



Mukilteo's Disappearing Pier

by John and Ann Collier

Another relic of World War II is no more. The Ammunition Loading Dock has been removed from the north shore to make way for the coming multimodal ferry terminal. Few will lament the replacement of an engine of war by a facility for peace and prosperity. But all of us should be aware of the significant role played by the pier in the history of Mukilteo.

The massive pier, 100 feet wide and 1500 feet long, was constructed in the early months of World War II in the area northeast of the present Silver Cloud Inn, the site where Crown Lumber Company was originally located.



Four ships berthed at Mukilteo's Ammunition Dock after the conclusion of WWII. Note the size of the dock in comparison to the lagoon in the background, which eventually became Mukilteo Lighthouse Park.

Four ships in the Victory or Liberty class could be loaded at the same time from the two parallel railroad tracks that ran the length of the pier. According to some accounts, Mukilteo was home to the second largest ammunition loading operation in the country.

Along with the pier, a large barracks building was constructed at the intersection of Front Street and Park Avenue. (Used by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration today, this building is also slated to be replaced, possibly at a slightly different location).

Supplementing the personnel housed in the barracks were numerous longshoremen, mechanics, guards, and other workers hired from Mukilteo and neighboring communities. A fleet of Greyhound buses shuttled them to and from the dock to maintain round-the-clock loading operations.

A newspaper account mentioned that Mukilteo citizens could watch from their hillside homes and see tons and tons of explosives being loaded at the huge pier, as much as 75,000 tons during every 24-hour period.

The transformation of the sleepy ferry town of Mukilteo was dramatic, as noted in a newspaper account: "Mukilteo became a boom town. The only thing that worried the regular residents was that the town might go boom."

Dock duty was hazardous. At a time when nearly everyone smoked, men were searched for matches and other potential sources of sparks. Despite the numerous precautions, more than one close call occurred. As Muk-

ilteo's John Moberg recalled: "Steady streams of train cars came and left at all hours of the day and night, carrying all forms of ammo, bombs, shells, and even poison gas and block nitroglycerine down from Paine Field. There was one person killed when, while unloading poison gas canisters, one burst. His name was Mr. Schultz."



Munitions are lined up for loading on the massive Mukilteo Ammunition Dock during World War II. The photograph captures a rare moment of inactivity in that no trains are present and only one ship is moored, on the left. [Photo courtesy of MOHAI]

The new dock really put Mukilteo on the map, even maps in the Soviet Union. Under the Lend-Lease Program, ships from several allied countries docked in Mukilteo. According to Virginia Zahler White, "The ones that attracted the most attention were the Russian ships. The reason for attracting so much attention was the crew members that went for walks around Mukilteo. There were men and women in the group, and they were dressed in warm clothing—

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A Message from our President

I'd like to start with a quote:

"The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well." — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Our 2016 season is off to a great start because of the many volunteers who give their time, energy, and even finances to keep the Mukilteo Light Station and grounds in pristine condition for visitors. Simply put, we volunteer to serve others. We use our talents and gifts to be a blessing to everyone who comes and enjoys everything of which we take care, from the archive displays to the wonderful gardens, the historical ceremonies, and the fun gift shop in the Assistant Keeper's house. I marvel at the number of faithful stewards in our membership.

I was fortunate to participate in the Annual Cleaning Day this year. What a delightful time. Who would have thought that cleaning up spider webs and dead bugs would be that much fun! We had a large turnout, so not only did we have light work from the many hands, we also had lots of opportunities to chat and get to know each other.

I was charged with cleaning "the Garage" (the building between Quarters B and the Interpretive Center), so I got my mop and bucket of soapy water, Windex, paper towels, and vacuum cleaner from Becky and headed over. I had never been in the Garage before. I opened the doors and was welcomed by a great exhibit of Mukilteo's maritime history. Before I started, I had to take in everything: the maps, pictures, narratives, and of course, the large wooden boat, all placed there by caring volunteers. I learned quite a bit.

After that history lesson, my job had much more meaning and purpose than merely dusting and vacuuming. I was becoming more a part of the fabric of the Society. While cleaning behind the old doors and seeing the maps on the wall, I imagined a small child exploring there and seeing a treasure. And then I could see the faces of the visitors as they examined the clothes, buildings, and landscapes from the pictures on the wall. And finally, I even envisioned a craftsman checking out the boat, to get an idea of how he could make one of his own.

And that's just one story from one volunteer. Every one of you who participates in our Society has a story of your own. That's what makes this Society great—all of you working together, side-by-side, to serve our neighbors, our community, and our visitors.

I said that we are off to a great start. Annual Cleaning Day was just one activity. We've already had many volunteers working behind the scenes getting ready for our 2016 season. I'd like to thank every one of you who has spent countless hours in the Gift Shop, Lighthouse, in Quarters A cataloging archives, tending our gardens, coordinating weddings, scheduling school field trips, planning our great Opening Ceremony, programming our monthly membership meetings, preparing Pioneer Cemetery for our annual Memorial Day ceremony, reenacting historical figures, maintaining our assets, and of course preparing, compiling, and organizing all the documents the new Directors and Officers need to help lead the Society!

Even this list is not complete. So, from inside the Garage, I raise my Windex to every one of you to say thank you for being part of the Mukilteo Historical Society.

Don Saul, President ♦

"Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile." — Albert Einstein



MHS Calendar

Thursday, May 12, 7:15-8:45 pm, **Monthly Membership Meeting**, Rosehill.

Saturday, May 21, 10:00 am, **Pioneer Cemetery cleanup**, Pioneer Cemetery.

Monday, May 30, 11:00 am, **Memorial Day Ceremony**, Pioneer Cemetery.

Saturday, June 4, 10:00 am, **Mass Planting**, Lighthouse. ♦

Upcoming Programs

Joanne Mulloy has announced these upcoming MHS programs:

June 9 features Chad Kaiser, lighthouse expert, telling of his experiences with lighthouses and how he became interested in preserving them.

July 14 program to be announced.

August 11 will be our chance to talk with Mukilteo's Pioneer of the Year. Who will be Pioneer of the Year in 2016?

September 8 features Nathaniel Howe discussing the Swiftsure Lightship, which was built in 1904 and is now being refurbished on Lake Union.

Joanne is working to complete the lineup of programs for the year. If you have ideas for a program that you think MHS members and guests would enjoy, please let her know. ♦

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more like we would wear in the winter. On their stroll around Mukilteo they would pick flowers, these were flowers from in people's yards. They thought our flowers were beautiful and they were different than the ones they had in Russia. No yard escaped being stripped of their flowers but no one seemed to care."

When the War Assets Administration declared the pier surplus in 1947, the Everett Port Commission attempted to turn the big dock into a free port. International ships could moor there and store cargo duty free until it could be carried to its point of destination. This effort failed, but the area became useful again to the U.S. Government during the Korean War when the ammunition loading dock was again put into operation. This time, however, the growing number of citizens in the newly incorporated city of Mukilteo objected to the nearby danger. The operation was then transferred to naval facilities in Bangor, Washington.

The recent removal of the abandoned pier is a good thing. Some 7,000 tons of creosote-soaked timber piles—estimated to be about four percent of all the toxic creosote in Puget Sound—are no longer a source of pollution.

The future Mukilteo waterfront will be safer, more productive, and a greater source of employment and recreation. It will also have interpretive signs and artifacts (perhaps one of the old WWII shell casings that scuba divers found in the cold water) as visible reminders of the transformative role once played by Mukilteo's Ammunition Loading Dock. ♦

Mukilteo Lighthouse Gift Shop

Another season has begun and if the number of guests already visiting our light station is any indication, this season could be outstanding.

Traffic in the gift shop has been steady and we have already placed a few reorders of merchandise. It is a fine balance between running out of top items and having them available for Festival Weekend in September.

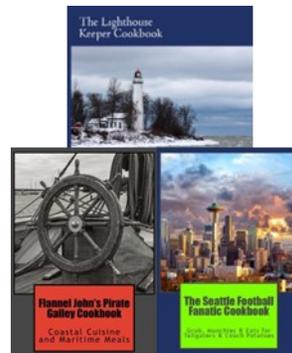
The bestselling mug so far this season is the Potter's Mug from Cape Shore. Due to other popular mugs in stock, we do not intend to reorder this one, so if you want one, you better hurry in.



Another top seller is the Ceramic Stackable Measuring Cup Lighthouse. We tried to reorder this, but it is already out of stock at the supplier.



A line of cookbooks from Flannel John's, located in Oregon, is now available. Titles include "The Lighthouse Keeper Cookbook," "Flannel John's Pirate Galley Cookbook," and other local themes.



The new adorable stuffed animals are being adopted quickly. And two new photo playing cards are here this year: Marine Life and Pirates.



On a sad note, the long time supplier of our Mukilteo lighthouse replicas, Gene Mitchell of Pacific NW Lighthouses, retired due to health issues. We purchased all of his remaining Mukilteo stock, but some items were very limited in quantity. The mini replica as well as the antique ornament will soon be gone.

We are looking for a new supplier and ask for your help. If you visit another gift shop and see lighthouse replicas on their shelves, please ask for information about their supplier. If they prefer, they can email the information to our website, mukilteohistorical.org, or directly to nancy@mukilteohistorical.org.

Please keep the feedback and suggestions coming. We are always looking to improve the gift shop and your shopping experience.

Thank you from your buyers,

Kim Nguyen and Nancy Joao ♦

We Love Our Volunteers!



You are the best! Thank you for all you do. More volunteers are needed to staff the lighthouse and gift shop. For more information, contact Becky Owensby at 425 308-3313 or bowensby@mukilteohistorical.org. ♦

From the Archives...

Why a lighthouse at Mukilteo?

In 1902, when Congress approved \$22,000 for a lighthouse at Mukilteo, that was a lot of money. According to measuringworth.com, \$22,000 in 1902 translates to \$503,000-\$16,200,000 today, depending on how you calculate it! The House of Representatives must have been convinced that a lighthouse at Mukilteo would keep the waterways safe.

Was Mukilteo a dangerous place for boats?

There are no stories of shipwrecks or rescues in the Mukilteo area, as far as the Archive team knows. The hulk of the Pacific Queen is visible on the beach at Picnic Point between Mukilteo and Edmonds. Other wrecks are also visible in this area on Google maps, but reportedly the area was a boat salvage yard, which accounts for them. Shipwreck fans can see more photos of this wooden-hulled minesweeper on flickr. Note that the area around the Pacific Queen is private property.



Aerial view of Pacific Queen shipwreck from Google maps.

The Archive team also reviewed the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) interactive map that shows known wrecks and obstructions to maritime navigation. The map is a fun tool, but no shipwrecks are shown in the vicinity of the lighthouse. Nor do local divers appear to have online records of shipwrecks in the immediate vicinity. So why was Mukilteo chosen as a lighthouse site?

What the newspapers say

The local newspapers reported that the Everett Chamber of Commerce petitioned the federal government in 1902 for a lighthouse at Mukilteo Point. The *Seattle Daily Times* states in the February 12, 1902 issue:

The Chamber of Commerce is preparing the second petition asking the department at Washington for a lighthouse and fog station to be established on Mukilteo Point. This petition is signed by two hundred pilots.

From the February 12, 1902 Seattle Daily Times.

The interest of area pilots is consistent with what we know about shipping at Mukilteo. The Crown Lumber Company employed Howard Josh as tugboat captain from 1914 to 1930 to pilot the company tug, *N.D. Tobey*, managing the 3-, 4-, and even 5-masted ships that came in to take on lumber.

Likewise, the newspaper *Washington Standard*, based in Olympia, described the need for a lighthouse and fog station in detail on March 14, 1902:

A telegram was received recently by the Chamber of Commerce, at Everett, stating that a favorable report had been received from the Treasury Department authorizing the expenditure of \$22,000 for a lighthouse and fog station at Mukilteo point. The report is now being considered by the Senate Committee on Commerce. Marine men and navigators as well as the business men of Everett and other Sound cities sent in several petitions to our representatives in Washington regarding this station. Mukilteo point is regarded as extremely dangerous to navigation, owing to the configuration of the coast line, which renders an echo from a whistle blast

of a steamer impossible, so that it is difficult in a fog to determine a boat's bearings in this way and avoid dangerous points.

From the March 14, 1902 Washington Standard.

The petitions were approved and the lighthouse opened in 1906. Given the apparent dangers in navigation, it may be very good luck that there are no famous shipwrecks in the area.

Do you know of any shipwrecks or rescues in Everett or Mukilteo waters? If so, please share them with us! ♦



MHS Wins Malstrom Award for Best Project in 2015



Happily holding the Malstrom Award Certificate are four members of the Walking Tour Committee: John Collier, Ann Collier, Sally Morrison, and Don Saul. The framed certificate may be viewed near the stairs in Quarters B. Photo by Isabella Summitt.

Mukilteo’s new walking tour was awarded the Malstrom Award as the best local history project in Snohomish County in 2015. The honor was announced at the annual spring banquet of the League of Snohomish County Heritage Organizations. The Walking Tour is a joint project of the Mukilteo Historical Society and Jericho Bridge Church, with additional funding from Mukilteo City’s Lodging Tax Grant.

The judge for local projects was Elizabeth Stewart, Museum Director at the Renton History Museum. Dr. Stewart wrote that the tour “can be accessed in multiple ways: through a text brochure, through text on the walking tour web site, and most ingeniously, through audio clips narrated by ten Mukilteo residents and actors, including a member of the Tulalip tribe and a high school student. The result is an informative experience at a beautiful site that provides an introduction to Mukilteo history, and will perhaps stimulate deeper exploration on the part of visitors.” Dr. Stewart, who earned her Ph.D. in American History at American University in Washington, D.C., also added that she appreciated “that the project takes into account different learning styles and connects the locale’s history to its natural history and ecology.”

The popular tour brochures are available at the light station, three other locations in Lighthouse Park, local hotels, tourist offices, and on local ferry runs. MHS volunteers have observed numerous visitors using mobile devices as they take the self-guided tour. For the exercise-averse, you can access the tour at home using the website mukilteowalkingtour.com. ♦

Keep Washington Shining!



Support Washington lighthouses. When you purchase a Washington Lighthouse license plate, a portion of the fees helps fund restoration projects at 13 non-profit lighthouses, including the Mukilteo lighthouse. For more information, go to <http://washingtonlighthouses.org/lighthouse-license-plates>. ♦



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2016

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Individual - \$15 Senior (65) - \$10 Senior Couple - \$20 Family - \$25

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