

The Ferries of Lake Crescent

By Peter Zelenka

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Introduction

Have you ever been to Lake Crescent? Have you ever experienced the summertime swimming? Every summer I make sure to go to Lake Crescent because of its amazing camping, swimming, mountain biking, canoeing, and all-around wonderful experiences. I have always had an interest in vehicles on land and sea and air, so I chose the lake's former ferries as an essay topic.

When diving off Devil's Punch Bowl bridge or snorkeling at Bovie's Meadow it is hard for me to imagine huge ferry boats steaming past and no road around the lake. For me, Lake Crescent is great for swimming in any season. In the winter when I dive off the dock it is a cold short-lived experience. When I clamber out of the water I see snow capped peaks all around me. In the summer it is hard to believe that a freezing-cold glacier carved out the lake in the Ice Age. Lake Crescent is one of my favorite places in the world, so if you haven't been there yourself I highly suggest you do go.

Geology

Lake Crescent was formed by glaciers coming down in the latest ice age and carving out the area. Later a huge landslide came in and separated present day Lake Sutherland and present day Lake Crescent forming two separate lakes. Lake Crescent is 596 feet deep although for a long time people thought it was much deeper like 1,000 feet ("Lake Bathymetry Elevation Bands").

Ecology

Lake Crescent has an abundant wild habitat in and around the lake. Schools of rainbow trout called Beardslee trout are endemic to the lake and spawn near the Lyre River bridge (Goin, 6). Crescent cutthroat trout is just another special species that live there (Goin, 6). Also many ducks thrive on the waters. The slow-moving, crystal clear waves bring a sensation of the vast blue sky shrunken into a lake.

Lake Crescent also has a lush environment on land. The forest around the lake is a Western Hemlock forest. Some of the many animals in these forests include black tailed deer, various species of insects, Douglas squirrels, pileated woodpeckers, robins, Steller's jays and many more.

Human History

Indians around the lake included the Quileute tribe and the Clallam tribe. These two tribes lived in the vicinity of Lake Crescent. Settlers also came in and inhabited the area. The settlers eventually started logging the area producing even more lumber for Port Angeles.

The European settlers first made land claims around Lake Crescent in the late 1880s and the early 1890s ("Settlement of Lake Crescent"). There was poor soil and rugged ground around the lake which made it hard for settlers to farm ("Settlement of Lake Crescent"). What kept some of the settlers was the scenic beauty and the abundant Beardslee trout (Evans, 87). Some of the settlers who stayed built resorts for visitors to enjoy nature (Evans, 91). By 1909 a lot of resorts had sprung up around the lake (Evans, 91).

Ferries Summary

Have you heard about the Lake Crescent Ferries? Lake Crescent in the late 19th to early 20th century had a need for transportation around the lake because there was no road around the lake. So they built ferry boats, barges, and steamboats.

One reason that Lake Crescent needed ferries in the late 19th century is because people needed to get to resorts. Another reason that they needed ferries is because people needed to get to their houses and farms.

The one reason that Lake Crescent needed ferries in the early 20th century was to get to resorts like Log Cabin Resort, The Qui Si Sauna which is now called Camp David Jr. just to name a few (Fish). Also they needed to get to the west end of the lake to go to Fairholm (Fish).

Private Ferries

Before 1891 the only form of transportation around the lake was canoes. In 1891 the Lady of the Lake became the first power boat running on Lake Crescent (Evans, 91). The Lady of the Lake was built by Paul Barnes and she was launched near Piedmont which was a town on the north shore of Lake Crescent (Evans, 91). The Lady was built at Port Crescent on the Strait of Juan de Fuca and carried to the lake on a hay rack (Fish, 5). This was seven miles over a rough road (Evans, 247). The engine was installed at Piedmont (Fish, 5).

For two years the Lady of the Lake was the only power boat traveling between Piedmont and Fairholm (Evans, 91). After 1893, several other boats were built, including The Flyer, The Betty Earles, and the Olympus (Fish, 6-7). These boats were mainly taking people to resorts (Fish, 5-7).



Betty Earles and barge, Lake Crescent
(Burt-Kellogg Collection, Identifier LKCRBOAT018)

Resorts

One of the early resorts was Ovington Resorts. Ovington Resort began in 1905. It was one of the most popular resorts in that time (Evans, 248). According to Olympic National Park's *Historic Resources Study*, the Ovington resort was “a charming place, occupying fourteen acres of land with a frontage on the lake of 1,500 feet. The main building has a large dining room, most artistically furnished with a number of Mexican curios, tiger skins, snake skins, and other articles of interest immediately attracting attention (Evans, 248).” One of the main reasons people went there was to fish. They fished the Beardslee trout and Crescenti cutthroat trout (“History Around Lake Crescent”).

Most of the resorts closed in the winter, but Hotel Fairholme was open all year (Evans, 250). Before the road around the southern part of Lake Crescent was completed in 1922, Fairholm was an important connection between pioneer trails heading west and boat traffic from the lake (Evans, 250). Fairholm was also important because it had a post office in 1891 and a telephone exchange in 1911 (Evans, 250).

Public Ferries

In the 1910's, the Clallam County Board of Commissioners decided to start ferry service on the lake (Evans, 250). They called for the construction of ferry boats called The Marjory and Storm King (Evans, 250). Also, the public ferries were built and christened at Piedmont on the north shore of Lake Crescent (Evans, 250). The public ferries were bigger than the private ferries and were run by the county. People used them to travel from the east end to the west end of Clallam County. In the summer of 1915 the public ferries carried seven times as much traffic as went on the lake before ("Lake Crescent Lodge"). At all of the resorts the ferries just ran up to the shore except East Beach because it was too shallow ("Ferry Makes Fast Time"). Farm animals, people, wagons, and cars went on the ferries.

In the North Olympic History Center's archives I was interested to find a log done by Earl Latimer, John Bibb and Joe Colesworthy about their trip on the Olympic Highway in October of 1919. As part of their trip they took one of the public ferries. At 4pm, the three men had a tire puncture but fortunately fifteen minutes later they arrived at East Beach (Latimer). From East Beach they took a ferry over to Fairholm (Latimer). On the boat ride there they fixed the puncture and, "ground out harmony of the regular old barber shop variety (Latimer)." This entry into their log gives me a feeling that they were having a jolly time.

The ferries sadly got put out of business due to them costing too much to run and the road being built (Evans, 250). When they got put out of business a barge service took over their business. The ferries stopped running because the road around Lake Crescent was completed on

the south shore (Evans, 250). So the County commissioners were going to auction off the ferries in 1922 (“County Will Sell Ferries from Lake”).

For a long period of time the ferries took people from the East end to the West End of Clallam County. At all of the resorts the ferries just ran up to the shore except East Beach because it was too shallow (“Ferry Makes Fast Time”). When the ferries stopped running it affected the resorts in many ways. In 1925 the ferry services completely stopped running between East Beach and Fairholm (Evans, 265). In 1931, the Olympic Peninsula Loop Highway was completed. Some of the older resorts around the lake moved to face the highway (Evans, 265). The new resorts focused on people driving in cars (Evans, 265).

Marjory

The Marjory was the first boat that Clallam County owned. She was 65 feet long, could run 8 mph, and cost four thousand dollars to build (Fish). The Marjory could carry seven to eight cars or wagons (Fish). The Marjory was smaller than the Storm King ferry boat. She was built in 1914 (Evans). The Marjory was put out of business in 1922. Marjory was sunk just east of Log Cabin Resort (Evans).

Storm King

The Storm King was Clallam County's second public ferry. She was a 90 foot long, 9 mile per hour,



Storm King Ferry at East Beach dock, Lake Crescent (Burt-Kellogg Collection, Identifier: LKCRBOAT006)

five to eight thousand dollar build. The Storm King was completed in 1915 (Fish). The Storm King and the Marjory were christened and launched at Piedmont (Evans). The Storm King's paint was white with a dark green trim (Seattle Post-Intelligencer). Storm King's Captain was Captain Frank Kalloch. Storm King could carry up to 30 vehicles or wagons. The Storm King sank across from Log Cabin Resort (Fish).

Conclusion

Ferries on the lake were a big hit for the people of Clallam County. They brought more tourists to Port Angeles and all of the County. Do you think that in the future of Lake Crescent there will be ferries again? I hope you have learned something from this essay. Also I hope that this essay will have sparked your interest and you will go and visit Lake Crescent to see some of the places I wrote about.

Annotated Bibliography

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In this passage it describes the ferry trip on Lake Crescent.

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