

MOSQUITO FLEET

Sailing ships from Spain, Russia, and England explored these waters looking for the Northwest Passage. Soon trading with the local tribes and others became the focus of visiting these waters. As non-native settlements became established, the need for supplies increased and this demand was met by shipping companies setting up routes. The sailing ships gave way to steam-powered vessels. Without roads to transport goods and people, ships were used. The flotilla of steamers sailing the waters became known as the Mosquito Fleet. Regular deliveries to the area took place on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Below are the steamers and the years they operated on the Strait route. Makah and Klallam canoes traversed the Strait of Juan de Fuca for many centuries before the sailing ships and steamers entered these waters. A variety of canoes were used, each with its own purpose. Canoes were made for ceremonial purposes, whaling, hauling heavy cargo, fishing, war, transporting a large number of tribal members, and short trips managed by single or double paddlers. Canoes were also fitted with sails to allow easier travel into Puget Sound or out on the Pacific Ocean.



Evangel was built in 1882 and was 100' long x 17' wide. It ran the Strait route from 1888 to 1890. It was built for missionary work in Alaska, but the owner went broke. The ship alternated on the mail route with the Despatch.



Three passengers, from the **Utopia**, were being brought to the shoreline. When a community didn't have a proper dock, passengers and cargo were brought to the shore with a launch. Looking at the ship photos closely, the smaller boats can be seen on the decks.



Five passengers are relaxing on the deck of the **SS Sol Duc**. For 55 years, from 1878 to 1933, these steamers serviced North Olympic Peninsula communities. The SS Sol Duc was one of over 1,000 ships plying the waters of Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.



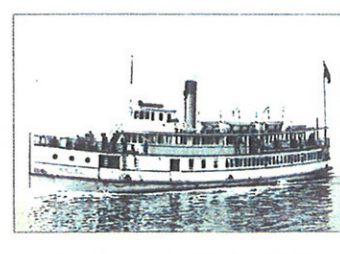
This ad was run in the early 1900s. The company sold its domestic assets to the State DOT in 1951 creating the Washington State Ferries. It kept the Canadian operation, Black Ball Ferry Line. The MV Coho, out of Port Angeles, is the last of that fleet.



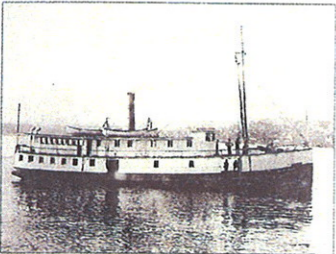
These passengers posed for this picture on the upper deck of the **SS Clallam**. The SS Clallam was involved in one of the worst maritime disasters on the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Read further about the tragedy on the Shipwrecks sign.



In communities without proper dock facilities, merchants and others had to row a boat or barge out to the steamers to haul cargo ashore. In this photo, produce and other goods were brought in at Sekiu. The Three Sisters rock formation can be seen in the background.



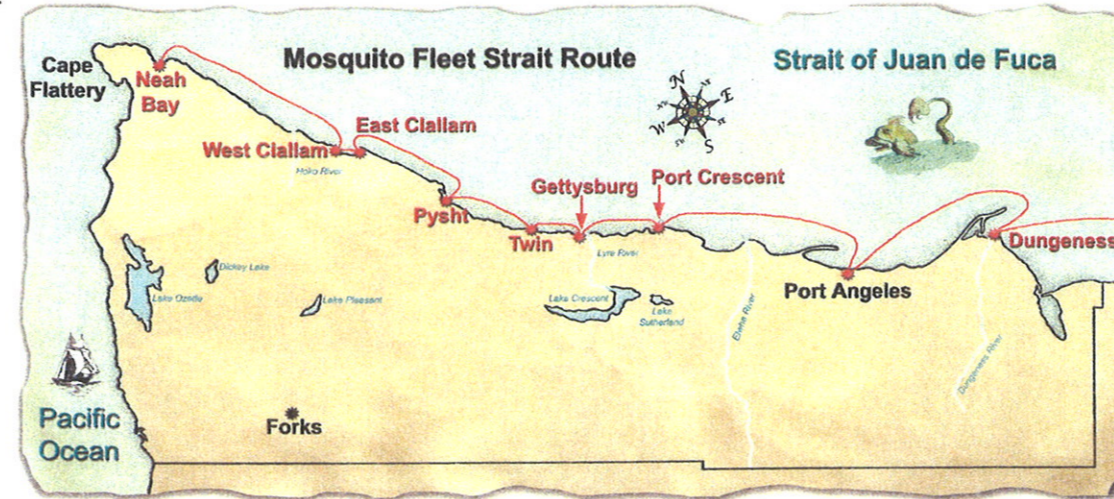
Monticello was built in Seattle in 1891 and was 130' long x 18' wide. It ran the Strait route in 1893. Captain Zephaniah J. Hatch built and ran the ship. He moved his boat to the Whatcom and Olympia route from 1893 to 1895. He then moved his operation to the San Francisco area until 1901.



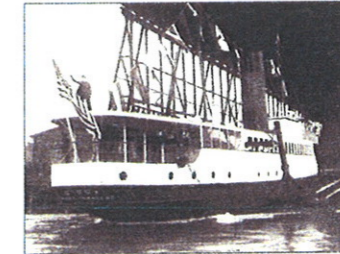
Garland was built in Port Townsend in 1890 and was 97' long x 18 1/2' wide. It ran the Strait route during 1890, 1891, 1893, 1897, 1898, 1900, 1902, and 1903. The ship was built for towing and hauling freight and was later lengthened to accommodate passengers.



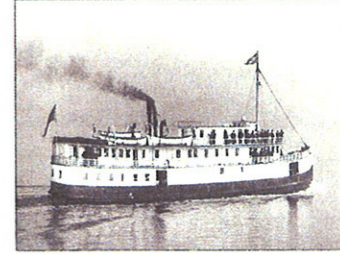
George E. Starr was built in Seattle in 1878 and was 154' long x 28' wide. It ran the Strait route from 1890 to 1892. The side-wheel steamer was built for the Puget Sound Navigation Company, then sold to Northwest Steamship Co. and Black Ball Line. It was abandoned on Lake Union, in Seattle, in 1921.



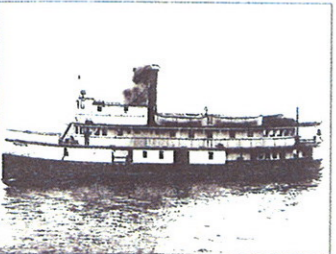
Historical photos are courtesy of the Clallam County Historical Society and the Bert Kellogg Collection of the North Olympic Library System



Sioux was built in Seattle in 1910. It ran the Strait route in 1914 and 1915. Much of the raw material for the steamer's construction came from the steel plant in Irondale, near Port Townsend. The ship was renamed Olympic in 1924.



Utopia was built in Seattle in 1893 and was 124' long x 25' wide. It ran the Strait route from 1918 to 1923. The Utopia was chartered by Harold Lloyd for the filming of the picture "Winds of Chance". Used during the Klondike gold rush, it burned in 1929.



Perdita was built in Seattle in 1903 and was lengthened to 143' long x 25' wide. It ran the Strait route in 1908 and 1909. It had the most melodious whistle of all the Hood Canal boats. It was destroyed by fire near Port Ludlow; its engines and boiler were later used in the Comanche.



Whatcom was built in Everett in 1901 and was 169' long x 30' wide. It ran the Strait route from 1908 to 1912. Originally named the Majestic, it was renamed the Whatcom in 1904, and later renamed again in 1921 to City of Bremerton.



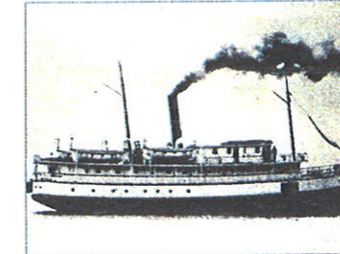
Rosalie was built in Alameda, CA in 1893 and was 136' long x 27' wide. It ran the Strait route in 1903. Originally built to be an Alameda ferry, it was brought north and used during the Klondike gold rush from 1897 to 1900.



City of Angeles was built in California in 1906. It ran the Strait route in 1914 and 1915.



Alice Gertrude was built in Tacoma in 1898 and was 145' long x 26' wide. It ran the Strait route from 1898 to 1907. The ship was built for the Thompson Steamboat Company and named after Fred Thompson's daughter.



Waialeale or Wealeale was built at Port Blakely in 1886. It ran the Strait route from 1913 to 1916 and again in 1921. It was nicknamed the Weary Willie because it was so slow. You had to line up an object on the shoreline to tell if the boat was in motion.



Willapa / Bellingham was built in Portland, OR in 1882 and was 136' long x 20' wide. It ran the Strait route in 1895 and from 1904 to 1919. Built as a Columbia River bar tug, it was later rebuilt and renamed the Willapa, and used during the Alaska gold rush. It was burned in 1950 as part of the Seattle Seafair celebration.

Other ships used on the Strait route include the following:

Despatch was built at Port Madison in 1876 and was 97' long x 16' wide. The ship started in 1878 as the first steamer on the mail and freight run from Port Townsend to Neah Bay.
Hermosa ran the Strait route in 1891.
Comanche was built in Seattle in 1913 and was 134' long x 28' wide. It ran the Strait route from 1923 to 1933. This ship was the last of the steamers to run the Strait route.