

SILVERDALE - THE EARLY DAYS

A taxidermist lent his name to the expansive bay that laps at Silverdale's shores. In 1841, the American expedition led by Lt. Charles Wilkes explored the area. Dyes Inlet was named after the expedition's taxidermist, John William Dyes.

The area remained virtually unexplored until 1854, when loggers arrived and began operations along the shoreline. The lumbermen soon expanded their operations into the valleys, building roads that ran inland. The logging headquarters were easy to spot, floating bunk houses pulled up to the shoreline. Chinese cooks provided the meals, and women and children often shared the barges with the men.

Then by the 1880's, the lumbering had taken the prime trees. Scandinavian immigrants, lured to the western United States by stories of cheap land, began pulling and burning stumps. The farmers thrived on this fertile and productive land and settled their families in.

These immigrants turned out to be excellent farmers and soon were hauling their surplus crops to Bremerton and Seattle markets. This led to the formation of the Farmers' Cooperative in 1887. The Silverdale Dock became an important center of operations and was soon surrounded by hotels, stores and fraternal lodges.

Some of these historical structures are still standing, including the building that houses the Kitsap County Historical Society's central museum.. Built in 1919, the structure housed Silverdale Sate Bank, with a drugstore and a butcher shop attached. At the

museum today you can see all aspects of Silverdale's history, from geologic formation to Indian artifacts. Pioneer implements, furniture, clothing, toys and a wealth of other materials are exhibited.

Economic depressions have had little effect on Silverdale throughout the years. The farmer's coop provided a livelihood and the young people found employment at the naval shipyard in Bremerton commuting back and forth on the boats of the Mosquito Fleet. Now only a few pilings remain to remind us of this passenger ferry service in and out of Silverdale. Just his past year, the new Silverdale Pier opened at the same location.

The announcement in 1971, that the US Navy would build it's Trident Submarine Base at nearby Bangor caused quite a stir in the community. Some residents sold properties for what they considered an inflated rate, only to watch their neighbors hold on for a year or two and become wealthy overnight. Familiar landmarks began to disappear and family properties were sold. New schools were built and bulldozers made room for housing projects. Silverdale and the surrounding areas began an exciting transition. As exciting perhaps, as when a Swedish woman stepped ashore from a rowboat and looked around the wilderness in the 1880's knowing that this was a very special place.

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