. The donkey engine would then haul herself and the boom up while the rope was being coiled into the boat so that when they had got up to the first anchor they were ready to run out the second. Not a very speedy method, but it got there just the same.

Captain Glidden finally took the *Scotland* and went to China with her, and some ten years later I saw the tops of her masts sticking out of water where she had struck a rock, just south of the Yangtze River, with the loss of all hands.

Of course, as a lad of seventeen, it is not to be expected that my recollections of those early days would be very vivid, but what little I have narrated stands out in my mind as if it had happened only a year or so ago. The practically unbroken timber around the shores of the Bay, the absence of any habitations save the shacks of the mill-town, and the solitude of the place are as fresh in my mind as ever, and these reminiscences are given in the hope that, as we look around and see what changes have come in the last few years, we may realize something of conditions fifty years ago. This paper, placed among the records of the Kitsap County Pioneers' Association, will have even a greater interest fifty years hence, and so I leave it in your hands for preservation.

W. B. SEYMORE.