

Maritime History

Ever since there have been people in the Pacific Northwest, the waterways have served as transportation corridors. From time immemorial through the early 1900s, entire Coast Salish families would travel incredible distances in ocean-going canoes. When European explorers first entered these waterways many thousands of years later, it was via four-and five-masted timber schooners.

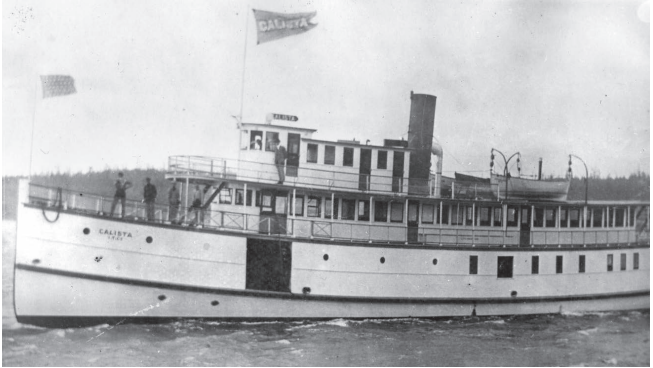


As small towns formed along coastlines, several long wharves came and went over the years, with sand bars and storm tides creating challenges. Between the 1880s and 1920s, a giant collection of steamships operated around Puget Sound. Known as the Mosquito Fleet, they served as



ABOVE: The stern wheeler, Fairhaven, seen here at the Langley Wharf, was an early member of the “Mosquito Fleet” that brought passengers and freight to Whidbey and Camano Islands. Circa 1910. Photo: South Whidbey Historical Museum. **TOP RIGHT:** The Coupeville based steamer Calista, circa 1915. Photo: Island County Historical Museum. **RIGHT:** Washington State Ferry Tokitae, on the Clinton-Mukilteo route.

Whidbey & Camano Islands



a primary form of transportation and fueled the growth of the area, able to reach just about anywhere with a waterfront.

Maritime heritage is still a daily part of life, with a vast number of Washingtonians crossing parts of the Sound regularly. The state ferry system is the largest in the country and among the largest in the world. Many exemplary boats found worldwide were built on the shores of Holmes Harbor. It's fitting then, that the Maritime Washington National Heritage Area was designated in 2019, encompassing 3,000 miles of the state's saltwater coastline and enveloping both Whidbey and Camano Islands.

Visit any of the museums featured in this guide to learn more about how the waterways surrounding Whidbey and Camano islands have been used since time immemorial.

