

## APPENDIX A

### Historical Overview

The city of Gig Harbor in Pierce County, Washington, is known appropriately as “Washington’s Maritime Village.” It is located on the Gig Harbor Peninsula, in southern Puget Sound, the western-most of several sub peninsulas that extend southward from the dominant Kitsap Peninsula. The area basks in a moderate climate with sunny summers and moderately rainy winters. Colvos Passage separates Gig Harbor from Vashon Island to the north and from the mainland to the east. Point Defiance is on the mainland east of and across from the harbor entrance. The Narrows, known for its strong currents, extends southward between the Gig Harbor Peninsula and the city of Tacoma.

The picturesque harbor for which the city is named has a 750-foot sand spit that extends across the entrance, leaving a passage less than 200 feet wide. The inner harbor is almost a mile long and three-tenths of a mile across at its widest breadth, reaching a depth of about six fathoms. The shoreline measures two and four-tenths miles. At low tide, broad mudflats line the north and west shores of the bay, while gravel beaches and the sand spit predominate at the entrance. Crescent Creek flows into the bay at its north end and Donkey Creek enters from the northwest.<sup>i</sup> Gently sloping hillsides, once covered with dense forests, rise from the harbor in a natural bowl.

For thousands of years, Native Americans built their homes along the shore of the harbor. In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the sheltered harbor and abundant natural resources began attracting Euro-Americans. Predominant immigrant groups were Croatians, who launched the local commercial fishing industry, and Scandinavians, many of whom established farms and small businesses. Adding to the mix were other European immigrants, along with an influx of families from the American Midwest. As in other parts of the Puget Sound region, logging companies cut down the peninsula’s old growth forests, some of which were left in a natural state to grow back while others were replaced by small farms. Sawmills were present on the waterfront until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, family commercial fishing operations dominated the waterfront and developed as the community’s major industry, along with related boat building. Ferries and small steamers delivered passengers and goods to and from nearby islands and the mainland.

In a regional context, the peninsula’s development was slow. This was due primarily to isolation from the mainland and a dependence on boats, which continued until 1950 when the Narrows Bridge linked the peninsula to Tacoma. In recent decades, Gig Harbor’s population has burgeoned with an influx of retirees, commuters, and vacation dwellers. This has brought substantial commercial and residential development as well as a host of recreational and tourist amenities. In response to increased development pressure, the City Council and the Harbor History Museum have worked together with residents to preserve the community’s unique heritage. The entire waterfront area has been designated as a Historic District and significant strides have been made to interpret and preserve historic sites within the district.

Many factors have come together to give the city its unique character. In the following overview they are interwoven into three broad contextual themes: cultural retention and assimilation; transportation - the movement of people and goods; and the environment. The overview is

structured chronologically and divided into five periods each of which had a distinct impact on the physical development of the community: A Change in Worlds (Pre-contact - 1882); Early Development (1883 - 1912); Industrial and Commercial Development (1913 - 1929); Depression Era and World War II (1930 - 1945); and City Charter and Bridge Era (1946 - 1960).

### **A Change in Worlds and Settlement (Pre-contact - 1882)**

The Gig Harbor area is the ancient homeland of Puyallup, Nisqually, and Squaxin Indians, who lived in clearings near the shore. Vast tracts of forest covered the surrounding hillsides. The waterways served as a transportation system that linked the S'Homamish People of South Puget Sound with each other and with the Salish People to the north. The tribes led a nomadic lifestyle for much of the year, traveling by canoe and setting up camp to hunt deer, fish for salmon, gather berries and roots, and preserve food for the winter months.

During the winters, tribes moved to their villages, where they gathered in the longhouse and slept in smaller outbuildings. In the warmth of the longhouse, elders passed down ancient stories, often through traditional songs and dances. Younger generations learned about the history of their people and their traditions of living wisely with the earth and with each other. Women taught girls to prepare food, to make clothing from soft inner cedar bark and from animal skins, and to weave intricate baskets with traditional designs. From the men, boys learned to carve canoes and ceremonial masks from cedar, and to build shelters for their winter villages and summer camps. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the natives' way of life was threatened by an influx of newcomers.

In 1792, Captain George Vancouver, leader of a British expedition, entered the Strait of Juan de Fuca to chart new territory. The captain dispatched a party under the command of Lieutenant Peter Puget to head south into waters that they named Puget Sound. They missed the harbor entrance, but at Wollochet Bay on the southwest side of what is now known as the Gig Harbor Peninsula, they met local people and traded buttons and beads in exchange for clams.<sup>ii</sup>

In 1833, the British Hudson's Bay Company established the first non-Native settlement at Fort Nisqually, north of what later became Olympia. The fort was just 15 miles from the S'Homamish village of Twa-wal-kut (meaning trout), which was located on Gig Harbor at the mouth of Donkey Creek. Native people from hundreds of miles around came to the fort to trade furs for steel tools, iron pots, and other goods that were new to them. While contact seems likely, there is no reference to Twa-wal-kut in surviving Hudson's Bay Company records.<sup>iii</sup>

Discovery of the small harbor was documented in 1841 when a United States exploring expedition, commanded by Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, made its way to the Pacific Northwest. One of the expedition's ships, the Vincennes, charted the waters of south Puget Sound and left a legacy of names, including Commencement Bay, Point Defiance, the Narrows, and Gig Harbor. The latter was named for the captain's gig, a longboat that was used to explore small bays. In his journal, Captain George Sinclair described Gig Harbor as "an excellent little bay." He noted, "A number of canoes came off from which we procured an abundance of salmon."<sup>iv</sup>

In 1846, Great Britain relinquished its claim to Puget Sound and negotiated a treaty with the United States that established the current Canadian/American border. Oregon Territory extended along the Pacific Coast to California. In 1853, United States President Franklin Pierce signed the act that created Washington Territory north of the Columbia River. In the same year, lines were drawn to establish Pierce County with Steilacoom as the county seat. As the first incorporated town in Washington Territory, Steilacoom's population grew to 100 residents in the next five years.<sup>v</sup> (The county line between Pierce and Kitsap Counties extends through the horseshoe-shaped harbor, consigning the northeast shore including the sandpit to Kitsap County. The City of Gig Harbor is in Pierce County and does not include the Kitsap County portion of the shoreline.)

By this time, the Native American population had been ravaged by diseases that were new to them including smallpox, tuberculosis, measles, and syphilis; in addition, the introduction of alcohol severely impacted their lives. But the most significant upheaval may have come from the Point Elliott Treaty. At the insistence of Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens, Puget Sound tribal leaders gathered at Mukilteo on January 22, 1855, to sign the treaty that ceded their homelands to settlers, and which required them to move to reservations where the United States government guaranteed them a place to live. Many Native people on the Gig Harbor peninsula moved to the Puyallup Reservation, but some stayed in their homeland, which at the time remained unclaimed by settlers.

In 1867, three fishermen - Samuel Jerisich, Peter Goldsmith, and John Farrague - rowed a boat from British Columbia down Puget Sound, where they discovered the sheltered harbor and decided to stay. Jerisich and Goldsmith were Croatian,<sup>vi</sup> and Farrague was born in Spain. From Gig Harbor, Jerisich rowed his boat back to Vancouver Island to fetch his Indian wife Anna Willets and their daughter Caroline - the first of their eight children. At age 25, Sam had married Anna, who was ten years his junior. Initially, the Jerisich family built a cabin near the sand spit on the east side of the bay, only to learn that the area was a military reserve. (The reserve was never developed for military purposes, and eventually opened for settlement.) The three founding fishermen then filed claims on the west side of the bay near Donkey Creek and Twa-wal-kut. The Jerisiches brought milled lumber from Olympia to build a cabin, dock, and smokehouse for salmon. In addition, they purchased a machine from Oregon Ironworks to render dogfish oil, which was in demand as a lubricant for sawmill equipment and for fueling lamps. The men rowed seven miles to Steilacoom, and further to Olympia to sell their smoked fish and dogfish oil. There are considerably fewer records of Farrague and Goldsmith than of Jerisich. According to the 1880 Federal Census, all three worked as fishermen. Farrague is listed as a bachelor, and Goldsmith at age 51 is listed as head of household; his wife Millie was a 20-year-old Croatian immigrant, and they had a two-year-old son, born in Washington Territory.

In 1878, Guiseppi (Joe) Dorotich and John Novakovich (shortened to Novak), completed their journey from Croatia. Later, Dorotich married Caroline Jerisich, the oldest daughter of Sam and Anna, and Novak married Zepina Josephine Cosgrove, the Seattle-born daughter of an Irish sailor and his Puyallup Indian wife. (The Puyallups knew her as Cheoka.) They filed claims on the west side of the harbor, and helped build the foundation for the commercial fishing industry, which along with related industries such as boat building would dominate the local economy for a century. Using large cotton nets, the men fished close to home during salmon runs, and rowed long distances in pursuit of the best catch during the rest of the year.

In 1879, an Indian census of the “Gig Harbor Band” counted 46 men, women, and children.<sup>vii</sup> The majority of the population was still Native American. Like the newcomers, they were fishermen, who sold smoked fish and dogfish oil. When a male settler married a local Indian woman, she was no longer required to move to a reservation. Her tribe generally held the marriage in esteem, since it ensured that descendents of the original people would remain in their ancestral homeland. Based on various accounts, interactions between local Indians and settlers were harmonious.

The last Indian village in Gig Harbor was Twa-wal-kut. The site was ideal since clams were abundant on the mud flats, and salmon gathered at the mouth of Donkey Creek, probably because of the mix of fresh and marine water. Records indicate that in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, the village consisted of a 100-foot-long longhouse and half dozen smaller buildings, each of which measured about 30 square feet.<sup>viii</sup> The Twa-wal-kut band maintained its tradition of hosting community gatherings and potlatches, attended by its neighboring Puyallup and Nisqually relatives and by guests from other Salish tribes. The gatherings continued into the 1890s - well into the time of pioneer settlement when tribal groups from as far away as Vancouver, B.C. came by canoe to find seasonal work harvesting hops.<sup>ix</sup>

In the 1870s, residents of Gig Harbor could walk along miles of beach at low tide; there were no roads, and with the exception of animal trails and an occasional Indian footpath, the forested hillsides were inaccessible. People built homes at the shore or near the mouth of Donkey Creek, and depended on rowboats and canoes to get from place to place. The nearest store was in Steilacoom, seven miles away by boat. At this writing, Gig Harbor has no remaining structures built by Native Americans or by pioneers in the early settlement period. The Jerisich family is memorialized in a park on the west side of the bay, where family photographs document the mixing of cultures. The park is located on land once owned by Sam Jerisich and his heirs.

### **Early Development (1883 – 1912)**

In 1883, the long-awaited Northern Pacific Railroad crossed the Cascade Mountains to reach its transcontinental terminus in Tacoma. As the first direct line to the Puget Sound region, it brought a steady stream of settlers and initiated overland commerce and trade. Seattle, which had earlier been dismissed by visitors as a “veritable mud hole,” and Tacoma, previously deemed unworthy of inclusion in the federal census, both became bustling urban centers. The territory’s population increased by nearly 400 percent during the 1880s, and statehood was granted in 1889. The lumber industry’s output multiplied eightfold during the decade with the new state ranking fifth among producers of forest products.<sup>x</sup> Although no rails came directly to Gig Harbor, it participated in the region’s growth with an influx of new settlers and industrial development, including bustling lumber and sawmills.

On the Gig Harbor Peninsula, inland farmers slowly hacked out rough wagon roads to their homes, and logging companies constructed skid roads made of horizontally-laid logs and greased with dogfish oil so that lumber could be skidded downhill to the water. For people on the peninsula, boats remained the essential component in the transportation network. Until the teens, farmers and fishermen used rowboats to get their produce to market in Tacoma. In 1882, Emmett Hunt, a member of a local farming family that had settled near Wollochet Bay, built the

peninsula's first steamboat, the "Baby Mine," to carry mail, freight, and up to four passengers on a route around the peninsula and to Tacoma. The steamer was the beginning of a business operated by the five Hunt brothers that provided boat transportation for the peninsula and neighboring islands, and that connected them with Tacoma markets. In addition to expanded passenger service, cargoes included cattle, hay, potatoes, or bricks from the Fox Island brickyard. Before docks were built, people would wait on the shore to signal a Hunt steamboat, which would dispatch a rowboat for pick up or delivery of passengers, mail, or freight. As their business grew, Emmett and several other members of the family moved to Gig Harbor where Emmett developed rental properties. In 1907, his younger brother Arda built a house on Soundview Drive (it remains extant), which became the office for his Tacoma-Burton Navigation Company. Small steamers, including those owned by the Hunts, proliferated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to serve communities up and down Puget Sound. The unique flotilla, popularly known as the "Mosquito Fleet," was a vital link in the region's transportation system during this period.

Prior to earning his living on the water, Emmett Hunt had passed his teacher's exam and opened the peninsula's first public school in 1878 at Artondale. His father Miles was a Civil War veteran who had filed a 160-acre homestead claim near Wollochet Bay before sending for his wife and their eight children in 1877. They had taken the train from Kalama on the Columbia River to Tacoma, then crossed the Narrows in a large rowboat and walked a mile to their new home. Miles cleared the land for a farm, and established the first local post office, which he called Artondale. The family also donated land and worked with neighbors to charter the local school.<sup>xi</sup>

Another veteran of the Civil War, Joseph Goodman, arrived in Gig Harbor with his family in 1883 on the new transcontinental railroad. He and his wife Rose filed their claim a mile up Crescent Creek where they began farming. Their daughters, Lucy and Anna, rowed back and forth across the Narrows to Stadium High School in Tacoma. In 1885 at age 17, Anna obtained her Washington Territory teaching certificate and opened Gig Harbor's first school, which was housed in the Twa-wal-kut longhouse. The agreement with the tribe stipulated that Indian children would be welcome. Anna's initial ten students included five Jerisiches. In 1885, the peninsula's second post office was established at Young's Landing near the mouth of Crescent Creek on the east side of the harbor.

After four months, Anna's school closed due to lack of funds. But the seed for education had been sown. In 1887, Dr. Alfred Mark Burnham, Sam Jerisich, and John Farrague donated land just south of Donkey Creek for a public school. The community turned out to build a schoolhouse where Lucy Goodman began her 76-year career as a teacher in Gig Harbor schools. A promoter and community builder, Dr. Burnham had served as a physician in his home town, Albert Lea, Minnesota, and later in the Union Army. After the war, he, his wife Rachel and their four children traversed the West until 1884 when they settled in Gig Harbor. Burnham (& Sons) opened the community's first general store in a wooden building (now demolished), located near the mouth of Donkey Creek.

On April 19, 1888, five years after the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in Tacoma, Alfred and Rachel Burnham filed the "City of Gig Harbor" plat. It was located at the north end of the bay on several acres that they had purchased from the three founding fishermen. The plat had streets with the names Front, Harbor, Tacoma, Forest, and Burnham with 50 x 120 foot lots.

Promoting the new city and opportunities in the region, Dr. Burnham persuaded a number of people from Albert Lea to come west. As an incentive, he is said to have offered a free 50 x 120-foot lot to anyone who would build a house and paint it white.<sup>xii</sup>

Some of the newcomers from Minnesota joined forces with Tacomans to found the Gig Harbor Mill Company with Frank Hall from Albert Lea as president. At its height, the Gig Harbor Mill turned out 100,000 board feet a day. It was located at the foot of what is now Rosedale Street, and behind it, laborers bunked in a shack town that sprawled up the hill. The mill had a 450-foot wharf, where lumber was loaded onto ships bound for ports of the world. One ship, the Republic, carried a million board feet of local lumber to Chile.<sup>xiii</sup> A shingle mill operated near the Gig Harbor mill, and Prentice Shingle Mill was at the head of the bay. But local mills of the era were short lived. The worldwide economic panic of 1893 curtailed foreign markets. The Gig Harbor mill went into receivership and was forced to close. Nothing remains of the mill structures today.

On June 28, 1888, two months after the Burnhams' filed their plat, Joseph and Caroline (Jerisich) Dorotich, John and Josephine Novak, and Sam Jerisich, all Croatian immigrants, platted their own town site just northwest of the mill on the harbor's western shore. They purchased the 30-acre site from another Croatian, Nikola Janovich, before he returned to his homeland. Although they were fishing families, they named the plat Millville for nearby lumber and shingle mills.<sup>xiv</sup> That year, the Dorotiches built their house beside the shore, which although remodeled, survives as of this writing.

Two years later, two additional plats were filed at the head of the bay a short distance east of the City of Gig Harbor plat. On August 22, 1890, new residents Henry W. and Adeline J. Woodworth platted "Woodworth's Addition to Gig Harbor City." The eight square-block plat is bounded by Peacock Hill Avenue NW on the east and Vernhardson Street on the north. The next day on August 23, 1890, the Artena Land and Improvement Company filed a plat for the "Town of Artena." It is bounded on the west by Peacock Hill Avenue NW and extends south from Vernhardson Street to the waterfront.

Although Gig Harbor remained sparsely populated, the filing of these plats marked the beginning of a demographic pattern that would shape its neighborhoods. From early on, people of western and northern European ancestry tended to settle in and around Burnham's plat and in neighborhoods at the north end of the bay. They were predominantly loggers, merchants, farmers, carpenters, and boat builders. Scandinavians were often farmers in the old country. In Gig Harbor they established small farms and dairies on the logged off hillsides that overlooked Millville and the west side of the harbor and also in the Crescent Valley area that extends northeast from the harbor. They shipped berries, fruits, homemade jams and jellies, poultry, eggs and dairy products to markets in Tacoma, at first by rowboat and later by ferry or steamer.<sup>xv</sup>

There was also a small but steady stream of Croatian and other Slavonian immigrants to the area. Like the Scandinavians, they were largely young people, who had escaped difficult economic straits or mandatory conscription in their homeland. They embraced the dream of America with hope for a promising future for themselves and their families. The Croatians tended to settle in and around the Millville Plat where they established small subsistence farms to provide for their families. Using skills that they brought with them from their homeland, most of them became fishermen and/or boat builders. Commercial fishing and related industries would dominate the local economy and the rhythm of life in the community for more than 100 years.

Fishermen worked the local waters and then headed north to the San Juan Islands. Early fishing boats were large rowboats with four oarsmen on each side. Until the 1910s, fishermen often banded together and hired a steamboat to tow their long string of rowboats north for trips that sometimes lasted as long as six weeks. One or two of the fishermen's wives accompanied the men to serve as cooks in their camp.

Croatians are credited with introducing purse seining to Puget Sound. The style of fishing requires long seine nets that hang vertically in the water with weights on the bottom edge and floats along the top. The net is set in a large circle to entrap fish. Then a cord that runs through the bottom edge is pulled, cinching the net into a purse. After pulling heavy loads of fish into the boat, they delivered their catch to large tenders (auxiliary ships operated by fish processing companies or cooperatives) which in turn delivered the catch to canneries. Early fishermen were paid by the number of fish, instead of by the pound.

Croatian fishermen in Gig Harbor built their houses and netsheds near the water. In their yards and on adjacent lots, men and boys mended their large cotton seine nets, then dipped them in tar for waterproofing, and spread them out to dry. In the off season, the nets were stored in the netshed. Fishing was a family business, where women played a significant role doing laundry, cooking, and serving meals and coffee to the crew. At this writing, there are several fishermen's houses that date to this early development period.

Beginning in November, 1892, the Methodist Episcopal Church held services on a barge anchored at the head of the bay. The next year, Dr. Burnham donated land on the hillside at the head of the bay, and others contributed goods and services to build Gig Harbor's first church. (The building, now demolished, was later moved to provide a site for Union High School.) Family names of original parishioners include Peacock, Johnson, Teachman, Hiss, Young, Carlson, Rust, Hammerlund and others.

Other church groups organized and met in members' homes or temporary venues. Civil War veterans formed a local chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and their wives formed the Women's Relief Corps. Schools, churches, and the GAR Hall, which was surrounded by ten acres of picnic grounds (corner of Harborview and Soundview Drives), became centers of social and civic activities.

The sole surviving service organization from this era is the Ladies' Fortnightly Club, founded in 1907 by "Mrs. Franklin Secor, Lucy Goodman, Mrs. Axel Uddenberg, Mrs. Ed Patrick, Mrs. Ernest Magoon, Dora McKee, Elise Jacobson, Amanda Carlson, and Mrs. Brittan." The club's initial mission was to serve social and educational needs of its members, but it quickly expanded to address social welfare issues in the community. In 1908, the club opened the community's first library, which it maintained for 27 years. In 1909, the club joined the State Federation of Women's Clubs which gave its members a voice in state and national political issues.<sup>xvi</sup>

By the early 1900s, John and Josephine Novak owned the former Indian village site southwest of the mouth of Donkey Creek. In 1909, they leased part of it to Charles O. Austin, who brought lumbering back to Gig Harbor. When he built the mill, Austin preserved at least one Indian

dwelling, which he used for storage. Logs could be floated close to the mill on the flat tideland. The C.O. Austin Mill employed up to 34 men and was seen as a sign of Gig Harbor's returning prosperity at the time that it was built. For 43 years it produced custom wood products such as cedar planks for boat builders, fruit boxes, and shingles.<sup>xvii</sup>

Throughout this early period, boats continued to be the primary mode of transportation. Front Street (now Harborview Drive) was a narrow dirt road where horse-drawn vehicles coped with mud and ruts. In the 1880s a trestle bridge was built across Donkey Creek, connecting what is now Harborview Drive with North Harborview Drive. The passenger ferry and other steamers made three stops in the harbor: Young's Landing on the east side of the bay in Kitsap County; the dock at the head of the bay (now Peninsula Yacht); and People's Dock near the foot of Pioneer Way. Families who lived by the bay had their own docks and boats.

Along with Front Street, other wagon roads included Carr's Inlet Road (now Rosedale Avenue) which ran east across the peninsula to the community of Rosedale, and Wollochet (now Pioneer Way) which ran southwest to Wollochet Bay. Kitsap Avenue (now Peacock Avenue) ran north from the head of the bay to Kitsap County. Mabel Shyleen, a Norwegian immigrant, and her husband Nils homesteaded on the Wollochet Road hillside, overlooking the bay, where they established a berry farm. A diarist, she described taking the road to Crescent Valley in 1911 to visit friends:

*We went a long distance and then came to the corduroy [log road]. To say  
It jarred us is putting it mildly . . . the farther we went, the worse the road got. . .  
No sheet of water loomed up in the distance, nothing but woods, woods, woods.  
Not a house or a sign of a living thing. I guess we would have been going yet  
had not something dreadful happened . . . when we struck a mud-hole [sic] which  
did not appear to be any worse than the rest of them, but we found out it was a  
good deal worse, for horse, wagon & all sunk down to a depth which was really  
alarming. I told Julia [Jerisich] to get out, and I stood up and encouraged the  
horse all I could; after a good deal of struggling he managed to pull us out. . . .<sup>xviii</sup>*

The community's first business district was located at the head of the bay along Front Street (now North Harborview Drive); it included a post office, a general store, and Frank Scott's livery stable, which catered to farmers who brought their horse-drawn wagons from Crescent Valley and the back country.<sup>xix</sup> Although the livery stable is gone, the Scott house still stands at the intersection of Peacock Hill Avenue Road and North Harborview Drive. In 1907, Axel Uddenberg, his wife, and their six children moved to Gig Harbor, where he opened a meat market and a second general store on the main floor of the family's new three-story home (now demolished) which was just south of the ferry dock. (Uddenberg, a former merchant and seaman, was born in Stockholm in 1855. He and his growing family immigrated to Tacoma in 1890.) Photographs from the period show only a few houses on the hillside above the commercial area. Among those that are extant are the 1892 Queen Anne style Charles Hess House, which may have been originally built as a hotel, and across the street from it, the modest 1892 George and Jessie Bale farmhouse.

To the southwest of this early commercial district, the sprawling C.O. Austin Mill is clearly visible in photographs. Today, all that remains from the early days of the enterprise is the Austin family home, which was moved across Harborview Drive and substantially altered for use as a gift shop. Further south, along Front Street and the waterfront, historic photos show a number of houses, several of which survive today. Remarkably consistent in form and detailing, these dwellings were built by Croatian immigrants who fished for a living. The buildings are characterized by a two-story front-gable form, vertical massing, narrow double-hung windows, and a full-width porch.

This area had commercial establishments distinct from those at the head of the bay. In approximately 1911, Axel Uddenberg purchased land beside People's Dock from Sam Jerisich's widow, Anna. On pilings next to the wharf, he built a hay and feed store that faced the water, and the West Side Grocery. Axel handed over management of both of the stores to his 16-year-old son Bert, and competed with him for business from his store at the head of the bay. While altered, the buildings survive today as the Tides Tavern. Prior to this time, the few commercial buildings in this area were located along Front Street in the Millville area. They tended to be simple wood frame buildings with gabled roofs and false fronts; surviving examples are St. Peter Brothers Grocery and Feed (later Stanich Grocery Store and now a deli) and Novak's general store (now the Harbor Peddler, a gift shop).

Another small neighborhood developed as a recreation community on the narrow beach south of the harbor entrance and across from Point Defiance. Families from Tacoma built modest cottages on stilts, which kept them above water at high tide. At this writing, there are 13 cottages on the beach, nine of which date from this early period. Deteriorating pilings are all that remain of the shop where Henry Maloney built and sold wooden rowboats for decades.

The village remained rugged and isolated throughout this period. The 1911-12 *Polk Directory to Pierce County* lists only 50 residents in Gig Harbor with occupations that include a physician, loggers, fishermen, a blacksmith, a barber, and a postmaster. Business listings include a brick manufacturer, drugstore, grocer, general store, real estate and notary office, sawmill and the "Skansie and Barovich plant." (The Skansie Ship Building Company was founded in 1912). There was also a newspaper called *County Home*, and a handful of churches. Leander Finholm had moved to Gig Harbor as manager of the cooperative Island Empire Telephone & Telegraph Company which was founded shortly after the turn of the century. (Leander and three of his siblings were Finnish immigrants who had settled in Olalla as strawberry farmers and leaders in the Olalla Berry Growers Association.) In addition, the community was served by a daily mail boat/passenger ferry from Tacoma.<sup>xx</sup>

At the end of the period, the community consisted of two residential/commercial areas, one near the head of the harbor; and the other, a Croatian fishing village on the west side of the harbor. In between them was C. O. Austin's mill. A third much smaller area was the recreation community on the isolated beach south of the harbor entrance. Farms were established, primarily by Scandinavians, on the hillsides above the harbor's western shore and northeast of the harbor in the Crescent Valley area.

## **Industrial and Commercial Development (1913 - 1929)**

The community grew rapidly between 1913 and 1929 with the introduction of automobiles and gasoline-powered boats that revolutionized transit on both land and water. Two distinct “downtowns” developed around the little settlements at the head of the bay and on the west side. The character of the waterfront changed with the construction of bustling shipyards that produced fishing boats and ferries, expanded ferry docks to serve automobile ferries, and a proliferation of fishermen’s docks and netsheds. The *Polk Directory* of 1915-16 numbers the population at 700.

The number of social organizations increased dramatically. Two church buildings that survive at this writing were constructed during this period. Oscar and Anna Gustafson donated land at the foot of Pioneer Way and other parishioners helped raise funds to build the Presbyterian Church, which opened in 1913 near the foot of Pioneer Way. Early trustees included Nils Shyleen, Arthur Constable, and William T. Wilkinson. Today the building has been substantially altered, but retains its original setting, massing, and orientation to the street.

The next year, St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Church was erected on Rosedale Street. Its founders included Nick Castelan, Andrew Gilich, Peter Skansie, John Ross, and Theresa Sweeney. Families of Croatian and Irish descent worked together to found and build the church. Today it is the historically intact centerpiece of a modern school and church complex.

In 1912, the four Skansie brothers who had emigrated from Croatia founded the Skansie Shipbuilding Company, located near the foot of Pioneer Way. At the time, fishermen were beginning to make the transition from oar to gasoline power, and larger boats that could take advantage of the new technology were needed. The Skansies reportedly built the first gasoline launch for seine fishing on Puget Sound.<sup>xxi</sup> While some of his brothers resumed commercial fishing careers, Mitchell became head of the shipyard which employed 25 to 30 workers. Located on the waterfront at the foot of what is now Pioneer Way, the shipyard featured a massive gable-roofed boat barn with open ends where workers built boats then slid them into the harbor. Between 1912 and 1930, Skansie produced more than 100 highly-rated vessels, most of them purse seiners. Typically, the seiners were some 60-feet in length with a cabin, captain’s quarters, and galley, and below-deck quarters for the crew. Today, the Harbor History Museum has a 1925 Skansie-built seiner, the *Shenandoah*, as a featured exhibit that is widely visible from Harborview Drive and from the water. The *Shenandoah* was donated to the museum by Tony Janovich, a local commercial fisherman who wanted to preserve the story of the fishing fleet for future generations. At this writing, the boat barn also survives, along with a workshop and a small office building that have been adapted to other uses.

In the late teens, Conrad Anderson left his job as a foreman of the Skansie Ship Building Company to open his own shipyard near the foot of Stinson Avenue. (Anderson’s buildings burned down in the late 1940s when his successor, Art Glein, rebuilt the shipyard including the boat barn and family home that are extant as of this writing.) With larger, fuel-powered vessels, Gig Harbor’s commercial fishermen developed their fleet into one of the most successful on the West Coast. Local fishermen plied the waters to fish for salmon and herring from California to the San Juan Islands to the Bering Sea.

In Scandinavia and in most of eastern and western Europe, people had a tradition of forming cooperatives to market their produce and share costs and benefits of insurance, utilities, and processing. Immigrants brought these traditions to the Pacific Northwest, where they envisioned a future that would ensure them a decent share of their proceeds and that would enable them to avoid selling through custom houses and other middle men.

In time more than 30 percent of local fishermen joined the Fisherman's Packing Corporation, a cooperative headquartered in Anacortes. Lee Makovich, a Croatian immigrant and a fisherman from Gig Harbor, served a term as C.E.O.<sup>xxii</sup> In addition, local fishermen frequently contracted with Nick Bez, who had come to Gig Harbor as a penniless immigrant fisherman, and who had worked his way up to become the owner of cannery companies up and down the West Coast, including P. E. Harris Company, the largest cannery operation in Alaska. After moving to Seattle where he had an office in the prestigious Dexter Horton Building, Nick and his wife Caroline (Dorotich) kept their family home on Harborview Drive where they maintained close ties with friends and relatives.

Local poultry farmers joined the Washington Co-operative Farmer's Association and built a large packing house on Co-op Boulevard (now Harborview Drive) southeast of the intersection with Wickersham Road (now Soundview Drive). Boats delivered hay and feed to the warehouse and picked up eggs and poultry which made their way to regional and national markets.<sup>xxiii</sup> Today, the packing house survives, but has been converted to another use. Local berry, fruit, and dairy farmers joined similar organizations such as the Co-operative Fruit Growers Association or the Washington Co-operative Creamery. Farmers also joined Farmers Mutual Insurance Company of Enumclaw, now Mutual of Enumclaw, which provided fire and disaster insurance.

In the late teens, the automobile was making a significant impact on the community. The Spadoni brothers opened a dirt works business at the intersection of Rosedale and Stinson Streets (known as Spadoni Corner), and began shoring up rutted dirt roads with gravel and pavement. Bert Uddenberg, Axel's son, opened the Gig Harbor Garage and Ford dealership at the corner of Stinson and Harborview. And in either direction along Harborview Drive other garages, car dealerships and gas stations opened, including three shore-side fuel depots (Union Oil, Standard Fuel, and Shell) that served both marine and land customers.<sup>xxiv</sup>

In 1918, Pierce County renovated the dock at the head of the bay to put the first car ferry on the Gig Harbor run. Prior to the 1920s, the neighborhood at the north end of the harbor was sparsely populated with about a dozen homes and a few small businesses along North Harborview Drive. A major catalyst for development was the formation of a local school district. The Methodist Church congregation had moved its building (still extant although significantly altered) to a site on North Harborview Drive, so that Union High School could be built on the property. In 1921, peninsula youth no longer had to cross the Narrows to go to Stadium High School in Tacoma. Union High School later published a yearbook with the name PERCLAWAM, an acronym for the grade schools that fed into it—Purdy, Elgin, Rosedale, Crescent Valley, Lincoln, Arletta, Wauna, Artondale, and Midway. Union High School became Goodman Middle School, then today's Harbor Ridge Middle School. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the historic building was torn down and replaced.

Below the school, North Harborview Drive experienced rapid development. In 1921, Gig Harbor's first paved road segment covered a short stretch of the street from the ferry dock to Burnham Avenue and the wooden bridge that crossed Donkey Creek.<sup>xxv</sup> Axel Uddenberg built two buildings on the north side of the street. He moved the grocery and meat market from the family home into one of them, while the other housed the post office. E. M. Trombley bought the *Bay Island News*, changed the name to *The Peninsula Gateway*, and set up shop in the pioneer schoolhouse at the foot of Peacock Hill Avenue. As editor, he chronicled local events for the next 30 years. In 1922, Theresa Sweeney, an Irish immigrant who was the mother of four and a realtor, built the one-story Sweeney Building on the harbor side of the street which housed a general mercantile, a dental office, a pharmacy, and a restaurant. There were a few other business and residential buildings to the southwest on North Harborview Drive, including an auto repair shop and a sheet metal shop.

In 1922, Hubert Secor leased the Scarponi family's garage, which was located a few doors southwest of Uddenberg's market. Secor purchased a White Motor Company bus to begin a motor vehicle stage service that included a ferry ride between Gig Harbor and Tacoma. In addition to passengers and express shipments, he branched out to haul freight.

The commercial buildings and transportation services became the nucleus of Gig Harbor's first "downtown." The Uddenberg buildings along with others from the era are extant; however the Sweeney Building has been demolished. A small residential neighborhood developed northeast of the ferry dock which is located at the foot of Peacock Hill Avenue NW. One of the extant waterfront houses was built by John Naterlin, a Croatian fisherman; the dock remains, but the family's netshed has been demolished.<sup>xxvi</sup>

In 1923, the ferry landing was moved to People's Dock at the foot of Pioneer Way beside Uddenberg's store on the west shore. By this time, the Skansie brothers had pioneered the use of diesel engines in ferries, which were being built at the shipyard. Mitchell Skansie bought an early ferry company, the Washington Navigation Company. In the mid 1920s when Pierce County could no longer afford to run ferries, it let contracts to independent operators including the Washington Navigation Company which provided service on several routes in south Puget Sound. Skansie-built ferries included the Vashonia, the Skansonia, the Elk, the Defiance, and others.

Gig Harbor's second "downtown" developed just west of the ferry dock around the intersection of Harborview Drive and Pioneer Way. In the mid 1920s, Andrew Gilich and Austin Richardson erected their two-story Peninsula Hotel, which included commercial storefronts and office suites on the second floor. Across the intersection, Frank Novak built the two-story Novak Hotel. Several other commercial buildings were erected, including the town's first movie theater, the Empress (later renamed the Roxy), and its first bank building. Carl Nielsen, who had a banking background, formed the First National Bank of Gig Harbor in 1927. With the exception of the theater, most of these buildings survive as of this writing. The GAR Hall (now demolished) was moved from its site across Harborview Drive from the ferry dock to a lot on the northwest side of Pioneer Way just above the business district, where it served as a meeting place for public events and for several organizations, including the Episcopal Church. The community continued to turn

out at the field abutting the old GAR Hall for baseball games between Gig Harbor and neighboring teams. Popular indoor gathering places included nearby restaurants, the movie theater, the bowling alley at the Uddenburg/Thrash building on Harborview Drive, and the waterfront dancehall between the two downtowns, near the site of today's Peninsula Historical Museum. (The site was developed by the Gig Harbor Peninsula Historical Society and became the museum's new home in 2008.)

Along with commercial development, residential growth between the two downtowns boomed. By the late 1920s, a number of Craftsman-Bungalow style houses stood among the older turn-of-the-century vernacular dwellings along Harborview Drive. Similar new residential development extended up the hillside along Dorotich Avenue (then First Street), Novak Avenue (then Second Street), and Stinson Avenue, and along Rosedale Street. The houses on the hillside were typically on large parcels with space for subsistence farming. Anton Barach, who like most of his neighbors in this area was of Croatian descent, had a large loganberry farm that extended up the hill behind the family home on Harborview Drive. Local women and children found seasonal work picking berries and processing them for shipment at the nearby berry barn. A significant number of the Croatians were commercial fishermen, as evidenced by numerous netsheds along the waterfront.<sup>xxvii</sup> Many of the houses, netsheds, and commercial buildings from the era survive today.

Between the two downtowns, the Austin Mill continued to dominate the waterfront near the mouth of Donkey Creek. Northeast of the mill on the shore side of Harborview Drive, the newly incorporated Peninsula Light Corporation opened its first office in 1924 in a wooden building that had served as a dancehall.<sup>xxviii</sup> The corporation demolished the building and replaced it with a brick structure in the 1960s, now part of the Harbor History Museum's property. Organized as a co-operative, Peninsula Light continues to provide electric power and public utilities to the area.

As the west side's downtown developed, Harborview Avenue and other streets were graveled and eventually paved. In 1928, the ferry dock was moved again to accommodate increased traffic volumes and larger vehicles. The new dock was southeast of the harbor entrance at the end of newly extended Harborview Drive, which included the former Co-operative Boulevard. Passengers from Tacoma could transfer from the ferry to an 11-passenger bus and continue on to Bremerton.<sup>xxix</sup>

### **Depression Era and World War II (1930 – 1945)**

In late 1929, the boom turned to bust with the collapse of the American stock market. After less than five years in business, Gig Harbor's bank was liquidated in 1933. Out of work people took menial jobs, if they could find them. Many went into the forests to pick wild huckleberries which they sold to canneries for three-cents a pound. Historian J. A. Eckrom writes, "the Depression was actually more brutal for the townsfolk than it was for farmers," who had produce to trade and enough to eat. A network of social and benevolent organizations did what they could to help the down and out. They included the Ladies' Fortnightly Club, the Lions Club, the Grange, churches, and the newly organized local chapter of Masons.

But even during the hard times, the local community saw progress. Philip R. Peyran, a holly farmer, established his Hollycroft Farm and packaging warehouse (now demolished) on the bluff east of Soundview Drive. Peyran invented a preservative dip that enabled holly to be shipped far and wide. He helped neighboring farmers to join him in the lucrative business, making Gig Harbor a major national producer of Christmas holly.<sup>xxx</sup>

In 1931, a phone cable was run across the bottom of The Narrows, connecting Gig Harbor with Tacoma. There had been local telephone service of a sort since the advent of the Island Empire Telephone & Telegraph Company at the beginning of the century. In 1931 under Leander Finholm's leadership, the phone company upgraded to new switchboards with party lines and moved into its own building on Harborview Drive near the intersection with Dorotich Street. As banks failed, a number of local families withdrew their money to invest in new houses, and a few launched new businesses. Young Johnny Finholm (Leander's nephew), who worked for Axel Uddenberg in his market on North Harborview Drive, bought the store and changed its name to Finholm's Market. He installed frozen food lockers, which helped neighbors without refrigerators survive the Depression and the rationing of World War II.<sup>xxxii</sup>

In the 1930s C. O. Austin developed a distinctive form of rustic log construction that featured peeled logs arranged vertically. The light-weight logs made it possible for one person to erect the exterior walls of a building. An Austin mill building subsequently moved across Harborview Drive from the mill site is one of several surviving examples of the construction type in the area. Another is the small Amateur Garden Club's clubhouse which club members persuaded Austin to build on a member's neighboring property at the north side of the mill. The design was probably inspired by the rustic architecture that was popularized by the National Park Service in lodges and parks during preceding decades, variations of which were used in WPA, Civilian Conservation Corps and other federal relief projects around the country. The Austin mill log construction is found in church, residential and commercial buildings in Gig Harbor and the region.

As in other communities, people in Gig Harbor wanted low-cost diversions from the hard times. Clarence E. Shaw, a local sign painter, artist and insurance agent, created a whimsical new sporting event that made people laugh and that drew national attention. Shaw began training his chickens to run for food when they were ten days old. As they got older, he put them on an 80-yard track where they ran for fun. He launched his famous Rooster Races, complete with the miniature town of Roosterville that he built around the track; local merchants sponsored individual racers which wore numbered "jockey shirts;" and pretty Roosterettes in short-skirted uniforms helped out. In 1938, Shaw and his show were flown to New York City where the race in Madison Square Garden was featured on National Public Radio.<sup>xxxii</sup>

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration created the New Deal to help stem the economic crisis. One of the programs, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), gave men jobs in public works projects. Washington State Governor Clarence Martin acted quickly to allocate state funds to meet the WPA's requirements for participation in local projects. In Gig Harbor, workers were hired to construct City Park located at the mouth of Crescent Creek at the northeast shore of the harbor. The park features typical WPA rustic construction with trails, a

playground area, and a log picnic shelter and restrooms. In addition, there were building projects at local public schools.

On June 24, 1938, *The Peninsula Gateway* announced, “Narrows Bridge Project Assured” with a Public Works Administration grant of \$2,700,000. The balance of the \$6.4 million cost was to be repaid in tolls. The bridge provided work when it was desperately needed. In November 1939, 50 men labored on it daily, and by 1940, daily employment was up to 263.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The Narrows Bridge that linked the Peninsula with Tacoma was the third largest suspension bridge in the world. It was hailed as a turning point for the peninsula, ending generations of isolation for residents and heralding desired economic growth. For the military, it connected McChord Air Field south of Tacoma to the Navy shipyard in Bremerton - an important link, considering the war in Europe. Opening day celebrations were on July 1, 1940. The *Kalakala*, the flagship for Black Ball Ferries, participated in the grand opening. With more than 1,000 passengers on board, she passed under the new bridge to make the last symbolic run between Tacoma and Gig Harbor.

The Narrows Bridge was barely into its fifth month of service on November 7, 1940 when it twisted and collapsed in a windstorm. With the nickname “Galloping Gertie,” it became notorious as the most dramatic bridge failure in history. Gig Harbor and the peninsula were consigned to another decade of isolation from the mainland. Auto ferry runs, which had been cancelled in anticipation of the bridge, were resumed. The newly organized Washington State Ferries managed all of Puget Sound’s routes. It purchased three ferries from Skansie’s Washington Navigation Company to resume service to Gig Harbor, and retained Skansie’s Shipyard for their maintenance. The passenger ferry dock just south of the harbor entrance with an off ramp to Harborview Drive had been dismantled with the opening of the bridge. The newly re-established ferry runs stopped at Point Fosdick, just south of Gig Harbor.

World War II brought an end to the economic crisis with jobs for everyone. Gig Harbor responded to the crisis, as did other communities, making sacrifices to support the war effort. Young men and women enlisted in the armed services. Local ship builders built barges and tugboats for the armed services.

In the 1930s, Gig Harbor experienced moderate residential growth. New homes replaced some of the vacant lots and farms on Ross Avenue and Rosedale Street, where most of the owners were commercial fishermen. Although it too had experienced some development, the hillside at the head of the bay still had tracts of second growth timber and remained sparsely populated. Residential lots were usually large enough to accommodate vegetable and berry patches, fruit trees, a small chicken house, and sometimes a rabbit hutch or a cow, all of which helped sustain families during the Depression and the wartime crisis. As in the past, major industries were fishing, boat building, farming, and wood products. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1929 shows several netsheds owned by Croatian fishermen along the west shore of the harbor and a few at the north end, including the Naterlin shed just east of the public dock (now Peninsula Yacht). In addition to the netsheds and fishermen’s homes on the west side of the harbor, the waterfront included the prominent three-story Axel Uddenberg residence along with other dwellings at the north end, three ship building plants, C.O. Austin’s Mill, three marine fuel depots, warehouses and docks, and commercial buildings in the community’s two downtowns.

South of the harbor entrance was the passenger ferry dock with the on-ramp from the east end of Harborview Drive. South of the dock at the base of the bluff were netsheds, and at the base of the bluff, Maloney's rowboat building site and the isolated beach community of summer homes.

The only significant farm in the predominantly Croatian neighborhood on the west side of the harbor was Anton Barach's loganberry farm. Because of their commercial fishing heritage, most Croatians chose to live near the water. Other farmers, many of whom were of Scandinavian descent, established fruit, poultry, and dairy farms on the gentle hillsides that rose around the harbor and in the Crescent Valley area that extends northeast of the bay. Philip Peyran's Hollycroft Farm and other holly farms were located southeast of the harbor near what is now Soundview Drive.

### **City Charter and Bridge Era (1946 – 1960)**

The aftermath of the war brought a population influx to Gig Harbor. A new Narrows bridge was planned, and offered opportunities for work. Local citizens began to ponder more seriously the question of cityhood. Gig Harbor had no organized fire department, no sewer system, no public drinking water supply, and no police force of its own. Yet some objected to organization of a city, fearing the expenses of government and burdensome taxes. In January 1945 shortly before the armistice, a fire roared along North Harborview Drive, consuming several commercial buildings and the Standard Oil marine distributor's cluster of tanks. As in many previous fires, a bucket brigade was no match for the flames, which consumed everything in their path until Coast Guard firefighters arrived. The fire sparked a post-war receptiveness to ideas that were taking shape.

On June 29, 1946, after an initial failed attempt, residents passed a proposal that enabled Gig Harbor to incorporate as a formal fourth class city. At the same time, voters were given a blank ballot with instructions to write in one name of their choice for mayor, and five for city council. Harold Ryan, the city's first dentist, was elected as its first mayor. The first city council members were Charles O. Austin, sawmill owner; Emmett Ross, commercial fisherman; Tony Stanich, manager of Stanich Grocery which was founded by his commercial fishing family and catered to fishermen, enabling them to buy on credit and pay at the end of fishing season; grocery and meat market owner John Finholm; and Keith Uddenberg who had followed his grandfather into the grocery business and launched the Thriftway chain that would become the largest privately held supermarket chain in the state. The first city judge was H.R. Thurston, an electrician and builder who did most of the electrical work on boats at local shipyards.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

At first, the council met in the GAR Hall on Pioneer Way and Tarabochia Street. As in the past, Gig Harbor continued to benefit from the generosity of spirited citizens. Judge Thurston gave the new city sites for a well and pump house, and for a public library that was built on Judson Street.

Historian Jack Evans writes, "To construct the new water system, the city borrowed \$120,000 of which they received \$116,500 after unearned interest had been deducted. With this they constructed a 250,000 gallon water storage tank, dug the well, laid the entire pipe and still ended up with a \$3,000 surplus from the loan. Hookup fee was \$40, and the monthly water assessment

was minimal. This water corporation was in the black after only ten years in spite of the fact that in these early years there were no tax assessments against the businesses or the residences.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Jack Bujacich, who served as mayor in the 1960s, recalls that the first city council acted quickly to give streets their current names. Prior to the city's incorporation, Harborview Drive had been Front Street; Rosedale Street had been Carr Inlet Road; Pioneer Way was called Wollochet; and Ross Street was named Wauna. Bujacich recalls that there was a swampy area between Rosedale and Dorotich Streets. As another example of contributions from spirited citizens, the Skansie brothers underwrote the cost of filling it in and it was subsequently developed into a residential neighborhood. Other projects followed, such as bulkheads to shore up the foot of Rosedale Street.<sup>xxxvi</sup> In 1949, the mouth of Donkey Creek was buried and the old trestle bridge was replaced with fill and a roadway.

In the late 1940s, the state financed construction of the second Narrows Bridge with a \$14 million bond issue. When the bridge opened in 1950, tolls were set, as in 1940. The bridge operated as a toll facility for 13 years, until the bonds were retired. The volume of traffic that crossed the bridge was greater than anticipated and led to an influx of people, and change for Gig Harbor. The city prepared for growth.

Nick and Rose (Ancich) Tarabochia were members of a commercial fishing family and entrepreneurs. In expectation of a population boom, they filed a plat on land that they owned on the north side of Pioneer Way near Harborview Drive. They purchased surplus wartime housing in Tacoma and barged it to Gig Harbor, where they prepared foundations on the new street that they named Tarabochia Street. The development included two small apartment buildings and a number of single family dwellings. In addition, the Tarabochias moved two of the buildings to Judson Street for commercial purposes. The modest rental housing filled a need, especially for laborers and fishermen who came to Gig Harbor to work in the boatyards and on fishing boats.

In 1946, in tandem with the city's incorporation, Carl Nielson organized the city's second bank, the Peninsula State Bank, which included among its directors Mayor Harold Ryan. The bank started in a small rental building on Harborview Drive, and then built its own brick building at the corner of Judson Avenue and Pioneer Way in 1958. Because the bank had obtained its money from local citizens, it always recycled the money locally. The bank was acquired by Puget Sound Bank in 1981, and is now Key Bank.

In 1955, State Savings and Loan Association became Gig Harbor's second financial institution and the first savings and loan. With J. Kenneth Hore as manager, the S & L opened in the building on Harborview Drive that had housed Gig Harbor's defunct original bank in the 1920s. The branch prospered and in time became the top lender of the State Savings branches. In the early 1960s, Bert Uddenberg Jr. accepted the position of manager. The S & L took pride in recycling money back to local citizens and helping the community grow. As of 1990, Uddenberg could boast that the institution had never had to foreclose on a local residential construction loan.

The Narrows Bridge ushered in an era of development that brought a steady influx of retirees and suburban commuters to Gig Harbor. In 1953, Keith Uddenberg and his partner Lee Thrash

constructed the Peninsula Shopping Center on Judson Street which included a new Thriftway supermarket, several shops, and a post office. Within two decades after the bridge's opening, the population doubled from 803 to 1,611.

In 1948, the former ferry landing at the north end of the bay became the city's first marina, the Peninsula Yacht Basin. It would take more than a decade for another marina to appear on the west side of the harbor, but Peninsula Yacht heralded the beginning of Gig Harbor's development as a popular recreation community.

In 1950, Ed Hoppen and Don Harder bought Art Glein's newly built shipyard and house. (Glein had bought the yard from the original owner Conrad Anderson, whose buildings burned down in 1948.) Hoppen developed a "kit" version of the Thunderbird, a plywood, hard-chined, 26-foot racing/cruising sloop designed by Ben Seaborn. Today, more than 1,400 Thunderbirds are registered around the world. The boatyard and property were purchased by the city following a remarkable grassroots preservation effort in 2004 as an education and activity center to preserve local boat building heritage.

One of the first businesses designed primarily for tourists was Skandia Gaard (Scandinavian Village) on Peacock Hill above the head of the bay. In 1956, Wilbur Johnson and Olaf Thortensen purchased the William Peacock homestead which included the large 1889 farmhouse, a chicken house, a barn and other outbuildings. The new owners converted it to a Scandinavian museum with cultural exhibits from Scandinavian countries, a gift shop, a coffee shop, and an outdoor pavilion for folk dances. Lessons were offered in both Scandinavian and Croatian dancing. Skandia Gaard attracted tourists from Tacoma and farther afield.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

### **Epilog (1961- Present)**

In the mid 1970s, Judge George Boldt issued a decision from the federal bench that would have a lasting impact on Gig Harbor's commercial fishing industry. In *U.S. vs. Washington*, the Department of Justice joined Indian activists to sue the State on behalf of tribes who had been denied fishing rights granted by treaties. The Boldt Decision affirmed the right of Indians to "half the catch" (an ambiguous phrase that gave rise to extensive legal debate) and allowed Indians to fish off their reservations. The federal government stepped in to set guidelines for management and enhancement of fisheries in the Northwest. After numerous appeals, much controversy and negotiation, the Boldt Decision was upheld. Over the years, the Indian share of the catch has approached their allotted 50 percent. Many non-Indian fishermen have suffered economically as a result. The Gig Harbor fleet dwindled, as younger generations pursued other lines of work.

Despite the restrictions, some of Gig Harbor's non-Indian fishermen have followed in their fathers' footsteps to continue the business. A few are descendents of Croatian pioneers and their Indian wives and have benefited from the law because of their Indian heritage. Now retired in his 90s, Don Gilich is the grandson of John and Josephine Novak. Josephine was half Indian and known by the Puyallups as Cheoka. Because she married a white man, she and her heirs were able to stay in their ancestral homeland. Now retired from fishing, Don Gilich serves on the Puyallup Tribal Council.

As of this writing, most of Gig Harbor's working waterfront has given way to recreational use; however, remnants of the community's commercial history are found in 17 extant historic netsheds, some of which remain in use, operated by third and fourth generation Croatians who continue to fish commercially. The picturesque waterfront attracts residents and tourists who enjoy walks along Harborview Drive where the Harbor History Museum has installed interpretive signage. The museum has moved into a prominent new building located on the former site of C.O. Austin's mill. Detailed walking tour brochures are readily available. The City has established a series of mini parks along the waterfront, most of which commemorate people and events in local history. Several historic buildings have been converted to use as restaurants, gift shops, and antique stores.

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<sup>i</sup> J. A. Eckrom, *An Excellent Little Bay: A History of the Gig Harbor Peninsula* (Gig Harbor: Gig Harbor Historical Society & Museum, 2004) 14-15

<sup>ii</sup> Murray Morgan, *A Narrative of Early Tacoma and the Southern Sound* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979) 6-14

<sup>iii</sup> *ibid.* Eckrom, 19

<sup>iv</sup> *ibid.*, Morgan, 44-55

<sup>v</sup> Robert E. Ficken and Charles P. LeWarne, *Washington: A Centennial History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989) 22

<sup>vi</sup> Croatia is a south Slavic nation, formerly a larger kingdom. Croatians include people who share linguistic and cultural traditions, and who immigrated from Croatia, Montenegro, Dalmatia, and the Croatian part of Austria. According to Census records, Samuel Jerisich immigrated from Kotor, Montenegro.

<sup>vii</sup> *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1879* (Washington, D.C.) Government Printing Office, 1879) 148

<sup>viii</sup> Marian Smith, *The Puyallup-Nisqually* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940) 11

<sup>ix</sup> Holmass, Adella, "Serenity Marks Picturesque Gig Harbor," *Tacoma News Tribune* (July 12, 1964)

<sup>x</sup> *ibid.* Ficken, 34

<sup>xi</sup> *ibid.* Eckrom, 45

<sup>xii</sup> Jack R. Evans, *Little History of Gig Harbor* (Seattle: SCW Publications, 1988) 2

<sup>xiii</sup> *ibid.* Eckrom, 50

<sup>xiv</sup> Land Title Co. of Pierce County, *Index of Recorded Plats in Pierce County Washington* (1966), 38

<sup>xv</sup> *ibid.* Eckrom, 144

<sup>xvi</sup> Harbor History Museum. On-line exhibit, [www.harborhistorymuseum.org/WPFortnightly.html](http://www.harborhistorymuseum.org/WPFortnightly.html). Also, Sandra Haarsager, *Organized Womanhood: Cultural Politics in the Pacific Northwest, 1840-1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997) 355

<sup>xvii</sup> *ibid.* Eckrom, 99

<sup>xviii</sup> *ibid.* Eckrom, 85

<sup>xix</sup> "Gig Harbor Stirs up Latent Forces," *Tacoma Daily Ledger* (May 12, 1912) 47

<sup>xx</sup> *Polk Director to Pierce County* (1911-12), 50

<sup>xxi</sup> Caroline Neal and Thomas Kilday Janus. *Puget Sound Ferries: From Canoe to Catamaran*. (Sun Valley, CA: American Historical Press, 2001)

<sup>xxii</sup> Markovich, Nick. Interview with Mildred Andrews, November 2008.

<sup>xxiii</sup> R. C. Bell and W.D. Buchanan, *Partners in Progress: The Story of the Washington Cooperative Farmers Association* (Washington Cooperative Farmers Association, ca. 1976),

<sup>xxiv</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Gig Harbor, Pierce Co., WA, Oct. 1929. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1929.

<sup>xxv</sup> Gladys Para, "Paved road impeded progress of wildlife," *Peninsula Gateway* (November 5, 1986) 2-C

<sup>xxvi</sup> *ibid.* Sanborn. 1929

<sup>xxvii</sup> *ibid.* Sanborn, 1929

<sup>xxviii</sup> Gladys Para, cool district, light company share roots," *Peninsula Gateway* (January 21, 1987)

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- <sup>xxix</sup> *ibid.* Eckrom, 131
- <sup>xxx</sup> “Hollycroft Gardens, Inc.,” *The Peninsula Gateway* (July 4, 1947) 1
- <sup>xxxi</sup> “Finholm’s Market: A Peninsula Tradition,” *The Peninsula Gateway*, (Jan. 1995), special feature
- <sup>xxxii</sup> *ibid.* Eckrom, 152-4
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> *ibid.* Eckrom, 164
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> *ibid.* Eckrom, 206
- <sup>xxxv</sup> *ibid.* Evans, 6
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> *ibid.* Ancich
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> *ibid.* Eckrom, 119