

# HAT ISLAND HISTORY

By Robert A Brunjes

*I hope you enjoy this updated history of our Island. We owe a debt of thanks to so many people who have helped make our Island paradise what it is today. I would like to dedicate this history to one of them, a wonderful man, world renowned Photographer and friend to many of us on Hat Island. BOB BENSON - You are gone, but the "Studio B" will always be in port.*

At Latitude 48 Degrees, 1 minute North, Longitude 122 Degrees, 19 minutes, is an Island formed by a retreating glacier some 13,500 years ago. The melt water pouring from its jagged edges gave up glacial materials forming deposits of clay, silt and gravel layer upon layer, until a land mass was formed. A smaller area of land was connected by a land bridge to a larger area now known as Camano Island.

As the glacier melted, fresh water remained around this land. Finally the ice mass in its steady decline moved beyond the Olympic Mountain Range, and Sea water rushed into the area, filling what is now Puget Sound. The water level rose and the land bridge vanished under water forming a small island. Over the next 13,000 years, rain, wind, tide, and storms continued to gnaw at this island reducing it some 30 percent to its current size of 1 and a ½ miles long by 1/3 of a mile wide and approximately 440 acres. With a mild climate and an average of 30 inches of rain per year (10 Inches less than the mainland only 3 nautical miles away) various forms of vegetation took hold, including Cedar, Alder, Douglas Fir, and Maple.

Protruding from the Southeast edge is a ledge, devoid of foliage forming a polygon. Below is a protruding beach area. Future generations would look at this area and be reminded of a hat with the extended beach as the brim. Not only was an Island formed, but a name that would stick "HAT ISLAND".

The earliest name for our Island was Native American (CHUH-CHUH-SUL-LAY). Tribes from Mukilteo and South Whidbey apparently felt that ghosts were connected with the island and called it "the place where little one lived." The term was said to refer to a Native American story that the western shore of the island was a good place for clams and fishing. A group from a local tribe was encamped there sunning themselves, when the bank suddenly caved forward and killed all but two. From that time on, the Island was a place you visited, but never stayed.

In the spring of 1792, Captain George Vancouver, with his two ships, Discovery and Chathen, began the first exploration and charting of Washington waters. On a Wednesday, May 30, 1792, Captain Vancouver was anchored off a point of land at Mukilteo, now known as Elliot Point. From his log: "weather is deteriorating" (so what else is new?) "weigh anchor late afternoon and head for island. Anchored in 20 fathoms of water, hard sandy bottom, near halfway between the island and the point that divides the two openings," (Camano Head). His botanist A. Menzies, mentions " heavy night rain fall" and "some dogs had been left on shore on this Island whose yellings were heard several times in the night" Vancouver mapped the area and named many of the prominent points: Gardner Bay for Vice Admiral Sir Alan Gardner, Port Susan for his wife,

Whidbey Island for Sailing Master Joseph Whidbey, but the little island that he anchored off, that the natives were afraid of, remained nameless for another 50 years.

In June of 1841 an American expedition arrived to chart and explore the area. The exploration was led by Captain Charles Wilkes, who would be responsible for the official charted name of Hat Island; Gedney Island. The big question “who was Gedney”? Wilkes indicated that he named it for a friend. Historians believed that it was Jonathon Haight Gedney, inventor of wooden cogs, used in the cotton gin and a horse drawn plow for digging potatoes. However, the Department of Navy recently released Wilkes’ memoirs and we now know that he named it for a fellow officer that he served with 10 years earlier, Lt Thomas R. Gedney. Gedney would become famous in the capture of the slave ship “Armistead” which became a major Hollywood movie.

Wilks lost 2 of his 5 ships. He was actually a Lieutenant and had promoted himself to Captain, and many of his discoveries were technically challenged. At the end of the voyage, he was court martialled, but in the bureaucracy of government the name was allowed to stand.

When the Northwest became a U.S. Territory, part of Hat Island became public land when a University grant was established in 1866. Our island was first homesteaded by one Peter Goutrie, better known as French Peter. He was a Hudson Bay Company Fur Trader. His original homestead was purchased by the Government in the 1860’s to establish the Tulalip Reservation. French Peter, also known to the Tribes as “Stu-hi” meaning that when ever they bartered with him their prices were *TOO HIGH*. He took his new found wealth (\$2,000) and moved to Hat Island. He built a cabin on the Northeast side and established a small farm and apple orchard.

In March 1873, he was granted a homestead on the island. Apparently he had the reputation of hoarding his wealth and always paid in cash. He lived quietly on the island with his native laborer, known as “his man John” for 12 years. On November 18, 1875 French Peter was found shot in the head, draped over a drift log on the beach. His pistol was still in his belt. His faithful dog was standing guard. The speculation became that he had been murdered for his money which was hidden somewhere on the homestead. The murderer was never found. He was buried “10 rods west of the cabin” (in the area of the clubhouse). Newspapers in Seattle and other areas embellished the story. Treasure hunters searched for the fortune for the next 50 years, No treasure was ever found.

Goutrie’s possessions were sold by a public magistrate. The homestead was sold for \$525.00 to John H. Davis. His faithful dog yielded \$1.13. From the Seattle Evening Dispatch, Nov 30<sup>th</sup>, 1875 “A most brutal and Fiendish murder occurred on Hat Island.....” A poem was included:

“There was an old man called French Peter  
Who was shot gunned from less than a meter.  
While few were offended  
That his life had been ended,  
Some were vexed that it wasn’t done neater.”

Another commercial enterprise was created in 1870; the Hat Island Sand & Gravel Co. Edward Barrington purchased part of the Public Land Grant and sold it to the Gravel Co. This purchase became the first reference to the name Hat Island. The Gravel Company

built bunkers and a wharf to transport gravel to the mainland. John Davis, with support from Amos Phinney of the Port Ludlow sawmill established a logging camp on the Island and logged the virgin timber. Many of the stumps are still visible from the logging operation.

Even in its earlier days, the island seemed destined to become a vacation hideaway. As early as July 20, 1893, the local newspaper ran an article on Hat Island. Six gentlemen, led by John Hilton visited the island on the steamer, Beaver. Hilton had come to this area in 1863 and now owned 270 acres of the island he intended to log, "which includes a pretty grove of Maples at the South end." The party located the Goutrie cabin described as "a deserted shack and outbuildings in a ravine near the Northern Beach." Also "Indians were near the spot enjoying a clam bake. The feasibility of the island as a town site, as a picnic resort, a pleasure park or hunting reserve was all discussed." The group left it to Mr. Hilton "to leave his mark upon the scene of the early exploits of Port Gardner Jack."

***HAT ISLAND FOLK LORE "Grampie, who was Port Gardner Jack?" I have not been able to find out much information. He may have been involved in French Peters demise.***

It was right after the turn of the century that the first development of the island occurred by Dan Duryee. He opened the Everett view tract selling cabin sights on the sand spit on the southeast end of the island. Also, before and during WWI, a Mr. Schmitz tried to promote a resort and built a dance hall on the Northern end, but it didn't pay.

After WWI the Gravel Company prospered under the guidance of Henry J. Kaiser. In addition to the wharf and bunkers, a cook shack and bunk house were built to support approximately 15 employees. He removed much of the gravel from the West side of the island which was used in his road construction and cement business. Just think. There is a little bit of Hat Island in many of Puget Sounds major developments and roads.

August Greyerbiehl in 1918 acquired 153 acres of the land logged by John Davis in settlement of a debt. He found that it offered a delightful spot for a summer home, which he built on the foundation of the dance hall. Goutrie's old apple orchard supplied more fruit than their family could eat. An old fisherman was squatting on the property and had started a cabin. He was kept on as caretaker. The Greyerbiehls built a few cabins for rent and installed a wharf.

Starting after WWI, the Island received sporadic ferry service from the Whidbey Island Transportation Co, This service was provided to the Sand and Gravel Co., South Beach summer residences and a few hardy souls who attempted to make Hat Island home. A flag was raised at a small pier and the Beeline would divert from its normal Everett to Langley run. The Beeline, commanded by Captain Bart Lovejoy, was converted to a car ferry after WWI and was steam powered. The Beeline provided this service thru the 1920's and early 30's.

An Indian woman and her children lived on the island for approximately 5 years living off the land. They were evicted by the Sheriff to prevent an adverse land claim.

With in a year or two of the passage of the Volstead Act (Prohibition) Hat Island was rumored to be the center of illegal distilleries and a drop point for rum runners. From the Everett Herald April 25, 1923, charges were filed against two men "*following their arrest*

*on Hat Island Monday when Deputy Sheriffs made one of the largest seizures of moon shiner's equipment ever made in the Northwest. The four stills, coils, and equipment taken in the raid of Hat Island by Fred S. Plymale and three Deputies after an all day search Monday, drew many curiosity seekers to the county yesterday, who wished to view what was described as the most complete equipment ever taken. The four stills taken by officers is said to be capable of providing in the aggregate, 75 gallons of moonshine whiskey daily. Chief Plymale declared that Hat Island was a rendezvous for moon shiners and was an historical place now."*

In 1926 Greyerbiehl leased his land to a Mr. Engle who attempted to establish a Fox Farm. The Fox Farm failed after 3 years. (Too bad he didn't raise rabbits). August Greyerbiehl died in 1936. The summer home was destroyed by fire and the wharf was destroyed by a winter storm

As part of the July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration, Everett held a marathon swim from Hat Island to Everett July 2, 1927, 17 "Crack Swimmers" started the course at 9:30 am with strong ebb tides and tricky cross currents The course was completed by a medical student in 4 hours. An Everett lady finished second in six hours. No word on what happened to the other 15 contestants. Heck of a way to earn \$400.

The population of the island blossomed In the late 20's and early 30's. The Sand and Gravel operation was in full swing. One or two Cedar shingle mills were in operation Also, there were a number of boat repair facilities located on the northeast and west side of the island. There was a long line of beach cabins and shanties facing Everett. These were very self-reliant people, many taking refuge as the depression hit. The population varied from 100 to 150. As the business died, the population dwindled and finally the Government moved to evict most of the remaining population just prior to 1940.

The Island contributed to the war effort during WWII. Air squadrons from Paine Field in Everett used the north end for bombing practice. In fact a P-38 Lightning Fighter crashed off the south end of the Island and was pulled off Into deep water by the Army Corp of Engineers.

### ***HAT ISLAND FOLK LORE "Grampie did anyone live on Hat Island during the WAR?"***

***When I was collecting information a man from Snohomish answered my add in the paper. He was afraid of dieing in the war, so he hid in one of the cabins facing Everett. His family brought him supplies from time to time. He was afraid to die in the war, but hid out on a bombing range until the war was over. Unbelievable, but he swears it's the truth.***

After WWII the Greyerblehl family sold their holdings to Dan Duryee Jr., whose father had developed the south end of the island. He In turn sold to Carl and Robert Fankhauser. A fire swept the Island In July of 1949. The fire was believed to have started from a camper's fire on the beach at the north end of the Island. Local people indicated that it burned for over a day, before Everett officials decided that the blaze threatened 18 summer cabins on the south end of the island. Twenty two firefighters from Sultan were transported to the Island by the Coast Guard to put out the fire. Signs of the fire were still present when lots were purchased in the 60's.

During the late 40's, 18 cabins existed on the south end of the Island. This grew to 30 in the 1950's. A fishing resort was developed by the Ryder Brothers including bait pens and a store. Hat was becoming known as an excellent fishing area. However, the resort may be better known by fishermen for drinking, than fishing. It became a tradition in the 50's for many Everett families to boat to Hat around Christmas time, build a beach fire, and hunt for Christmas trees. Andle's Resort provided 5 low cost one room cabins with wood cook stoves on the northwest side of the Island, north of the pilings, from the late 1940's to the mid 1950's.

People were still enjoying the fruit from Goutrie's orchard. The only fresh water sources were from springs in the side of the bluff. One was located on the north side and one on the south side which was apparently some type of Japanese bath. In 1961, John Macintosh recognized the tremendous development potential of the Island, and the Hat Island Riviera was born. He and a group of investors purchased from the Fankhausers, 367 acres of the island. They formed the Hat Island Development Co in January 1961 and offered stock at \$100.00 a share to raise funds for the island's development. The prospectus offered potential investors a 10-to-1 return on their investments. The financial business plan estimated a 3 million dollar net income after development. They intended to spend \$80,000 on advertising and less than \$55,000 on water and utilities for the Island. The entire Island from beach to hill side was sub-plotted into 956 lots. The grand opening was on May 18, 1962 and the land rush was on. For \$2,495.00, \$250.00 down and \$25.00 a month, you could become part of the Hat Island Riviera "one of the finest deluxe recreational resorts in the Northwest". Along with their full page ad campaigns and magazine articles, they offered other incentives to get people to come. Free boat ride, free breakfast or lunch at Taylor's Landing (now Ivars). If it was raining when you came to the Island they took \$50.00 off the purchase price. If you came in the morning they gave you the "early bird" special of \$100.00 off.

As you arrived, a salesman would rush you into a car for a tour of the island. Many of the lots had wood plaques with names marked on them indicating that they were already sold. Better Hurry. The island was to have a 9 hole "medal play golf course, replete with water hazards and well sand trapped," and 1,800 ft runway for light aircraft, modern marina with moorage for 100 boats, and dry storage for 400 more. A boatel (motel for boaters), a theater, restaurant, gas dock, general store, yacht club, deep lake (the duck pond) ideal for swimming and trout fishing, tennis court, power and water to each lot, rustic barbeque shelter, and a swimming pool were all planned. Why, even celebrities were jumping on the wagon. Gisele MacKenzie of "Annie get your Gun" fame, purchased a lot and Burt Parks came to inspect property. Better hurry. Many did just that. Some purchased lots sight unseen and to this day still own them, but have never been to the island. It was the ultimate sales promotion, the "selling of a dream." The promotion continued as division after division was opened up. Work on the golf course began in late 1964. The 9 hole, par 35 course was designed by Bill Teufel. The 40 acre' course was built by Contractor, Ray Coleman, at a cost of \$25,000. The developers claimed they spent \$90,000. It opened in June of 1966. We had a pro-shop located in the trailer adjacent to the course. Al Embrey was hired as our first and only golf pro. He was also the greens keeper for the first 2 years of the course's existence.

***HAT ISLAND FOLK LORE Grampie, “What prayer do you say on the first tee before playing golf?” It is the Hat Island mans prayer. I AM A MAN, I CAN DO BETTER IF I TRY, MAYBE NOT. AMEN***

The island had two vessels providing transportation during development. Art Monk designed a passenger only ferry for the development company. The original design called for a metal hull. This was switched to wood for cost considerations. The boat was built in 1962 by Weldcraft Steel and Maritime Inc. It was 50 ft long, with a 38 ton displacement, twin diesels, capable of carrying 100 passengers, built at a cost of approximately \$50,000. It was christened the “Holiday” and went into service in 1962. It was expected to have a 10 year life. Forty-four years later it is still providing dependable service. The ferry originally provided service from Mukilteo, however, due to wind conditions and winter storms it was switched to Port of Everett 13<sup>th</sup> street ramp. A private car ferry, the “Acorn” was also providing service via the 13<sup>th</sup> street ramp. A special temporary island ramp was built in Everett in 1966 and installed at the Island. The “Acorn” built in 1924, was 65 ft x 25 ft powered by a 75 hp diesel and provided daily car/passenger service to the island. There was always a mad rush to see who was going to get their car off the island at the end of the day. Another milestone was reached when phone service was brought to the island by the creation of the Hat Island Phone Company. Early requests for phone service were denied by the Public Utility Commission as a burden to the rate payers of Whidbey Island. However with persistence, the first underwater cable was put into service on August 8, 1961, later converted to microwave, and back to underwater fiber optic cable as technology improved. Our little private phone company caused quite a commotion when some creative entrepreneurial skills were used to implement one of the first discount long distance calling services. This did not sit well with “Ma Bell”. A newspaper article of the day states, “A telephone had been installed on a tree, in the name of an executive of a large equipment company doing business nationally. Employees of the firm make numerous long-distance calls, all charged to the Hat Island credit number.” It also states, “Federal Investigators are looking into the operation of the tiny Hat Island Phone Co., which has only about 15 customers. The company gets a share of the charge, even though its facilities aren’t involved. This income amounted to more than \$40,000 in 1970.” The old statement about death or taxes applied in this case, and jail was the price paid in the end, the little Hat Island Phone Co. prevailed against Ma Bell, and our phone service continues. Our club was officially incorporated as the Hat Island Yacht and Golf Club, Inc. March 11, 1964. All lot owners became members of the club, a \$500.00 value according to the developers. Mr. Dean Geddes was named the first Commodore. The A-frame used as the sales office also became the club house. They had a dress code which included jackets in the dining room and cocktail lounge after 8 p.m. and dry bathing suits with suitable tops. Under the clause for termination of membership, was included conduct unbecoming of a lady or gentleman. In the early days the club had social activities, but no cruises. Dues were turned over to the development company. The Hat Island Riviera was soon to become the Hat Island Reality. The first generation of lot owners did not rush to build vacation homes, but waited for others, speculating on the land values. The first 6 years of stagnation brought the development company close to

bankruptcy. Only 15 homes had been built. The water system was not complete. The power system consisted of one well worn, 96 kilowatt caterpillar diesel generator installed in 1965, and two additional 50 kilowatt generators installed In 1967. None were suitable for continuous operation. The golf course was built on leased land from the Gravel Company. The Marina Hotel development fell apart. The marina and break water were in, but had a sizeable mortgage. We had 9 miles of gravel roads, the duck pond, and our rustic barbeque shelter. The Hat Island Development Company did go chapter 11 and we were on our own. Land was changing hands at the rate of 200 lots per year and the county started tax sales on some lots.

Islanders who wanted to keep the dream alive, formed Hat Island Country Club, Inc. on June 30, 1967 and changed the name to Hat Island Community Inc. on October 25, 1968. Two organizations played important roles in holding the Island community together. The Yacht and Golf Club drew the lot owners together, providing a social focus for the community. The Community Inc. was presented with the awesome task of completing what the development company had not and finding the money to keep the organization going. The development company turned over its assets to the community, including roads and land, the "Holiday" passenger ferry, a bus, pick-up, jeep, dump truck and a promise of \$101,000 (to complete the utility system) as additional land was sold. In June of 1969 the island acquired a military landing craft LCM (landing craft materials) renamed the Elsie M, so that we could continue to get materials to the Island. In 1969 the community operated \$10,000 in the red, and were behind in taxes and bank loans. 85 lot owners did not pay assessments, which increased to \$50. The club first started publishing the Mad Hatter as a monthly newsletter and also purchased the A-frame as our official club house. 1970 became the year of the volunteer. People were only going to build if services were available. Power for the Island was intermittent at best. Power was provided from Friday night until Sunday afternoon, if the generators didn't quit. Sometimes the first 12 hours on the Island were spent fixing the generators. The water system needed to be completed. 2400 feet of distribution lines were added with volunteer labor. In order for the Island development to succeed a plan had to be developed. In 1971 a survey of islanders was completed. With the help of the University of Washington, a community development study was published. This became the action plan for the future. The community enforced a no gun, no hunting policy. That policy was rescinded in order to save the Island grievous harm from *Dryctolagus Cuniculus*. Herds had been attacking homes and the golf course was in extreme jeopardy. A hunt was organized and sponsored in part by (would you believe) the State Big Game Council and Snohomish County Sheriff Department. To give them an even break only shot guns or bows and arrows were used, The hunts took place in May 1971 and March 1972. Teams of skimmers were organized and a barbeque roast of the fallen foe was planned. At the end of this conflict, better known as the "Rabbit Wars," the enemy appeared to still have the upper hand. However, a truce was signed and the island returned to peace and quiet.

**HAT ISLAND FOLK LORE "Grampie how did the rabbits get to Hat Island?"**  
**There was a man called Clem who raised rabbits for a living. He got into trouble with the IRS for not paying taxes. The government put a lean on this property.**

**Rather than give up his rabbits to a fur company he put the rabbits in his boat and set them free on Hat Island where they have multiplied ever since.**

The community continued to ask for next year's assessments to pay this year's bills. Property was still changing hands at the rate of 100 lots per year. The Holiday was out of service for much of the winter for maintenance and money issues. On the plus side, the yacht and golf club paid its mortgage off in March 1972 and the club was free and clear. The golf course was purchased from the Gravel Company. The down payment was collected by an innovative plan called Club 100.

Golfers paid \$100 for unlimited golf play. The course was now ours.

A local utility district was being promoted to bring electrical power service to the island. The Shoreline Management Act went into effect in 1971 limiting beach building possibilities. There were challenges to the Shoreline Management Act but to no avail. However, the county and state left Division H on the southwest side and Division N as the only possibility for beach building sites. The gravel pit was purchased in 1973 from Glacier Sand and Gravel Company.

A bridge to Hat Island. Yes, In 1973 our Governor Dan Evans proposed a bridge connection between Everett and Whidbey Island by way of Hat Island. The shallow water between Everett and Hat could reduce the overall construction cost compared to the Mukilteo Clinton route. I guess they forgot to tell the Governor that the water between Hat and Whidbey is over 500 ft. deep. This started the land speculation again. Quoting an ad "Do you remember what happened to land values on Mercer Island after the bridge.. Buy now before prices soar". We couldn't get daily public ferry service, and now they wanted to give us a bridge. Well the bridge never got past the study stage and islanders stopped barricading the beaches.

The board continued to negotiate for the purchase for the marina and in February 1974 it was decided to the community. Financial problems for the island still persisted. In 1974 things began to look up with electric power coming to the island. All during the summer, Beard Construction was laying under ground power lines throughout the Island. On December 2, 1974, 15,936 feet of 15 Kv 3 phase underwater cable from Mission Beach reached the Island. The "Holiday" brought PUD officials to the island for the splicing ceremonies. The lights went on! The cost was \$350,000 paid for by property assessments. The community began to foreclose on those who did not pay assessments, but turnover of lot owners still persisted, A utility and maintenance garage was built and gas and diesel pumps were installed. In 1976 the community operated in the black for the first time and someone noticed that there were no tax sales that year. Property sales were slower and land values increased.

In the late 70's the marina was improved and expanded and a new bulk head was built to stop winter storms from tearing the docks apart. During the bulk head expansion an entire barge load of rock was lost in a storm. The barge began to take on water and tipped the entire load into the bay.

In the early 1980's the community began to improve the water system. This was done with a lot of volunteer labor, and a \$300 assessment to each lot owner. Old lines were taken out, new wells and pumping stations were built. Two new holding tanks were built in 1982 (150,000 and 160,000 gallon capacity) and 1700 feet of 6" main pipe was installed. Two new wells were drilled in 1986. Now that the island had a dependable



transportation system, a sound financial base, an improved water system, and public power, a new generation of islanders arrived and stayed. A building boom began and continues with over 170 homes built through the 1980's and over 350 homes projected to date.

**HAT ISLAND FOLK LORE “Grampie Do things get stolen on Hat Island?”**

**Well, fire wood seems to be a popular item. The rule is don't ever leave it where you cut it. Not even for lunch. I had a neighbor who only burned cedar. He would drag it off the beach, cut it and split it. One night he left half a cord by the beach. The next morning the wood was gone and his arch enemy who lived on the top of the Island had it stacked by his house. When my neighbor confronted him he said “prove it.”**

**Now my neighbor was a hunter and loaded his own ammo with gun power. He quietly finished cutting his wood that day and took a special piece of cedar home and returned it to the pile on the beach later that evening. A FEW WEEKS LATER HE PROVED IT. The feud continued for years until they both left the Island.**

Our Island autos have always been a curiosity (the Tijuana parking lot). This is best described by a new holiday skipper: “After I had secured the boat I noticed the cars in the parking lot. My first impression was they were all clunkers which were to be dropped in the water to augment the breakwater. You can imagine my amazement when people actually got in them and drove off.” Although the membership in the yacht and golf club dropped, the active members continued to grow with a bonified cruise schedule and activities all year long. The club out grew the little A-Frame and an 800 foot expansion was proposed in November 1976. By October of 1977 permits were approved. It took three years and a lot of volunteer labor to build the extension. A complete remodeling of the interior of the club was done in 1985, 1990, the mid-90's, and 2005. I suspect the hammers will be out in the future to continue the improvements. Fire protection was a major concern for many years. Islanders had come up with pumps mounted on a truck to be used in emergencies The instructions were: if we have a fire on top, drive down to the beach. Why? Because that's where the water is. May 1979 Hat Island registered voters unanimously 18-0 approved the creation of Fire District 27 for the Island. Three Hat Island residents were appointed Fire Commissioners. A recruiting campaign was started for 15 volunteer fire fighters. A 1941 classic pump fire truck was leased from Clearview, also a 1957 Pontiac Ambulance Aid car was donated. A bond Issue was passed in May 1983 to build 40 x 180' fire house which was built later that year. The fire house became home to the fire truck aid car, 6 x 6 utility truck and 2000 gallon pumper. The Fire Bunnies (ladies auxiliary) was formed to support our volunteer unit and has become an important part of community life.

Our Fire Department has come a long way since then. The name of our island has been an issue for a long time. The problem was put before the Washington Board of Geographic Names. There is an island with the official name of Hat Island off Anacortes, Washington. The Gedney name had historical significance. The local populous had always called it Hat and legal property descriptions in Snohomish County used Hat.

Therefore, a compromise was reached September 12, 1980. On all official maps in the future, the Island will be called Gedney Island (Hat).

A large parcel of land was purchased from the Swarm estate. This property extended from the Northwest side of the gravel pit and along the beach up to Div N. It included the Swarm home. The Island took title in Jan 1989, sold the home and recovered half of the purchase price.

**Grampie, Who was Mr. Swarm? Dr Myron Swarm was very active on Hat Island in it's early years and was instrumental in obtaining power from the PUD for the island. He was a professor and scientist at the University of Washington and spent many years in the exploration of Antarctica and has a mountain named after him on that continent.**

In 1989 the community built the tennis court. Materials were purchased by the the board and the complete project was built by volunteers including the cement work. Major storms were a big problem for the marina and a proposal to improve the entrance by a concrete wave wall or log pilings was put to a vote of the community. The least expensive option of log pilings was approved by a narrow margin. A special assessment of \$160 per lot owner was assessed giving us \$136,000 for the project. Many lot owners were upset with the expense and the resulting wall.

Div N joined the community in 1991 after a lengthy battle with developers, government agencies, and the County. It was repotted and joined the community in the spring of 1991 opening up the last area of beach development.

The direction of the island became a very contentious issue in the early 1990's. Many of the original group of owners wanted the Island to stay the same. "no changes, no growth".

There was a large group of absentee owners 200-300) who had purchased in the early 60's. Their property had not increased in value. "not a penny more". The newer owners wanted improved infrastructure and services. The island proposed daily ferry service by Mosquito Fleet. It was voted down by "the committee to save the Holiday". We had a long range planning group that had been collecting data and developing a comprehensive plan, in conjunction with Snohomish County and the University of Washington. The water committee did a projection on pumping capacity vs projected usage and determined that we would run out of water in the summer of 94 or 95. The first RO (reverse osmoses) proposal was was presented to the community. The monthly meetings and annual meetings became very intense affairs. As the result the long range planning committee and the standing committees on water, roads, marina, golf, were eliminated. NO BAD NEWS, NO CHANGES, NO DEVELOPMENT.

Albert Einstein defined insanity as "Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." We put, over time, five wood barges in front of the marina to protect it. All five are on the bottom. In a six year period we had five different island/office managers. Over the same period of time we hired and fired six maintenance guys. Adjusting the deck chairs was not going to keep the "Titanic" afloat. Finally the log jam was broken. In 1995, people getting of the ferry on Friday night were told that the tanks were dry. There is no water. Snohomish County stepped in and placed

water moratorium on the Island. NO NEW BUILDING PERMITS. Things started to look up. A number of long term islanders took control of the board and with the help of new members with professional backgrounds started to move us in a positive direction. The 300 owners who refused to vote for anything started to sell their property to a local island developer who saw the long term potential of the island. The next year we passed the first assessment increase in many years. It was a special assessment of \$85 per lot owner for 8 years to be used for infrastructure improvements. The Marina and water became the main focus. We hired an Island manager who stayed and things started to get done. We formed a new committee to solve our water issue. We had no more fresh water, but were surrounded by salt water. The RO (reverse osmoses) option began to build steam. This is a system of progressively smaller filters, which under high temperature and pressure force the salt and biological out of the water giving you better quality than bottled water. We reduced loss from leakage in the system from 44% in 1998 to 12% in 1999. After correcting a number of problems the county gave us a few additional water permits.

In December of 1999 another special assessment passed to build the biggest RO system in the state. The vote passed 209 to 121 (yes we still had had people who did not want growth), but they were now out numbered. We had \$850,000 to build our RO system which at full capacity could produce 110,000 gal. per day. Gray and Osborne was hired to manage the project.

At the same time we had a few members of the community who single handed built the Island office and rental upstairs. A few volunteers took this project on using a lot of donated money and were there every day framing, siding, roofing. The building was completed in Dec of 1999 at a cost of approximately \$34,000 and is appraised at \$193,000. The office had been located in a trailer at the top of the marina since 1995. It had been located in the Everett Marina before that, and in Lynnwood until 1986 By March 2001 we had a design for our RO, applied for permits and started to build. They were testing the system by Christmas of 2002 and it went on line in March of 2003. The Elsie M (LCM) was built during WWII, and was at the end of its life. We found an LCM-6 built in 1982, wider and 10 feet longer. It was purchased for \$90,000 and modified with a new wheel house and other modifications and was put into service Jan 2002 at a cost of \$140,000 2002 became the year of miracles. The community passed a regular assessment increase by a vote of 230 yes, 98 no. It was the first increase in 22 years. A building boom is underway and the community has created a new long range planning committee to support and protect our Island in the future.

## **THE HISTORY OF OUR ISLAND CONTINUES.**

On a Saturday in the not to distant future, the ferry will pull out of its moorage at Everett. It will head for the island still shrouded in the morning mist and fog, as it has for generations.

On board sitting in a corner of the boat will be a family that no one recognizes. They will have plans for a home under their arm, and a new chapter will begin in the history of an island called Hat!

## HAT ISLAND WILDLIFE

The island has become home to many species of wildlife. Off shore lies one of the most popular fishing areas in central Puget Sound. The south side of Hat and the bar between Camano and Hat are host to King and Coho Salmon. They are waiting for the fresh water scent to trigger their spawning instincts and send them up the Snohomish and Stillaguamish Rivers. In odd numbered years, rods are bent by the extra bonus of a Humpie (Pink) Salmon run.

Port Gardener Bay Is known as one of three crab incubators in Puget Sound. The pots of Islanders are usually full, with Dungeness and Red Rock Crabs.

**HAT ISLAND FOLK LORE “Grampie With all the crab pots out front do people take the wrong pot?” We had a neighbor who kept accusing us of taking the crab from his pot. He drank allot so we just ignored him. One day we watched him set his pots and go home. We waited a few hours and raided his pots and left him a surprise.**

**When he came down to check we all went to the beach to watch. In each pot he pulled was a six pack of Bud. He couldn’t believe his luck. It would have made a great TV ad.**

Our clam beds have been productive since the days of CHUHCHUH-SUL-LAY with a large variety of Butter, Geoduck, Littleneck, Mussels, and Horse clams. Our bird population varies with the season. Nesting pairs of American Bald Eagles, and Red Tailed Hawks call Hat Island home. Cormorants, sounding like kids In a school yard, make the old pilings below the gravel pit their winter resting spot. Herons patrol the water line looking for dinner, and our ever present Sea Gulls buzz the beach in hopes of a free lunch. Summer brings a large variety of birds to nest and feed Including’ Gold Finches, White Crow Sparrows, Warbles, and Humming Birds.

Pods of Orca Whales are spotted from time to time, migrating to their fishing grounds, usually in October and November during the first quarter moon. Even a few Gray Whales have been known to frolic just off the beach in the spring and fall.

Dahl Porpoises, sometimes mistaken for Orcas, are also prevalent. The Sea Lion population continues to grow in the winter months and Harbor Seals are found resting on the barge in front of the Marina

Sea Otters are constantly plotting new ways to invade the Duck pond, home to our White Crested ducks. Our once domesticated rabbit population rounds out our menagerie, adds a bit of color, and provides feed for our Eagles and Hawks.

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